

# FOLA launches LSO bencher election website

**By AdvocateDaily.com Staff**

Solicitors should consider running in the Law Society of Ontario's upcoming bencher elections, says Michael Winward, chair of [The Federation of Ontario Law Associations \(FOLA\)](#).

"Historically, the solicitor side of the profession is under-represented at Convocation," Winward, partner with Hamilton law firm [Mackesy Smye LLP](#), tells AdvocateDaily.com.

He says the high proportion of sole practitioners doing solicitor's work could explain why so few put their names forward.

"The time commitment is certainly significant, and it may be that they view it as too onerous in addition to their own work, but it is unfortunate, and I would love to see more solicitors going for it," Winward says.

To support those members who do decide to take the plunge, FOLA has created a special Bencher Elections resource page, complete with all the key dates, nomination forms, and LSO resources they need in order to get a campaign up and running.

In addition, the site includes tips and comments from both a current and former bencher to give prospective candidates a better sense of what the job entails.

Winward says the site will be updated frequently, and FOLA is open to suggestions from others who have either campaigned and lost or are currently benchers.

Whether or not they actually decide to run, FOLA members are encouraged to fully engage with the campaign, according to Winward.

That includes researching candidates, and questioning them before voting in the February 2019 election, which will return benchers to Convocation for a four-year term expiring in 2023, he adds.

"Lawyers who are going to vote ought to put their minds to the issues that are most important to them, and then reach out to candidates to put their feet to the fire," Winward says. "We are entering a new decade, and the profession is changing very rapidly, both in terms of the increasing number of lawyers and the pace of technology development.

"It's a good time for lawyers to reflect on the direction the profession is heading and how they think the regulator should be supporting them," he adds.

Although FOLA does not officially endorse candidates, Winward says its benchner election website will be updated with information about the association's priorities. Prospective benchers will also be invited to make a pitch to members, and comment on how their platforms match up with FOLA's aims.