



Media Release

For immediate release: March 7, 2023

Toronto, ON – Today the Federation of Ontario Law Associations ([FOLA](#)) held its annual Queen’s Park lobby day. Approximately 50 practicing lawyers from every region in the province took part in this virtual event, spending the day meeting with government and opposition MPPs and ministerial staff.

On the agenda were a wide variety of justice issues, including Legal Aid, family law, courthouse issues and modernization, criminal law, real estate law, and more. In addition to minister’s staff, participants heard from Attorney General Doug Downey, MPP (Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte), the NDP critic for the Attorney General, Kristyn Wong-Tam, MPP (Toronto Centre), the Parliamentary Assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, Todd McCarthy, MPP (Durham) and the Minister for Francophone Affairs, Caroline Mulroney, MPP (York-Simcoe). Approximately 30 participants were also able to arrange for about 20 one-on-one meetings with their individual MPPs today.

You can learn more about our lobby day [here](#).

Quotes from Roundtable Session Leaders on Key Issues from Lobby Day

The following quotes can be attributed as indicated:

Courthouse Issues & Modernization – Douglas Judson, FOLA’s Chair, who practices in Fort Frances:

“Due in large part to the pandemic, Ontario’s courts have adopted new online tools and solution that have benefited our justice system. That progress must be celebrated and accelerated. One growing pain we are now faced with is that different courts, jurisdictions, and judges are using these technologies differently, but access to justice requires standardization. Today FOLA called on the Attorney General to help push the adoption of some universal standards for technology use in different types of court sittings and processes.”

Legal Aid – Terry Brandon, FOLA’s Legal Aid Committee Chair, who practices criminal Law in Sarnia:

“FOLA reiterated its request from our recent budget submission that the province increase legal aid funding from \$350 million to \$480 million annually. Support is desperately needed for legal services that contribute to Ontario’s commitment to equality, fairness, and overall access to

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731 9th Street West,
Owen Sound, ON
N4K 3P5

(519) 270-4001

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justice. Legal Aid Ontario is not sustainable on the present trajectory. The fact that we are asking for the government to match funding at the 2014 budget clearly demonstrates how poorly funded the system is at present, especially when you account for inflation over the past decade. We are approaching a point where it is not going to be viable for lawyers to practice at Legal Aid's rates, which is going to worsen the access to justice crisis in Ontario for low-income and marginalized people."

Criminal Law/Bail Reforms – Terry Brandon, FOLA's Legal Aid Committee Chair, who practices criminal law in Sarnia::

"As Ontario considers reforms to our bail system, FOLA has reminded the government that bail procedures are codified in federal legislation. The bar has spoken with one voice to underscore the presumption of innocence in our criminal justice system and the *Charter* right to reasonable bail."

Real Estate Law – Mark Giavedoni, FOLA's Real Estate Committee Chair, who practices in Hamilton:

"Today FOLA reminded the government that delays in the justice system aren't confined to trials. Anyone who has entered into a real estate transaction over the past few years knows this all too well. With the government placing huge importance on affordable housing and commercial development in recent years, FOLA is calling on the government to commit to investing its revenues collected from sources such as Land Transfer Taxes back into the system to help staff and support the infrastructure necessary to provide these services to the public. This can help speed up processing, accuracy in the system and avoid undue and costly delays."

Family Law – Laura Oliver, FOLA's Family Law Committee Co-Chair, who practices in Oakville:

"Today FOLA again pressed the government to continue the expansion of the Dispute Resolution Officer Program throughout the province and speed up the expansion of the Unified Family Court. Family law matters take up a significant amount of court time and use a great deal of the available judicial resources. The DRO program, which allows senior family law practitioners to hold conferences and ensure files are ready for judicial intervention, represent a tremendous untapped resource for jurisdictions that do not yet have use of the program."

Family Law – Logan Rathbone, FOLA's Family Law Committee Co-Chair, who practices in Milton:

"The unified family court allows for specialist judges to deal with family law matters under the case management approach provided for in the family law rules. This approach allows judges to deal with matters on a continuum rather than on a 'one off' basis."

FOLA representatives in these areas would be happy to speak with members of the media to discuss the issues and practice area concerns noted above. To arrange a call, please contact Katie at katie.robinette@fola.ca and specify which topic you would like to discuss to ensure your request is appropriately directed.

[About FOLA](#)

FOLA is a non-profit organization that represents Ontario's 46 county and district law associations, and through them, their members. FOLA represents approximately 12,000 practicing lawyers from all regions of the province. These lawyers are on the front lines of Ontario's justice system, serving the public primarily through sole practices and small firms.

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Contact:

Katie Robinette
Executive Director
647-280-9340
katie.robinette@fola.ca

