



The County & District  
**Law Presidents' Association**

**L'Association Des Bâtonniers**  
De Comtés et Districts

**Janet M. Whitehead, Chair**

**Daniel J. Rosenkrantz, Vice Chair**

### **In The Trenches**

#### ***A summary of the February 2013 CDLPA Executive Meeting***

In February 2013 the Executive of the County and District Law Presidents' Association held a scheduled meeting in Toronto to deliberate on matters affecting our Membership.

Since that meeting we have focused our efforts on outreach and advocacy with local decision leaders throughout Ontario. Through January and February, our Chair travelled to six of the seven judicial regions to discuss the challenges we face as a profession with Benchers, Members of Provincial Parliament and local Law Associations. This travel is in support of our advocacy initiative and it is becoming more and more important that we continue this work, on your behalf, to promote and protect the viability of the profession and the resources we access in the administration of justice. By the end of March, CDLPA will have visited every judicial region and gained valuable perspective from our membership on your priority issues.

In addition to these activities, we wish to provide you with an overview of matters considered at our meeting and encourage you to share these details with your Association.

#### **UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair's commitment to the advocacy initiative continued through January and February, during which Janet participated in sixteen separate events with key decision makers in support of our local Law Associations. As of the end of February Janet, on behalf of our membership, has met with six MPPs (Attorney General John Gerretsen, Sylvia Jones, Bob Bailey, Jack MacLaren, Steve Clark, Rod Jackson), participated in four local Law Association Events (CCLA-ABCC, Sudbury, Peel and Toronto Lawyers Associations), met with three Benchers, contributed to two Law Society initiatives and met with Dave McKillop (Vice-President Legal Aid Ontario). Each of these activities provides a unique forum and opportunity to advance the interests of the CDLPA and offer our perspective on key matters to those responsible for decisions that affect the practising bar.

In addition, the CDLPA continues to offer its support and willingness to provide direct input toward the budgetary review process currently being undertaken by the Law Society. Through discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee, Janet continues to demonstrate our willingness to provide feedback or insight in to changes to funded program delivery.



## **MEMBERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM/ONTARIO LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The CDLPA's expression of concern regarding the transition between OLAP and MAP is contributing toward improvements in how the Law Society is communicating with lawyers on changes to service delivery and how our profession will access services from the provider going forward. Following our January meeting with representatives of the Law Society on this issue, anticipated changes were not being realized to the satisfaction of the Executive. As a result, the CDLPA formally expressed our concerns to Law Society CEO Robert Lapper and as importantly offered recommendations on how to better promote and communicate details of the Members Assistance Program with an emphasis on improving the accessibility of services. Resulting from that letter, we received the sincere assurance of the CEO that our concerns are being addressed. We continue to monitor the progress of these remediation efforts.

Throughout the process of transition, the CDLPA has focused on ensuring that appropriate services are available to our members should they experience personal or professional challenge or crisis. We have intentionally not 'picked sides' in the dispute between the Law Society and OLAP and expressed this position to both parties. The availability of immediate and ongoing support services is important to the CDLPA and to practising lawyers in Ontario and this remains our focus. We are encouraged by the commitment of the CEO to implement changes and continue to actively engage the Law Society on this matter.

### **ADVOCACY INITIATIVE UPDATE**

As noted in the update from the Chair, January and February were active and productive months for the CDLPA. The below chart reflects an overview of our outreach.

<b>ACTIVITY SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
01.09.13	Eastern	Queen's Park	Meeting with Attorney General
01.26.13	Eastern	Ottawa	CCLA-ABCC 125th Anniversary
01.28.13	South West	Queen's Park	Meeting with MPP Bob Bailey
01.28.13	Eastern	Queen's Park	Meeting with MPP Steve Clark
01.28.13	Eastern	Queen's Park	Meeting with MPP Jack MacLaren
02.05.13	South West	London	Meeting with Michael Lerner, Bencher
02.13.13	Central West	Orangeville	Meeting with MPP Sylvia Jones, MPP
02.20.13	Northeast	Sudbury	Meeting with Carol Hartman, Bencher
02.21.13	Northeast	Sudbury	Sudbury Law Association AGM
02.21.13	Northeast	Sudbury	Meeting with Jack Braithwaite, Bencher
02.21.13	Central West	Brampton	Peel Law Association AGM
02.22.13	Central East	Barrie	Meeting with MPP Rod Jackson
02.26.13	Toronto	Toronto	TLA Awards of Distinction
02.27.13	Toronto	Toronto	Law Society Event - Bencher Dinner
02.28.13	Toronto	Toronto	Law Society Event - Racialized Licensees Task Force



**Members of Provincial Parliament** – In meeting with MPPs, it is the goal and intent of the CDLPA to provide an overview of our organization and our priority issues to Members. As often as possible, we will align these priorities with a Member’s portfolio or area of interest to make our presentation more relevant. Additionally, we are seeking to connect local Law Association leadership with their MPP. In Orangeville and Barrie, we were fortunate to be joined by Presidents Carrie Bellan and Adam Little in our meetings – of which neither had previously had an opportunity to meet with their MPP. Establishing these connections will benefit both the CDLPA and the local Association in the future.

These meetings are also contributing to the process of creating template materials including meeting requests, remarks, and follow up materials for use by local Law Associations in the future. As Janet and Scott Lovell continue their meetings as part of the “supported tour” – we are improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our meetings.

**Benchers** – In meeting with Benchers, it is the goal and intent of the CDLPA to promote the interests and priorities of our membership on matters considered by the Law Society that affect us directly. This has most often resulted in discussions regarding County Law Libraries and their importance to the practising bar. It is clear from individual meetings and engagement with Benchers in larger forums that the CDLPA has a critical role to play in promoting the value of this resource to this audience.

**Law Associations** – We are grateful to the Associations that have invited and hosted us through 2013 at their AGMs. Being able to attend and address your membership helps us connect with the grassroots of our profession and meet the colleagues we represent. In our travel, we like to remind Associations how their strength gives CDLPA strength – that through collaboration and participation with each other, we truly represent the consensus voice of over 12,000 members of the practising bar. Your voice is the one we seek to amplify to those who are making decisions that affect the way we work.

## **LIBRARIES**

It is clear from our travel, outreach and the feedback of our membership that there are significant concerns over the future of Law Libraries in Ontario. We are challenged by the perception of some Benchers that the cost may outweigh the value of maintaining individual libraries in each county and district. Practicing lawyers are further facing the possibility of reductions in operating support affecting service levels within the library system and even uncertainty from leadership at LibraryCo. on how funding will be allocated in the coming years. The CDLPA will not accept uncertainty with respect to Libraries and we are actively developing a strategy to confront these challenges and improve the function and services offered in our local Libraries.



As Chair, Janet has been promoting the evolution of the Law Library toward a model that more accurately reflects the function of the space for lawyers. In our meetings with MPPs, Benchers and Law Associations we are beginning to advance the concept of transforming the traditional 'library' to a 'Practice Centre'. The Practice Centre concept builds on the actual use of space in most our courthouses, which now sees the traditional library being used as:

- *a business centre* - where lawyers using the courthouse have access to technical and practical support such as computers, fax machines, copiers, etc.
- *a conference centre* - where segments of the Bar meet to discuss legal issues.
- *a community centre* - which fosters communication, professionalism and collegiality among lawyers.
- *a learning centre* - where lawyers access/receive continuing legal education, and
- *a resource centre* - with access to the traditional features of a law library - the books and the research support.

This concept was discussed with the Attorney General during our January meeting and the AG has since written the Treasurer of the Law Society encouraging him to work with the CDLPA in exploring this evolution.

We will be providing more detail on how we are working to ensure the viability and sustained function of libraries throughout Ontario in the coming weeks.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

We continue to encourage our Presidents to share our Executive messages with their membership, and again invite your comments or feedback on the content. We commit ourselves to ensuring we are discussing and responding to the issues that affect members of the practicing bar, and improve our ability to do so with your input and support.

In addition to providing our message to Presidents and our members, we remain active on Twitter and can be followed at @cdlpa. Our intent through this medium, and through an improved public website, will be to better communicate our organization to the general public on the issues that affect our organization and profession.

We invite your comment and feedback on our submissions to Associations.

Wishing you all a safe and happy March Break!

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