



TREASURER ELECTION: Nominations have now closed. The following Benchers are seeking election by Convocation in a vote to be held on June 23, 2016:

Raj Anand

Howard Goldblatt

Susan McGrath

Paul Schabas

HERE WE GO AGAIN: My confession is that I have participated in decades of "Bar Admission" reforms only to learn yet once again, that previously praised initiatives are now thought to be lacking. The public is very well served by our ever vigilant efforts to enhance licensing standards. Convocation will be asked to approve a new protocol by which aspiring lawyers will be licenced in conjunction with its assessment of the 2012 Pathways Pilot Project to begin in September. The current onerous two days of separate Barrister and Solicitor examinations may be replaced. It is now proposed subject to further consultation that after law school, Candidates will be required to successfully complete a Practice and Procedure Examination before undertaking experiential learning (aka articling or LPP). That learning phase could be shortened from 10 to 9 months. It may even be reduced to 6 months if a credit is earned by students participating in a law school clinic or a summer work experience should both student and Articling Principal agree. My guess is that 6 months will become the norm. Thereafter, if approved, students will be required to pass a Practice Skills Examination. New examinations will undergo a rigorous developmental review and validation process. Significant consideration should be given to the financial impact on licensees including internationally trained students. It is thought that perhaps the reduction of "articling" to only 6 months may encourage law firms to at least take one student or large firms to double the cohort of articling students. Students will be required to complete all licensing requirements within 3 years. It remains to be seen what the law deans or law firms think of the proposals. For more information see the full report of the Professional Development and Competence Committee at www.lsuc.on.ca.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: In April Convocation, Benchers approved 2015 Financial Statements for the Law Society, LawPro and LibraryCo. On a consolidated basis the Law Society recorded a \$2.3m surplus when a deficit had been projected of \$2.2m. Quite a success story. LawPro was able to maintain base annual premiums in part because of the increased number of lawyers. Real estate and litigation continue to be the most significant claims areas. Once again, rumours of Library closures has been reported as unsubstantiated.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Ho Hum, Ho Hum. The webcast AGM was held on May 11th. No surprises. Financial statements were approved.

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: Lawyers appear to be at greater risk of mental health and addiction issues than other professions. With the support of Treasurer Minor a plan to address these important matters has been approved. A Task Force will address both preventative and regulatory strategies to be designed to avoid stigma and career impairment. A cornerstone of the initiative will be the longstanding Members' Assistance Program (1.855.403.8922) which is available free of charge to Ontario lawyers, paralegals, law students, judges and family members.

MAY 30 DEADLINE: This is the deadline for filing Annual Reports or face a \$100. late fee and referral for suspension.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: While we all struggle to enhance access to justice the Attorney General has announced a plan to increase court fees by 30% and introduce new fees in family law matters. The claim is that the funds are needed to modernize our justice system. The Ministry is also proposing to raise the fee waiver eligibility threshold by 30%. However, there has been no public commitment that the increased fees will be dedicated to making our courts more modern and responsive to the people they serve. I wonder if we will ever know to what use the new and increased fees have been put.

HAVE YOUR SAY: On Saturday May 28th at 10:30 a.m. attend a public design session in Osgoode Hall's lower Barrister Lounge where attendees will reimagine the justice system. "How would you access it, who would be in the space, how would you get help?". This may be an extraordinary opportunity to participate in the development of badly needed access to justice solutions.

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