



FEDERATION OF ONTARIO
LAW ASSOCIATIONS

FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS
DU BARREAU DE L'ONTARIO

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Presidents and Association delegates,

Writing this report is one of my final acts as Chair of the Federation of Ontario Law Associations (FOLA). As I reflect on the past eighteen months, I am very proud of the work our Association continues to do on behalf of the lawyers from across Ontario.

When I was first approached to join the Executive as the East Region Representative in 2013, I did not anticipate the breadth and the complexity of the issues that our profession would face over the next five years. Fortunately, there are many lawyers who share my concern about the future of our profession including those I have had the privilege of working with at FOLA. Your attendance at Plenary over many days to discuss these issues highlights that the concern for the future is shared across the province.

In my tenure as chair, we have focused on stability of financing for FOLA. Through the support of you, our members, we were able to pass a modest increase in our dues that has translated into an ability to financially meet unexpected challenges. For example, while we did not predict that our Executive Director would resign in May, having further funds available allowed for a seamless and swift replacement process. The result was the hiring of Katie Robinette, who has proven her strength in political advocacy and social media from day one. While we were sorry to see Michael Ras leave us, the value of having fresh energy and new ideas injected into an Association such as FOLA is often underestimated.

Our Executive has continued to be extremely active in all areas of the practice. We are currently engaged in the following issues:

- A) Providing a response to the Federal Government's Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding Bill C-75 which restricts preliminary inquiries, eliminates jury preemptory challenges and modifies the admission of routine evidence.
- B) the examination by the LSO's Advertising and Fee Arrangements Issues Working Group of payments of fees and offering of benefits by title insurers to real estate lawyers and their staff
- C) Input sought by the Law Society of Ontario on its governance structure including the size of convocation, the ratios of lawyers to paralegals and changes to the sitting term of the Treasurer and Benchers;
- D) Providing submissions including a member survey on the critical debate around the future of our law licensing system including the debate on education and testing standards and experiential training;

In addition, FOLA continues to be active as issues arise involving Family Law, Real Estate, the role of Paralegals in the profession, and Legal Aid.

The future of the courthouse library system continues to be at the forefront of our organization. In November 2017, our members provided us with a mandate to move forward in the selection of a skill-based board and a managing director for LIRN, the Library and Information Resources Network. I am personally involved with Nathan Baker in the Selection Committee. FOLA understands how important this issue is to all of our members and will continue to work towards a new governance structure that will ensure courthouse libraries continue to meet the needs of our members into the future. Mike Winward has asked that I remain involved in LIRN while as past-chair. I appreciate the opportunity to see this initiative to its fruition.

On the organizational front, I want to thank Alfred Schorr who is retiring from the Executive after 8 years. In addition to his years as Central East Regional Representative, Alf has championed FOLA's position on the role of paralegals. His voice will be missed at our executive meetings.

We have also slightly restructured our Real Estate Committee. Given the increase in issues facing solicitors, Merredith MacLennan and Eldon Horner will become co-chairs of this committee. Eldon has also agreed to stay on as the Chinese Food Organizer.

I also wish to personally congratulate our former Family Law Chair, Sonia Jain on her appointment to the Superior Court of Justice. Justice Jain was appointed on September 29, 2018 and will be a valuable addition to the family court judiciary in Barrie.

In close, while I know it is trite and somewhat expected for me to thank our Executive and Kelly Lovell for all of their support; however, it is important to recognize the extraordinary level of support I received during my term. I believe I am the first female chair of this organization with a young family. As a result, there were many times when other executive members attended swearing in ceremonies, Law Society of Ontario events and other FOLA commitments on my behalf. I want to thank the entire Executive for all of their support but in particular, I want to thank Kelly Lovell and Mike Winward. Kelly's patience and organizational skills keeps our entire organization on track. Mike Winward's calm demeanor mixed with humour is often the perfect stress reliever. Mike was called upon more than most 1st Vice Chairs to step in and assist; far more than I was asked to do by Eldon Horner.

I have no doubt that with Mike at the helm, and Bill Woodward and the dedicated FOLA Executive to assist, FOLA is in very solid hands into the future.

Jaye Hooper
FOLA Chair