



2020-2021  
EXECUTIVE

December 17, 2020

Dear Treasurer Donnelly and all Benchers

We are writing to you today to express our concerns regarding the Law Society of Ontario's recent cuts to our law libraries.

As you are no doubt aware, it is the regulatory mandate of the Law Society to ensure that the public is served by lawyers and paralegals with high standards of learning and competence. We question how cutting law library budgets -and thus access to resources - will accomplish this goal.

Our law libraries play a critical role in upholding lawyer competence as well as facilitating mentorship opportunities for younger or new members of the profession. Law librarians and library staff and the collections in the law libraries throughout the province enable legal professionals to access the resources required to do their job.

It was therefore with great shock that we learned that the Law Society of Ontario voted to cut the Legal Information and Resource Network (LIRN) budget by 10% at your November Convocation. The lack of consultation on this issue was of great concern.

While our members understand that we all must 'tighten our belts' in the face of COVID-19, we cannot support cuts to our law libraries - critical institutions which are already underfunded.

Legal research is of fundamental importance to the practice of law in Ontario. The common law demands that lawyers and self-represented litigants understand the law. This is the premise on which the entire legal system rests. It is essential that lawyers have access to legal research materials in order to adequately inform the Court of the development of the common law when arguing their case. We cannot forget that this obligation is an ethical and professional requirement of legal professionals as Officers of the Court.

Meanwhile, legal texts and databases are very expensive, and their proper navigation is critical to ensuring the identification of relevant law. The public, sole practitioners, and professionals from smaller and medium sized law firms often do not have the resources to support this required bank of knowledge. This is even true for the Judiciary. Members of the Judiciary consult the material in the law library that is not otherwise available to them in their offices or through the Judicial library, including rare books. This is where our law libraries step in.

Our Ontario county and district law librarians and library staff have been providing both the resources and the expertise in the use of those resources to the full range of justice system participants for over 140 years.

William Woodward, Chair

Michael Winward, Past  
Chair

Jane Robertson, Treasurer

Corey Wall, Central East  
Region Chair

Allen Wynperle, Central  
South Region Chair

Sam Misheal, Central West  
Region Chair & Family Law  
Chair

Ted Mann  
East Region Chair

Gordon Prisco, Northeast  
Region Chair

Douglas Judson, Northwest  
Region Chair

Terry Brandon, Southwest  
Region Chair

Anna Wong, Toronto  
Lawyers Association  
Representative

Nathan Baker, FOLA LIRN  
Chair

Eldon Horner, Real Estate  
Co-Chair

Merredith MacLennan,  
Real Estate Co-Chair

Katie Robinette, Executive  
Director

Kelly Lovell, Executive  
Assistant

*Corporate Mailing Address:*

731 9<sup>th</sup> Street West, Owen Sound, ON N4K 3P5

Phone: (519) 270-4001

[www.foia.ca](http://www.foia.ca)

[@ont\\_law\\_assoc](https://twitter.com/ont_law_assoc)



Our members tell us that their law libraries are essential and critical to their practice and we trust that the Law Society of Ontario takes this into serious consideration given its obligation to ensure competency in the profession. Well stocked, staffed, and funded courthouse libraries enable all legal professionals to carry out the research required of them on behalf of their clients and under their obligations under the Rules of Professional Conduct.

It is imperative that each of you understands and supports the work that our associations do for the benefit of our members, and that your work towards the 2022 budget will increase, not decrease, LIRN's funding in recognition of annual increases of collection costs. We are happy to educate you as to our libraries' role in fulfilling the mandate of the LSO and their value to the profession and our vital need for our funding to be increased.

We look forward to hearing from you as to how we can help to ensure that this happens.

Signed

William Woodward, FOLA Chair

Nathan Baker, LIRN Chair

Michael Winward, Past Chair

Jane Robertson, Treasurer

Ted Mann, East Region Representative

Corey Wall, Central East Region Representative

Allen Wynperle, Central South Region Representative

Samuel Misheal, Central West Region Representative and Family Law Chair

Douglas Judson, Northwest Region Representative

Gordon Prisco, Northeast Region Representative

Terry Brandon, Southwest Region Representative and Legal Aid Chair

Anna Wong, Toronto Lawyers Association Rep

Merredith MacLennan, Real Estate Co-Chair

Eldon Horner, Real Estate Co-Chair

cc: Diana Miles, CEO

Sheena Weir, Executive Director, External Relations and Communications

Brenda Albuquerque-Boutilier, Executive Director, Finance and Chief Financial Officer