



COVID 19 RESPONSES:

We have all been receiving regular Law Society communications of actions taken to reduce the impact of the pandemic on the profession and to protect the public interest. In short order, CEO, Diana Miles, and her senior management team undertook a wide range of significant and timely initiatives. Convocation has deferred the time for fee withdrawals and payments to May, and the A.G.M. to a future date to be selected. Spring call to the bar ceremonies have been cancelled and candidates will become licenced without a ceremony based on paper applications. Licensing examinations and articling terms have been modified to respond to the current situation. Law firms are being asked to adapt to the current situation to modify and preserve summer and articling placements for students who are in very vulnerable situations.

Details can best be found at

<https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19>.

CONVOCATION:

Benchers met by ZOOM on April 23rd. Unfortunately the session was not available to the public but the virtual platform worked well, permitting Benchers to receive reports, comment and vote. Additionally Benchers were able to meet privately as a committee of the whole in the same virtual manner. Convocation received an extensive [report from CEO Diana Miles](#) detailing the steps taken and are being considered by the Law Society. As with many other aspects of our lives, it will be interesting to see how future Law Society meetings will be imagined now that we have discovered the possibility of remote participation. In addition, we have seen how well the Law Society can function with a high quality, reliable staff supervised by the Treasurer and perhaps any number of trusted advisors he may consult with. Perhaps our new learning will redefine previously held views of appropriate governance of the

legal profession in the public interest as well as the appropriate future operational role of the Law Society.

GOOD NEWS - 2020 AWARDS SEASON:

We all celebrate our colleagues' dedication to the public and profession, their accomplishments and most recent recognition.

LAW SOCIETY - The Law Society Medal recipients are:

Professor Jeff Berryman
Marie Chen
Dr. Ron Ellis (PhD Law)
Arleen Huggins
Gilbert Labine
Colonel (Ret'd) Vihar Joshi
Heather Joy Ross
Dr. Dianne Saxe (PhD Law)
Donald V. Thomson

LINCOLN ALEXANDER AWARD:

John E. Valeriotte

LAURA LEGGE AWARD:

Jacqueline Lewis

J. SHIRLEY DENISON AWARD:

Mary Birdsell

WILLIAM J. SIMPSON DISTINGUISHED
PARALEGAL AWARD:

Michelle L. Haigh

LAW SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:

In this time of crisis for so many, the University of Ottawa has recognized the plight of students whose employment and income expectations are in jeopardy. The school's Common Law Section announced a new Summer Student Support Initiative with funding of \$250,000 for 50 new summer positions. As well, internships have become available to assist students to earn credits and hours. Lawyers capable of employing a student or supervising an internship or funded fellowship should reach out to Penelope.Simons@uottawa.ca or Karine.Laframboise@uottawa.ca.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Newly elected Benchers met with the help of a facilitator in September, 2019. In February they approved a Strategic Plan to "guide and direct the strategic agenda" for

the 2019-2023 Benchers term.

The four key objectives identified for the Law Society were: proportionate regulation; scope of regulation; competence and quality of service; and access to justice.

Implementation of those objectives is already impacted by Law Society Covid-19 responses and must now be up for thoughtful reconsideration. All Benchers including those seeking to become Treasurer in the Spring election should be challenged to debate whether the previously determined objectives should be revisited or how any of them will be achieved, at least until sustainable law practices can be restored. What will the Treasurer candidates stand for in these unsettled times? Elected leadership is still required to determine policy for staff implementation.

[LAW SOCIETY SUES LAWPRO and CATLIN CANADA INC:](#)

Lengthy discipline proceedings commenced in 2009 were dismissed by a Hearing Panel in 2013. The following day the Law Society posted information online, that the lawyers involved in the discipline proceeding considered to be unfair and defamatory. Upon complaint, the Law Society promptly removed the offending statement from its website and apologized for its publication. Thereafter the Law Society unsuccessfully appealed the Hearing Panel dismissal. The final award of costs in favour of the lawyers was set at \$1.3m. In 2017 the lawyers commenced an action against the Law Society which notified LawPRO and its excess insurer, Catlin Canada Inc. The lawyers and the Law Society attended a mediation at which the Law Society settled the 2017 claim by agreeing to pay the lawyers \$6.43m inclusive of all claims and costs. The insurers have refused to indemnify the Law Society for the amount paid to the lawyers. Hence the 2020 Law Society law suit. Stay tuned.

[ARREST OF HONG KONG LAWYERS:](#)

As if there are not enough problems arising from the fight against Covid-19, Hong Kong has arrested many individuals including civil rights lawyers Margaret Ng and Marin Lee. Ms. Ng was educated at Cambridge and Boston University and is a former employee of an international bank. Mr. Lee is chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association and drafted Hong King's "mini-constitution". Beijing clearly intends to continue the suppression of pro-democracy leaders without regard for the prevailing pandemic. It remains troubling to learn of the arrest of lawyers.

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