



[AWARD SEASON](#)

The annual Law Society Awards ceremony will be held on May 22, 2024 to recognize members of Ontario's legal professions for their outstanding career achievements and contributions to their communities. A link to the webcast will be available to view the event at: LSO.ca/2024AwardsEvent.

[Law Society Medal](#)

Dianne G. Corbiere
Rob Cunningham
Carole M. Dagher
Milton A. Davis
Raj Dhir
Professor Mayo Moran

[William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award](#)

Charlene Nero

[Lincoln Alexander Award](#)

Juliet Chang Knapton

[Laura Legge Award](#)

Julie Lasseonde

[J. Shirley Denison Award](#)

Trudy McCormick

[Human Rights Award](#)

Parkash Diar

GOODBYE LAW SOCIETY (at least only in B.C. for now)

Under proposed legislation the B.C. Law Society is to be disbanded and a new regulator established that will include lawyers, notaries public and paralegals. A new independent discipline tribunal will also be established to impartially hear cases involving all these professionals. This is a significant departure and is an important separation of power. The B.C. Law Society currently has 32 Benchers including 6 government appointees.

It is contemplated that the new regulator will only have 17 directors, including a minimum of 14 licensees (notaries, lawyers and paralegals).

Nine would be elected within the professions (five lawyers and four notaries/paralegals), five others would be appointed by the nine electees (including four lawyers) and three would be appointed by government.

Lawyer groups, including the Law Society, complain that the legislation guarantees only five of 17 directors will be lawyers elected directly by lawyers. It is recognized that while the professions will hold a majority of the director's seats; governance will no longer be that of lawyers predominantly, who are justifiably concerned with the loss of self-regulation.

However, there is merit in allowing for the composition of Benchers to be augmented by an additional appointed group (whether lawyers or not) who possess skills, characteristic or attributes, for example French speaking) not found in the initial elected group of Benchers.

BUN FIGHT (LSO secrecy even from Benchers)

This all began with a 2019 request from Bencher Klippenstein for information that was denied, resulting in an unseemly law suit that the LSO settled last December by agreeing to answer the requests for information (Payment of Klippenstein costs remains contentious and may be determined by a Court in June). At the time there was no prior LSO policy dealing with Bencher information requests, which was likely considered as a factor in settling the litigation. In September 2023, Convocation ([BBN 182](#)) tabled an earlier proposal for further consideration.

But today, Convocation was asked and has now capitulated to a Policy restricting Bencher information requests to a protocol procedure requiring an information request for consideration by the Treasurer in consultation with the CEO. If the request is denied the Treasurer will provide written reasons. Finished. There is no recourse to Convocation that has thus ceded control of its records and information to the sole discretion of the Treasurer/CEO. Without even a supporting legal opinion this is an astounding limitation of information to be available to those we elect to govern the professions in the public interest. How can the public interest be safeguarded if there is no guaranteed transparency of information to those charged with decision making? I have great respect for the integrity and wisdom of the current Treasurer and CEO, however who knows the characteristics or motives of future office holders. The Policy is immutable and appears to be an abrogation by Convocation of its authority, disregarding the simple entitlement to information by Benchers responsible for future policy decisions of our self-regulating professions.

ONTARIO TREASURER ELECTION

With the flight of time, the second term of Treasurer Horvat is quickly coming to a close. Presently the two well-qualified candidates standing for election by Convocation in June are (alphabetically):

Stay tuned.

MORE REGULATION (Practice Essentials Course for Sole Practitioners)

Convocation has determined that a “Foundations” course will be mandatory for all licensees who declare as a sole practitioner for the first time, starting on January 1, 2025. Once completed the course time will be treated as CPD hours earned. The topics to be covered include client service and communications, financial and practice management, the business of running a law practice and professional responsibility in practice. A failure to complete the course within the required time period will result in an administrative suspension. For more information see the full report.

PRACTICE SUCCESSION PLANNING (Client Contingency Planning):

This has been under consideration since 2021 with a 2022 consultation to address what will happen when any of us suddenly cannot practice or meet our professional obligations. Convocation has approved a new By-Law requiring every licensee providing legal services (with a few exceptions) to maintain an annually reviewed contingency plan for such exigencies. Effective **January 1, 2025** each plan must appoint an administrator of our choosing to be entrusted with certain information and file access to ensure protection of client interests in their own property, files and deposited trust funds. Our current Trustee Services department simply can not keep up with timely, effective intervention to safeguard clients' immediate needs, having learned from one LSO survey that 80% of licensees (about 70,000 in Ontario) do not have business continuity plans. Voluntary succession planning encouraged since 2014 was not successful so the By-Law is needed. While the change is intended to benefit clients and the LSO, the new requirement will also take an enormous unwanted burden off the shoulders of our ill-prepared family and friends on the day we are incapacitated. In time more information will be coming and we will get a draft client contingency plan and individualized guidance and resources. This should be a win-win-win decision. To review the full report and background information see <https://www.lso.ca/about-lso/convocation/2024/april-25>

HOLOCAUST REMBERANCE DAY: May 6, 2024

The annual LSO, B'nai Brith and Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs virtual event will be held from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. For details and registration see <https://www.lso.ca/news-events/events/events-2024/holocaust-remembrance-day-program>

ASIAN and SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH: May 14, 2024

This annual LSO, Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers, the South Asian Bar Association of Toronto, and the Korean Canadian Lawyers Association will be held from 5:30 to 7:15 p.m. For details and registration see <https://www.lso.ca/news-events/events/events-2024/asian-and-south-asian-heritage-month-program>

IN MEMORIAM: ROY McMURTRY

A giant among us is gone at the age of 91. Those of us fortunate enough to have known Roy are aware of his outstanding range of contributions to our civil society affecting so many aspects of our lives. His brilliant mind, wonderful smile and hearty laugh will not be forgotten. To spend time with Roy always left you feeling better about yourself, somehow, even when you lost a court room argument before him.

Roy made an unparalleled range of positive political and judicial contributions affecting many aspects of our lives including his pivotal role in the establishment of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and reform of Ontario family law. I also recall a few of his many successful efforts including the creation and expansion of legal aid, legalization of same sex marriages, creation of the Ontario Law Reform Commission, the Osgoode Society for Legal History and Pro Bono Law Ontario.

Roy's many accomplishments were made possible through the tireless and good humoured contributions of his life time partner Ria, whom Roy invariably recognized when receiving the many public awards bestowed upon him. She too is sadly missed.

Everyone in Ontario and beyond is more fortunate today in our personal, legal and political lives than we would have been had Roy's work not preceded. May his and Ria's memories always be a blessing.

NEXT CONVOCATIONS:

May 23 and June 28 (Treasurer Election). Tune in to watch via webcast with the link provided that day on the LSO home page. <https://lso.ca/home>

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