



Statement

Clarifications Regarding FullStop Campaign Statements on Courthouse Libraries

For immediate release: March 15, 2023

The following statement may be attributed to the board of directors of the Federation of Ontario Law Associations (FOLA):

“Funding for county and district law libraries is an issue at the forefront of the 2023 bench election campaign. This underscores the importance of these vital practice resources to the legal profession.

It also underscores the need to elect benchers that recognize that funding for courthouse libraries is central to the mandate of the Law Society of Ontario to ensure its licensees meet high standards of competency and professional conduct and to facilitate access to legal services for people across Ontario.

Recently, our board was alerted to some concerning statements in campaign literature from the FullStop slate, including commentary which impacts FOLA’s advocacy in support of sustainable library funding. On March 8, a FullStop campaign email and [website post](#) made the following statements:

- That members of the FullStop slate had brought forward a motion at Convocation in October to freeze annual fees at the 2022 level;
- That no member of the FullStop slate has proposed that library funding be “offloaded” to the Law Foundation of Ontario;
- That members of the FullStop slate brought forward a motion in 2022 to “find efficiencies” in the Law Society’s budget;
- That the physical closure of law libraries during the pandemic justified budget cuts; and
- That the 2023 budget for law libraries was passed with FullStop’s support.

Some of these statements have been repeated in [communications](#) from members of the FullStop slate to their local law associations, including in correspondence that has been critical of FOLA.

Respectfully, these statements – which FullStop represents as factual – are misleading or incomplete. They are also misrepresentative of the record of some FullStop benchers and leadership figures on these very issues. The *actual* facts are as follows:

- The FullStop incumbents have repeatedly voted in favour of blanket, unspecified cuts to the Law Society budget. While all licensees would prefer lower annual fees (including members

of our board), without specifying where savings are to be found, the reality is that external cost centres like courthouse libraries are going to be among the first cuts. These motions by the FullStop incumbents were brought forward in [September 2020](#) (p. 4), [October 2021](#) (p. 4), and [October 2022](#) (p. 3).

- FullStop incumbents have voted against or abstained from voting on Law Society funding for LiRN (which is the corporation that funds courthouse libraries). Members of the FullStop slate did so in [November 2020](#) (p. 9) and [October 2021](#) (p. 6).
- FullStop incumbents have advocated for the Law Foundation to fund courthouse libraries. This is [not a realistic or sustainable funding source](#) for courthouse libraries. It is also not a funding source within the control of the Law Society, effectively placing the fate of libraries in the hands of third parties. Despite this, in [November 2021](#), 14 FullStop members voted in favour of a motion calling on the Law Foundation to fund “the establishment, maintenance, and operation of law libraries in Ontario.”
- Contrary to the statements in their March 8, 2023 campaign materials, FullStop incumbents did not bring forward a motion in the 2023 budget process to “find efficiencies” at the Law Society. [The motion](#) (p. 3) was directed at reducing projected annual fees, without specifying where savings or “efficiencies” could be found.
- While the FullStop campaign claims that the 2023 LiRN budget passed with unanimous bench support, that vote was immediately preceded by [the FullStop motion](#) (p. 3) to keep fees at their 2022 levels. With current inflationary pressures, this was effectively a cut which would, again, likely be taken out on library budgets. Some FullStop benchers were asked by FOLA, in advance of this meeting, to amend their motion to protect LiRN funding from any necessary cuts. They declined to do so. For this reason, it is misleading to suggest that the 2022 budget process reflects robust or “unanimous” support for library funding.

FOLA’s board felt strongly about offering these clarifications as part of our effort to ensure that full and accurate information is available to voters in this election process. We encourage all candidates and campaign teams to focus on the important issues facing our profession in a manner consistent with their professional duties of candour and good faith.

FOLA continues to collect responses to a survey of all bench candidate on the priority issues of Legal Aid and courthouse library funding, and we encourage all candidates to share their views on these issues through that process. We are committed to publishing all responses we receive. We encourage all law association members to inform themselves of the issues and to vote in the election between April 19 and 28.”

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