

December 22, 2020

Regional Bencher Mr. Andrew Spurgeon

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Mr. Michael Lesage

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Mr. Jorge Pineda

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Dear Sirs,

RE: LIRN Budget Cuts

I am the Regional Representative for Central South with the Federation of Law Associations of Ontario. I along with my colleagues, the Presidents of the Law Associations in Central South wish to express our deep concern over budget cuts to our libraries. It is important to understand that Law libraries are a critical resource which supports our members in private practice. In order for the population in our region to have real access to justice quality legal services must be provided at all times. Our members are able to provide those services in part, because we continue to have the resources of our Law Associations as a foundation of our continued learning. This learning is partly due to the books and computer services available in our library. However, the library itself is also a gathering place for colleagues where we learn best practices from one another which allow us to practice at the highest possible standards.

In our view our local Law Associations are a pillar of access to justice for the public. It should be noted that in Central South there are no law schools. The Law Associations libraries are often time the only such library available to our members.

Unfortunately, for many years the cost of running the library, including subscriptions and staffing costs have been rising at a rate far greater than inflation. For the last many years increases to our library grants have not even kept pace with the inflationary pressures on our associations. Our members have been struggling to keep up with this shortfall year over year. Now our associations are faced with an additional cut to the

budget which will impact the quality of services available. It is likely that all of our associations will either have to reduce subscriptions or staffing, or both. We recognize that in other regions, such as Toronto, there are a variety of libraries available to obtain legal resources. However, in Central South that is not possible. As a result, these cuts disproportionately affect the Law Associations in Central South and thus will disproportionately disadvantage our citizens. The Law Society should remember at all times that the most visible manifestation of the Law Society in our region is in fact the law libraries and all of the education that comes from these associations. It is the role of the Law Society to mandate competency levels for lawyers and paralegals alike. However, with those rules must come opportunities to ensure that lawyers are kept as up to date on the law and the application of ethical rules as possible. The associations take on this role for the public good. Careful consideration needs to be given to increased funding for association not cuts based on a formula which does not recognize the unique predicament of lawyers practicing in Central South.

It is hoped, that going forward the Law Society will provide renewed and increased funding to the LIRN to allow for assistance to Law Association libraries in keeping with the stated objective of increased lawyer/paralegal competency and access to justice.

It is further requested that the LSO staff and LIRN create a three year plan regarding library funding, ensuring that any additional changes to the library granting system be considered and circulated for consultation well in advance of the applicable year end. It is submitted that the last-minute announcement regarding the changes to grants created an unnecessary sense of crisis between the County Associations and the LSO, eroding the trust of the engaged members of Ontario Law Associations. It may be observed that there was no precipitating event that necessitated the last-minute nature of the announcement, particularly against the backdrop of the policy development being undertaken by LIRN.

Your immediate attention to this matter is appreciated.

Yours very truly,


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20201222 - LIRN Budget Cuts

Final Audit Report

2021-01-12

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Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA4fxhUO8I8XaF20R2KZKVvwPACGo3gkUy

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