



February 10, 2021

2020-2021
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Dear Benchers:

I am writing you directly on behalf of the Central West region to express our dismay in relation to the announced approved cuts of grants to our county and law associations for the year 2021.

The principles and the foundation of the law libraries stem from the concept dating back to 1832 where Convocation demonstrated a great interest in building a library that members of the profession could use.

Since then, law libraries have always been information-based and information-intensive. They continue to play a unique and fundamental role in forming our legal system's quality at all levels by virtue of their unique collection and services. It would be an understatement to say that our libraries are a part of the process from the very start, as it provides a serene environment for research, study, and intellectual engagement.

Furthermore, law libraries are designed to assist lawyers, judges, and anyone else who wishes to determine the state of the law. Moreover, it can be classified as a type of unique library because of its focus on providing specialized resources on the law and their specialized and limited user base. Additionally, it is not unusual to see members of the Judiciary consult and require legal resources that are not available to them in their judicial library from ours.

The recently announced vote to cut the Legal Information and Resource Network (LIRN) budget by 10% at the November Convocation is disappointing, without merit,



it cannot be viewed as the least intrusive mechanism and with the least adverse effect on libraries. Furthermore, the lack of empirical data and consultation on this issue with stakeholders is arbitrary.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has had severe financial effects on the Law Society of Ontario and the challenging task given the unprecedented uncertainty and the massive fiscal shock from the pandemic. Despite that, we cannot support cuts to our law libraries, turn a blind eye to this critical topic given the importance of law libraries, librarians, their resources and collections to the practicing bar, and their role in our justice system for over a century.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed budget increase of 2% per annum; despite those increases, it is our understanding that Libraries across the province have struggled to maintain their subscriptions and ultimately cancel many loose-leaf titles that members had been relied upon by many lawyers for their research needs. The decrease in funding coupled with the rise in subscription cost will ultimately have an adverse effect on our library system. Our region predominately is comprised of sole practitioners and small firms. Our associations have a grave concern regarding these cuts given our members rely heavily on their libraries and the resources available to them; thus, each association plays a critical role in maintaining up to date and adequate material for our members.

We hope that all benchers seriously contemplate the reinstatement of the pre-2021 budget in the upcoming budget discussions and support an additional grant funding towards the increase in publication costs. Doing so would allow our libraries to continue offering based on the same principle of ensuring our libraries are at the forefront of affording up-to-date legal information to all lawyers across the province.

Sincerely,

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cc: Law Society of Ontario Treasurer and All Benchers of the Law Society of Ontario
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Brenda Albuquerque-Boutilier, CFO
Sheena Weir, Executive Director, External Relations and Communications