

 **Banack's Bencher News**

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NEW CEO: Convocation approved the hiring of Malcolm Heins as the new Law Society CEO. Malcolm's knowledge of the profession and successful track record at LPIC give real reason for optimism with respect to future management of Law Society affairs. Malcolm's expertise will not be lost to LPIC, as he will continue to sit on its Board of Directors. Michelle Strom, LPIC Senior Vice President and C.F.O. will now become its President.

UNCLAIMED TRUST FUNDS: Convocation approved the by-law necessary to permit lawyers to pay to the Law Society, trust funds unclaimed for at least two years. The administration to receive and account for the funds is presently being established. The Law Society will be reimbursed for its cost of administering the unclaimed trust funds from interest earned on outstanding balances. Money will be held in perpetuity for the purpose of satisfying claims of those entitled to the money and law firms depositing unclaimed trust funds will no longer be obliged to routinely report the existence of the money.

GRIFFITH'S REPORT UPDATE: At its monthly meetings, the Professional Regulation Committee now monitors the Law Society's handling of complaints, investigations and discipline matters. The obvious goal is to ensure timely and cost-effective discovery of problems and implementation of resolutions. While the necessary staff are being hired and trained, certain files have been referred to outside counsel for prompt attention. An understanding of the effectiveness of the Griffith's recommendations will likely take six to twelve months of vigilant monitoring.

COMPETENCE: The Task Force which considered the Law Society's competence mandate tabled its report that will be debated in March Convocation. The nine month consultation process involved focus groups, member surveys and submissions from legal organizations across the Province. A copy of the Report may be obtained by contacting the Law Society Policy Secretariat at 416-947-5209. Among the options considered, support appears to be growing for the establishment of a continuum of professional development throughout our careers. To appreciate the various alternatives and factors, please review the Report and offer any thoughts you may have within the next several weeks.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: After lengthy debate and numerous amendments, Convocation approved a strategic plan for

implementation to 2003. The Plan addressed legal education, operational activities of Convocation, the role of Secretary, a plan to assist sole practitioners and small law firms to provide access to legal services for individuals and small businesses. Consideration of the national and international possibilities for lawyers will be discussed at a later date.

VIRUS ALERT: E-mail users can inadvertently be sent a virus by any infected computer. For example, my last newsletter was received by one of our colleagues who had a resident virus on his computer. That virus was redistributed by our colleague's computer to the e-mail recipients of this Newsletter. I and the lawyer who was unaware of the problem, apologize to any recipients who received the virus. Precautions have now been taken to minimize this method of infection in the future. All e-mail users are urged to have an antivirus program installed on their computers and to keep it up to date.