

 **Banack's Bencher News**

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LPIC LEVY 2000: Convocation approved a \$500.00 reduction to the base premium, resulting in a new premium payment of \$3,150.00 per lawyer. The real estate and civil litigation transaction levies will be continued providing that revenues are held and applied solely as premiums for the liability program. The premium for mandatory insurance coverage has been reduced, as has the lump sum premium payment discount. Lawyers who complete and electronically submit their liability insurance applications will be entitled to a \$50.00 premium discount. From 1977 to 1999, it was reported that four out of five practising lawyers reported an errors and omissions claim and two out of five lawyers had claims paid on their behalf.

DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT COUNSEL: Ms. Mary Teresa Devlin has been hired to provide this important function to all lawyers in Ontario by providing safe counsel in respect of discrimination and harassment matters. Ms. Devlin will act at arms-length from the Law Society in accepting complaints, exploring options and providing related services in an attempt to resolve any complaint. She can be reached by toll free telephone at 1-877-790-2200 and/or by toll free fax at 1-877-398-1100.

SPOT AUDITS: For the period ending June, 1999, approximately 255 audits were conducted, of which 210 firms were selected randomly and the balance were referred as a result of information obtained on self-reporting forms. Approximately ½ were conducted within the Greater Toronto Area and the balance distributed throughout the Province. 41% of the audits detected some sort of trust account recording inadequacies or other conduct which required further investigation. 38% were closed after the lawyer was provided administrative guidance and 2% gave rise to a subsequent request to conduct a more in-depth Law Society investigation. A post-audit survey disclosed that 99% of responding lawyers concluded that the auditors were courteous, considerate of the member's time and helpful. More detailed information in respect of these spot audits and the focused audits can be obtained if you wish.

LAWYERS WORK BENCH AND THE LAW SOCIETY TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE: The Task Force is made up of Benchers, other lawyers and staff who will be monitoring expectations to ensure the project satisfies Law Society objectives or whether it should be joined or replaced by other technological initiatives. In addition, the Task Force has the mandate of examining the impact of technology on the practice of law in a variety of areas which include development of a

comprehensive member data base, creation of an electronic certifying authority, maintenance of the Law Society website, electronic continuing legal education material as well as the technological impact on library services. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Task Force staff member, Mr. Gord Lalonde at 1-800-668-7380 or (416) 947-3397.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING PROJECT: The Law Foundation has agreed to support this project with a grant in the amount of \$1.3 Million provided certain conditions are met by the Law Society. It is anticipated that the three phase project will immediately expand education delivery choices, support a growing body of electronically available education materials and learning environments and support technologically enhanced education at a number of locations throughout the Province. The Project will be subjected to pre-determined evaluative measures of success in respect of each of the three phases.

C.E.O. SECOND QUARTER REPORT: The Customer Service Centre centralizes inquiries to provide quick, accurate and consistent responses to inquiries from the public and the Profession. The number of matters before Hearing Panels, Discipline Committees and Convocations has declined by 23%, mainly due to the streamlining of the prosecution process and perhaps, as well, because the Complaints Department has now been replaced by the resolution and compliance section, emphasizing the use of alternate dispute resolution techniques. The Law Society goal is to resolve complaints within two months of receipt.

TREASURER'S SUMMER REPORT: The Treasurer reported a very active summer, meeting with members of the local Bar throughout much of the Province. He will be going to the North West Region in October. As well, the Treasurer attended the annual meetings of the Federation of Law Societies and Canadian Bar Association. He has strongly supported lawyers in opposition to the CBA Report on Multi-Disciplinary partnerships that contemplates that the partnerships might be controlled by chartered accountants rather than by lawyers. I share the Treasurer's view that it will not be possible to protect the core values of our Profession if chartered accountants have their way and are able to control any multi-disciplinary partnership in which public accountants are partners.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Benchers are scheduled to meet on October 14 and 15, 1999 for a strategic planning session intended to permit all Benchers to have an opportunity to shape the Law Society agenda in the near future. Any thoughts you might have in this respect should be communicated to your regional Bencher or by return fax of this newsletter sent to (416) 977-3316.