



The County & District
Law Presidents' Association

L'Association Des Bâtonniers
De Comtés et Districts

Janet Whitehead, Chair

Cheryl Siran, Vice Chair

August 6th, 2013

Dear Presidents,

Now that summer has finally arrived, we hope everyone has been able to take some time away from the demands of the practice of law, to enjoy with friends and family. We wanted to provide an update of the work your CDLPA executive has been engaged in over the past couple of months.

Practice Resource Centers

As discussed at the May 2013 Plenary, the CDLPA Executive, through the work of the CDLPA Library Committee, is preparing our position to be used within the discussions with the Law Society of Upper Canada regarding what we see as the vision for the library system in Ontario going forward.

We understand that there may be some confusion and uncertainty about the essential elements of this position. We are taking this opportunity to provide our outline regarding the developing concept of "Practice Resource Centers" to ensure clarity and ease some of this confusion. **We specifically ask that you share this information with your Association Membership and your library staff.**

The core of our position is, and always has been, that adequate staffing, physical premises, and resources (including legal research materials) need to be maintained in each county. This is necessary to ensure that all lawyers across the province have access to adequate resources in order to properly service their clients, regardless of the size or location of the jurisdiction.

You will recall that we circulated a survey in April of this year regarding the services provided and resources available at each county library (including the TLA library) across the province. These survey results clearly supported our contention that county libraries provide far more value and support to the practicing bar than simply access to legal research materials. While there is some variation between individual jurisdictions regardless of classification, our existing libraries and staff simply provide far greater support and assistance than is understood by Law Society personnel, including staff and



benchers.

The work undertaken by the CDLPA Library Committee is focussing on three particular areas:

- Refining the concept of “practice resource centres”
- Developing minimum expectations with respect to staffing/resources/legal research materials (both paper and electronic) needed to support practicing lawyers
- Outline ways to improve standards and consistency.

The concept of the “Practice Resource Center” is being used to demonstrate a more inclusive picture of the totality of services provided by the employees in our libraries and the physical library space itself that is value to a practicing lawyer.

A Practice Resource Center means a physical space located within or in conjunction to a court house, staffed on a part-time or full-time basis, which provides lawyers inside or outside Toronto with access to a minimum of:

- paper and electronic research materials
- Research and/or other informational assistance by way of a staff person
- facilities for the conduct of CPD or other legal education activities
- Meeting space
- Access to office equipment including but not limited to computers, printers, fax machines and scanners
- Information facilities for news and accessing other available services
- Local association office and storage space

Practice Resource Centers are intended to be adjacent to, or in some cases may actually serve as, robing rooms and lawyers lounge facilities. They are also intended to house the collections of key resources necessary to support the competency of lawyers as they work on behalf of the public.

Most importantly, the Practice Resource Center requires appropriate staffing.

As this is a developing concept, we would appreciate any feedback from the local Associations through their Presidents’ and Regional Representatives as we work to refine our position.

- Are there other aspects, which need to be included within this concept?
- Are there other ways a practice centre can provide support to the practicing bar,



which have not been identified?

CPD Format

Over the past number of weeks, we have heard from a number of associations expressing concern about the Law Society's decision to discontinue providing its CPD material by DVD, and focus entirely on providing content by internet. Many library staff reporting past concerns with the reliability and strength of the internet access in their particular regions, and indicated an expectation that this change might detrimentally impact on the local association's ability to provide replays of CPD programming.

CDLPA raised this concern with the Law Society, and we are pleased to advise that we received a response this week from the Law Society confirming that they are investigating the possibility of providing MP4 files which the user could then download and save to any location on their computer or onto a USB. This would permit viewing without the necessity of internet service. Once the Law Society has completed testing of this format, and are ready to move forward with implementation, they will announce its availability.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Whitehead', written in a cursive style.

Janet Whitehead
CDLPA Chair

