

MOTION (AMENDED – FINAL VERSION)

WHEREAS the Law Society of Ontario [**“Law Society”**] has duties to the public under the *Law Society Act*, including a duty “to act so as to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario”;

AND WHEREAS several regions and communities in Ontario are experiencing a long-standing “greying of the bar” and struggling to attract and retain licensing candidates and new lawyers to join or start practices, leaving under-served populations as lawyers retire or leave practice;

AND WHEREAS many communities in Ontario are experiencing a shortage of lawyers in key areas of private practice, particularly areas of law for which Legal Aid Ontario issues certificates;

AND WHEREAS Ontario’s rural and northern communities, in particular, are struggling to attract and retain junior lawyers and licensing candidates;

AND WHEREAS despite advancements in communications technology, access to justice continues to require access to locally-based lawyers and face-to-face interaction with clients, particularly to assist persons from low-income, vulnerable, and marginalized communities;

AND WHEREAS the Law Society is currently in the process of developing policy on requirements for succession planning for sole practitioners and small firms;

AND WHEREAS the Law Society’s recent Competence Task Force received feedback from the bar on the need to improve mentorship in the profession, as an element of competency;

AND WHEREAS the Law Society currently maintains uniform licensing program fees and annual fees that are not adjusted for market needs, the economics of different practice environments, or to encourage lawyers to practice in under-served communities or areas of law;

NOW THEREFORE the members hereby direct:

1. That the Law Society shall develop and implement financial and non-financial strategies and incentives for the purpose of encouraging lawyer and paralegal licensing candidates and recently-called lawyers and recently-licensed paralegals to locate their practices in under-served communities;
2. That the strategies and incentives to be developed may include any or all of preferential licensing program fees or rebates, preferred rates for annual fees, and small firm and sole practitioner succession planning supports;
3. That the strategies and incentives under consideration shall be brought to Convocation for decision;
4. That the Law Society shall consult closely with county and district law associations, paralegal associations, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, Ontario’s paralegal college program coordinators, and Ontario’s law school deans in relation to this motion.

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