

CHAIR'S REPORT FOR PLENARY - NOV 2019

The six months between May and November have been busy for FOLA. Within these months, we have made a number of submissions to both the Law Society and the Ontario Government. Those submissions include:

- A response to the LSO's Access to Justice Committee.
- A response to the LSO's Proposed Amendments to the Conflict of Interest Rules for Legal Aid Ontario.
- A response to the LSO's Call for Comment Regarding Proposed Rule Amendments for the Definition of "Lending Client" in the Rules of Professional Conduct.
- A submission to the Ministry of the Attorney General relative to its review of Family Legislation Regulation and Processes.
- A submission to the LSO in response to Bill C75 and paralegal practice in criminal law.
- A submission regarding the review of the *Legal Aid Services Act*.
- A submission to the Ministry of Finance relative to proposed changes to Automobile Insurance.

The past six months have also seen significant effort, lead by Jaye Hooper and Nathan Baker, on finalizing the transition of law libraries from LibraryCo to LIRN Inc. There has been a tremendous amount of time and effort dedicated to this transition, which will hopefully come to conclusion at Plenary.

In June, the FOLA Executive traveled to Picton for its strategic planning meeting. This was an extremely effective process as we enlisted the services of past Chair Janet Whitehead to act as facilitator. At the end of the process, we identified six priorities:

1. Completion of the transition of the library system from LibraryCo to LIRN.
2. Development of content for FOLA communications.
3. Development of a plan for dissemination of information to members through FOLA communications.
4. Developing better education and relationship building with Law Society Benchers.
5. Developing a plan and strategy to engage with MPP's and bureaucrats.
6. Development of succession planning and recruitment strategies.

Over the course of the summer, Justice David Brown of the Ontario Court of Appeal reached out to past Chair Jaye Hooper about partnering with FOLA to conduct a series of appellate advocacy programs in various locations throughout the province. This was an exceptionally generous offer on the part of Justice Brown as he is prepared to conduct six or seven sessions throughout the province in 2020. The plan is that each session would be three to four hours in length with a target audience of 30 to 40 preferably younger members of the bar. The program will be directed at civil and family law appellate advocacy with Justice Brown to run the program and provide all materials. For the first half of 2020, we are looking at programs in Ottawa, Hamilton and London. Depending on Justice Brown's sittings schedule for the second half of 2020, we are likely looking at Kingston, Thunder Bay and Sudbury with a potential extra session in the greater GTA. This is a wonderful opportunity for lawyers to get an appellate judge's perspective as to the do's and don'ts in appeal before the Court of Appeal.

In January, I participated in a meeting with Chief Justice George Strathy, then Attorney General Caroline Mulroney and numerous other stakeholders in the justice system. The goal of the meeting was to discuss ideas on how to improve Ontario's justice system. There were a number of very interesting ideas put forward at that meeting, which unfortunately seemed to get off the rails after cuts were announced to LAO. In June, I spoke with Chief Justice Strathy about potentially trying to reconstitute this group with the new Attorney General Doug Downie and breathe some life back into the discussions that had been commenced in January. I arranged a conference call in October with the various participants and it is my intention to do whatever I can to keep this initiative moving forward. The original idea was to engage in further and broader consultations with the legal community to try to come up with ideas to improve Ontario's justice system. Since the original meeting at the end of January, the Ontario government significantly reduced Legal Aid funding, which took all justice stakeholders by surprise. As we try to come to terms with that reduction in funding, it is my intention to continue to work with legal stakeholders, the Attorney General's office and Chief Justice Strathy's office to try to identify means by which our justice system can be improved.

Since the May Plenary, it has been my pleasure to participate in the following Association events:

- The Hamilton Law Association's strategic planning meeting in May.
- The Temiskaming Law Association's 100th Anniversary celebration in May.
- The Opening of Courts in Ottawa and the re-opening of the CCLA Law Library in May.
- The Frontenac Law Association Annual Conference in September.

It is always my pleasure to attend at Association events. If invited, and if my schedule allows, I would be happy to participate in further events across the province.

I would like to express my appreciation to the FOLA executive members for all of their support, dedication and hard work. FOLA is a volunteer board and given the size of this province and the time it takes to get to executive meetings, I am extremely grateful to the dedication the board members have demonstrated in their commitment to serve the practicing lawyers of Ontario. I would particularly like to thank our Executive Director, Katie Robinette, and Executive Assistant, Kelly Lovell, for their energy, enthusiasm and hard work in making FOLA the success that it is. Lastly, I would like to express my thanks, and the thanks of the FOLA executive, to our former Family Law Chair, Valerie Brown, who was appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice, sitting in Owen Sound, in October. Valerie's submissions on family law issues and her passion for family law will be greatly missed. I look forward to having Sam Misheal on as our new Family Law Chair.

Mike Winward,
FOLA Chair