


Banack's Bencher News

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MILLENNIUM FEE: Convocation began debate in respect of our fees for the year 2000. It is now recommended that Bar Ad tuition not be changed next year. The debate is to be continued on December 10th. It is likely that there will be a marginal total fee increase however, LPIC fees have been reduced by \$500.00 which will result in a net lower cost to practice next year.

SPOT AUDITS: Convocation has approved the continuation of the spot audit project. Spot audit criteria have been expanded to include any newly formed law firm, to ensure that correct accounting practices are implemented at that formative stage. Lawyers utilizing the services of a licensed public accountant may have that professional file a Certificate of Assurance confirming that the Law Society spot audit procedures have been utilized, in which case, that law firm may be excluded from the spot audit program. The exclusion process permits lawyers to have financial records reviewed with the same scrutiny as the spot audit without being obliged to pay on a second occasion for a Law Society audit. As well, the exclusion will help conserve and best utilize Law Society resources to audit firms when otherwise required.

LAW SOCIETY REPORTS: Convocation has approved a single filing of all information previously supplied by lawyers on the Private Practitioner's Report and Membership Information Form. It is anticipated the new form containing pre-printed information will save time for lawyers and expense of the Law Society.

LAW FIRM DEMOGRAPHICS: As at August, 1999, our profession was made up as follows:

Law Firm Size	# of Firms	% of Total Firms
Sole Practice	5,455	74%
2 Person Partnership	885	12%
3-10 Partners	879	12%
More than 10 Partners	162	2%

LAW SOCIETY STATUS REPORT/STRATEGIC PLANNING

SESSION: To survey the "health" and future of the legal profession in Ontario, Convocation commissioned a consultant to conduct qualitative research. About 300 lawyers in 15 focus groups across the Province were consulted in March, 1999. The Report, which is available upon request from the Law Society, was considered by Benchers during a strategic planning session held on October 14 and

15, 1999. The Report described what many lawyers say and feel about the changes which have occurred within the profession in the past 10 years. A series of priorities have been identified for medium and long-term attention, having regard for the content of the Report, the information obtained during the Treasurer's visits to Law Associations across the Province and the feedback Benchers have received from lawyers.

RE-QUALIFICATION: Lawyers who have not made substantial use of their legal skills on a regular basis for five years or more will now be required to re-qualify. Before returning to private practice, such lawyers must take steps to upgrade their legal education. The Report to Convocation and the By-law giving effect to the re-qualification requirement are available by contacting the Law Society Policy Secretariat (416) 947-5209.

COURT HOUSE TASK FORCE: Convocation established a Task Force to consider the deplorable state of many Court facilities throughout the Province that do not adequately serve the needs of either the profession or the public.

PARALEGALS: The Attorney-General, James Flaherty, has announced the appointment of the Honourable Mr. Justice Corey as mediator/facilitator to meet with the various interest groups and attempt to achieve consensus in relation to the issues of paralegals providing service to the public. The Attorney-General has indicated that in the absence of consensus by May, 2000, Justice Corey will be asked for his recommendations.

TIME COMMITMENT: However you may feel about what Benchers accomplish at the Law Society, it is certainly not for a lack of trying or commitment of time. In October and November, Benchers committed eight full days and also attended at discipline hearings and other projects and task force meetings.