

 **Banack's Bencher News**

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Volume #2 Issue #16

January 24, 2002

Honorary Doctorate Recipients: The Treasurer continues the tradition of bestowing Honorary Doctorates at the annual calls to the bar. This year's worthy recipients are Irving Abella, Marlys Edwardh, David Mullan, Anna Porter, and William Kaplan. Congratulations to each of them.

Director of Education: The Director of the Education Department, Bob Bernhardt left his position on December 7, 2001. This provided the opportunity to create a Bar Admission Office in place of the former department. The directors of the new Bar Admission Office are Ian Lebane and Cindy Pinkus.

Richard Tinsley: After 23 years with the Law Society, Richard Tinsley has resigned effective January 31st. During his career, he played a major role in respect of professional regulation functions, the development of several major initiatives and represented Ontario lawyers on national committees affecting the legal profession. The Treasurer has extended the appreciation of the profession to Richard for his unwaivering service in the best interest of our community.

2003 Budget Process: Arising from last year's budget discussion, Convocation recognized the difficulty in last minute policy debates necessary to inform the Finance and Audit Committee in advance of preparing the budget. Accordingly, Convocation adopted a program review model for compiling the 2003 budget and budget timetable, with the expectation that Convocation will meet in October of this year to adopt the budget and annual membership fee for 2003. An examination will be undertaken of present programs to assess what the Law Society is undertaking and what value is being received, together with a comparative analysis of other Law Societies and professions in the Province. The goal is to determine an "appropriate and affordable" membership fee.

CLE – Competence Model: As previously requested, Convocation received a Report containing a design for the CLE component needed to implement the Law Society's competence mandate. The Report of the Professional Development & Competence Committee is available on the Law Society website. The Committee discussed the issue of accessibility of CLE with various individuals including 45 county representatives. The overwhelming view of the county representatives was that CLE is accessible at the local level and that low lawyer attendance is the result, not of a lack of programming, but of a certain degree of apathy among lawyers in their

communities. The Committee described the components of the design, a statement of minimum expectations regarding professional development and a reporting mechanism. Convocation approved the Report which includes a minimum annual expectation of 50 hours of self study and 12 hours of continuing legal education. It must be noted that the minimum expectation is not mandatory but we will be obliged to disclose the annual amount of CLE in which we engage.

Real Time Electronic Transfer of Closing Funds: Convocation received a report describing the current impediments to the electronic transfer of real estate closing funds which have perpetuated inefficiency and additional client cost notwithstanding the existence of electronic title registration in certain areas of the province. It is estimated that by the Spring of 2002, 55% of all real estate transactions will be completed through the electronic registration system. Accordingly, it was necessary to amend existing Law Society regulations relating to the handling of money in order to permit electronic transfer of funds. Real estate lawyers should immediately familiarize themselves with this new development. Although the current protocol utilizes the Bank of Montreal, it is anticipated that other chartered banks will likely offer the same service in the near future.

Convocation: The Treasurer has now occupied the office for six months. He has been true to his word and Convocation has met no more than once per month and concluded the matters for debate by no later than 1:00 p.m. each day. This efficiency has been accomplished through good management in respect of the thoroughness of the reports brought to Convocation by the various committees and good luck in the absence of any particular crises requiring attention. February, however, will be very busy with meeting of Convocation, Committee Day and calls to the bar in Ottawa, London and Toronto. The very important Mobility Task Force will likely be received in February and the Legal Education Task Force in March.

Members' Annual Reports: Lawyers can now file the 2001 Members' Annual Reports electronically. Details may be obtained at the Law Society website www.lsuc.on.ca.