
BANACK'S BENCHER NEWS #1

June 30, 1995

TO: Vicky Russell
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I had not expected to write to you this soon.

Since election as a Bencher in May, I have been to orientation meetings, a two-day retreat, Committee Day, two Convocations and one Special Convocation, in addition to spending a day on Discipline Hearings. With the election of Susan Elliott as Treasurer, I am convinced that Law Society business will become more streamlined operationally and that substantive changes can be achieved which will improve the tasks performed for the profession.

However, I am writing at this time to ensure that you are informed about the current critical situation involving the Ontario Legal Aid Plan. You will undoubtedly receive detailed information from the Law Society directly through various publications for lawyers and from other representational groups. Please review the information carefully. Whether or not you accept legal aid certificates, the current debate will impact on the delivery of legal services in the Province and certainly affect the income of many of our colleagues.

In addition to the financial difficulties encountered by the Plan, the new government has publicly resolved to withdraw \$130,000,000.00 from the legal aid budget which will effectively destroy the current delivery system without any proposal being offered for an alternate, acceptable model to ensure access to justice for all Ontario residents.

On June 23, 1995, Convocation resolved to implement a speedy analysis in consultation with the profession at large, service providers and users, as well as other affected groups. The goal is to arrive at a determination, hopefully by the end of August, in order to implement a short term management plan and commence the process to effect systemic change to the Plan to maintain a form of the widely acclaimed judicare model presently in place.

It is only space availability that precludes me from detailing the reasons and magnitude for the current critical situation. Please do not be misled by the absence of such information in this update which I hope you will serve as a reminder for you to study the material which will be provided shortly and to become actively involved in the consultation process.

Before Convocation acts, I want to ensure that you have had all available current information and the opportunity to consider alternatives and contribute to the decision making process. If, in the coming weeks, you have any questions, require additional information or have suggestions or criticisms to offer, please do not hesitate to send them to me by fax (416-977-3316) or telephone.

Larry Banack