Legal Information and Resource Network Update

The Shareholders of LibraryCo have engaged in a dialogue to consider how to effectively evolve the provision of legal information and library services for members of the Law Society.

Our perspective has been informed by our interest in maintaining and enhancing the competence of our members as critical to the public interest. Licensees require access to high quality information and services in order to serve their clients, and the Shareholders are keen to move forward with a plan to evolve the provision of these resources and to support the continued high quality provision of legal services.

With that in mind, a proposal for the Legal Information and Resource Network (LIRN) was presented to stakeholders for input in May 2017. We are grateful to all those who have provided their feedback.

Taking the input into account, the Shareholders returned to the discussion table and a revised development plan for the proposed LIRN model was considered. The shareholders know we must strike the right balance between moving our legal information and support services into the future while still maintaining value for our members and avoiding unnecessary disruption to the system of services and supports.

We continue to agree that some of the key objectives of any legal information and resource network for our members should:

- Fulfil the regulatory mandate to ensure that the public is served by lawyers and paralegals with high standards of learning and competence
- Support the ongoing professional development of licensees, with a specific emphasis on the use and application of legal information, legal research and legal training content and activities
- Establish a platform that provides access to information for all licensees
- Offer a supportive and robust range of services targeted to the needs of lawyer users.

In order to achieve these goals, the Shareholders have agreed that the governance of LIRN is critical to future success. A proposal has been put forward to establish a new board structure that includes independent board members who would be nominated to provide specified knowledge and skills that would best support the future decision-making of the LIRN. It is proposed that those individuals will be selected in accordance with a defined skills-matrix, recruited, interviewed and appointed by the Shareholders. It is also proposed that an external recruitment firm will be retained to assist the Shareholders with this work.

It is important to reiterate that under this proposal, the current shareholders arrangement would remain in place.

In this proposal, the first order of business for the new Board would be defining the skills and abilities of a new lead administrator, the Director of LIRN, and to recruit and hire for the position, once again with the assistance of an external recruitment firm.

The Shareholders have all agreed that it will not be necessary to seek changes to the employment relationships that currently exist as between the law associations across Ontario and their law library staff. The library staff will continue to be the employees of the law associations.

This proposal will be considered by the members of FOLA at the upcoming Plenary meeting scheduled for November 8 – 10 in Toronto; the Law Society at its meeting of Convocation on Nov. 2, 2017 and the next TLA meeting.