

Banack's Bencher News #60

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2006 LEVY: Convocation considered the Law Society budget for 2006, including funding for Library Co. After extensive debate and a partial rejection of the recommendation of the Finance Committee, it approved the 2006 levy for Law Society membership in the amount of \$1,509.00 (up from \$1,441.00 in 2005). However, Bar Admission students will get a significant saving in paying only \$2,600.00 in 2006 (down from \$4,400.00 in 2005) because of the new licensing process. The fee is based on an assumption of 31,000 full fee paying members (up 1,000 members from last year), as well as funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario and receipt of investment income surplus from the errors and omissions insurance fund. It is important to note that no provision has been made for the potential costs associated with the implementation of paralegal regulation should the government proceed in that fashion. It has been said that the approved budget focuses Law Society resources on its core functions. This is evidenced by an additional \$1.2 million being devoted to regulatory and other functions. More detailed information in respect of the approved budget can be viewed on the Law Society's website <http://www.lsuc.on.ca>

BENCHER RETREAT: The Treasurer convened a two day retreat for Benchers to participate in a facilitated discussion addressing issues likely to be considered by Convocation in the final two years of this mandate. Various presentations and lively discussion have set the stage for Convocation to determine priorities in order to enhance our regulatory process.

J.S. DENISON TRUST FUND: J.S. Denison, a former Treasurer of the Law Society, well-known for his interest and contribution to the work of the Society, established a trust fund. The Law Society has the authority to make awards from the Fund to impoverished or indigent members, disbarred members and students in the Bar Admission Course (including spouses, widow(er)s and children) as it sees fit. Convocation has confirmed 12 grants of approximately \$50,000.00 in 2005, more than double the average number and value of grants in recent years.

BENCHER REMUNERATION: Since the Profession approved the proposal on Bencher remuneration in 2004, Convocation has been considering the rules and process necessary to implement the decision. Hopefully, the procedure will in fact induce lawyers from various practice backgrounds and geographic locations throughout the Province to stand for election as a Bencher in 2007. The cost of the remuneration package cannot be determined until the rules are finalized and it is determined how many Benchers may decide not to accept remuneration for their services as a Bencher. A controversy has arisen in respect of those Benchers who may receive compensation as a result of their participation on Boards which provide remuneration to all Board members (whether or not Law Society appointees). This entire matter is far from finalized.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: The Law Society continues to conduct regular audits of books and records, as well as complex audits, totalling approximately 1,100 per year. It is heartening that only a small number of those audits result in a referral for further investigations or members undertakings being given for the future conduct of their practice. In 2004, over 6,500 members acquired the bar admission course reference materials, free of charge, on-line. Only 1,300 had done so to June, 2005. The topical materials provide an invaluable library resource.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT COUNCIL: During the first six months of the year, 99 individuals contacted Council, with about 5% communicating in French. Complaints of discrimination or harassment were raised by about 15% from the public and 16% from members of the Profession. Most of the complaints from within the Profession arose in the context of the complainant's employment or in the context of a job interview. Of the 15 lay individuals, about half arose from an employment situation and the balance involved clients or prospective clients. It is very important that the profession maintains an awareness of and takes steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment.

COMING EVENTS: Details in respect of the following Equity Public Education events may be obtained from the Law Society website:

Louis Riel Day – November 16, 2005	South Asian Heritage Month – May 3, 2006
Black History Month – February 22, 2006	National Aboriginal Day – June 8, 2006
International Women's Day – May 8, 2006	Pride Week Event – June 15, 2006
National Holocaust Memorial Day – April 26, 2006	

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