



MINUTES

Benchers

Date:	Thursday, September 4, 2025	
Time:	1:00 pm	
Location:	Elkhorn Resort, Clear Lake, Manitoba and via Videoconference	
Present:	Kyle Dear, President Ken Mandzuik, KC, Vice-President Gerri Wiebe, KC, Past President Carmen Nedohin, Officer-at-Large Kassy Baker Kathrine Basarab Serena Ehrmantraut Patrick Fortier Jason Gisser Nicole Hamilton Sharyne Hamm Simon Jack	Teresa Jaenen Tehani Jainarine Dr. Richard Jochelson Timothy Kurbis Mathieu Lafrenière Rhea Majewski Penny Piper Trent Sholdice Leah Unruh Joshua Weinstein Deanna Wilson
Regrets:	Kalanit Faingold	Gordon Daman
Guests:	Erin Wilcott	
Staff:	Leah Kosokowsky Rennie Stonyk Sandra Alleyne Noelia Bernardo Pat Bourbonnais Tana Christianson Eileen Derksen	Christopher Donaldson Linda Fontaine Joan Holmstrom Deirdre O'Reilly Sean Rivera Alissa Schacter Simon Young

1.0 PRESIDENT'S WELCOME AND TREATY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ms Dear, President, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. Benchers, guests and staff were welcomed to the meeting, including newly elected benchers, Jason Gisser and Nicole Hamilton. Treaty 2 lands were acknowledged with gratitude.

2.0 IN MEMORIAM

Benchers observed a moment of silence for Morris Harvey Smeltz, KC, James McLaren Halley, KC, and Walter Thiessen.

3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

3.1 Minutes of June 26, 2025 Meeting

Benchers considered the minutes of the June 26, 2025 bencher meeting.

3.2 Report of the Complaints Investigation Committee

Benchers received for information the report of the Complaints Investigation Committee dated August 26, 2025.

Motion: That the consent agenda items be approved as presented.

MOVED: Mr. Lafrenière
Seconded: Ms Hamm
Carried unanimously.

4.0 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

4.1 President's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Dear's report dated August 25, 2025. Ms Dear advised that in the coming months benchers will receive a benchers survey for their completion. While these surveys have traditionally been conducted bi-annually, consideration will be given to conducting the surveys on an annual basis as recommended earlier in the day by the facilitator of the benchers workshop on board governance.

4.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's report dated August 25, 2025. Ms. Kosokowsky advised that the Law Society of Alberta has now disbarred two of its members for their involvement in the retention of a private investigating firm in 2021 to surveil Manitoba's Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench while he was presiding over a case in which they acted as counsel. Benchers were reminded that the two lawyers had been banned from practising in Manitoba by a Law Society hearing panel in 2023.

4.3 2025-2028 Activity Plan Update

Ms Schacter provided an oral update on recent activities which have taken place since the June benchers meeting in the areas of competence, access to justice, and stakeholder confidence.

5.0 DISCUSSION/DECISION

5.1 Governance Policies

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Kosokowsky, dated August 25, 2025, which recommended amending the Governance Policies to align with the new Purpose statement and Ends contained within the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan.

Motion: That the Mission statement and Ends contained within the Governance Policies be amended to reflect the Purpose and Ends articulated within the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan.

MOVED: Mr. Kurbis
Seconded: Ms Hamilton
Carried unanimously.

6.0 MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

6.1 Rule of Law – Public Education Campaign

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Kosokowsky, dated August 25, 2025, which provided an update on the status of the Rule of Law Campaign. Benchers were advised that Navigator, the communications specialists delivering the campaign, has set September 15, 2025 as the deadline for each participating jurisdiction to confirm their financial support for Phase II of the campaign. This will dictate the amount spent on media rollout across the country. It is hoped that each jurisdiction will be in a position to confirm their financial commitment within that timeframe.

Benchers requested that a brief summary of the campaign be made available for their information prior to rollout in the event they receive questions from members about the campaign and how it is being financed.

6.2 Access to Justice Initiative – Phase I Update

Benchers received for information Ms Kalinowsky's report on Phase I of the Access to Justice Initiative which provided an analysis of the information which had been gathered to date flowing from consultations with 17 key stakeholders. Feedback will now be sought from those same stakeholders to: (a) affirm that the information contained within the report accurately reflects the access challenges articulated by each stakeholder; and, (b) confirm their support for the collective strategy which has been formulated to move this initiative forward. Benchers were advised that consultations with Indigenous communities, which had been postponed due to the ongoing wildfire evacuations, remains a priority moving forward.

6.3 Western Canada Competency Profile – Implementation Project

Benchers received for information a memorandum prepared by Ms Stonyk, dated August 27, 2025, which provided an update on the development of the Western Canada Competency Profile. Benchers were advised that the participating jurisdictions (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) have now: (a) endorsed the development of universal articling forms with jurisdiction-specific tweaks to support consistent practices; and (b) approved the development of training resources which will aid principals in assessing the competencies that all students will be required to meet under the new competency profile.

The Society's Admissions and Education Committee will be tasked with reviewing and providing feedback on the forms and resources which are being drafted by the WCCP steering committee. Benchers were advised that the steering committee has had preliminary discussions about potential alternatives or changes to the articling process to address existing challenges. Each law society will be invited to seek input and direction from its respective committee once the steering committee has developed specific recommendations for law societies to consider. It was confirmed that no changes to the existing articling processes would be made without consultation with students, law firms, and other relevant stakeholders and organizations involved in the employment or supervision of articling students.

6.4 Pension Plan Valuation

Benchers received for information a memorandum prepared by Ms Kosokowsky, dated August 26, 2025, which reported on the results of the recent actuarial valuation conducted on the Amended Staff Pension Plan for the period ending December 31, 2024. Benchers were advised that the valuation confirmed that the plan remains solvent and that no additional funding is required at this time. The next valuation will take place following the period ending December 31, 2027.

6.5 CPLED Report – August 2025

Benchers received for information a memorandum prepared by Ms Worthington, CEO of the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education, dated August 25, 2025, which reported on the results of the August 2025 Capstone Evaluations.

7.0 MONITORING REPORTS

7.1 Admissions and Membership Department

Benchers considered a monitoring report prepared by Ms Stonyk, dated August 27, 2025, which provided a detailed report on operations within the Admissions and Membership Department.

It was noted that demographics statistics show a notable increase in diversity within the profession, with the exception of growth among Indigenous lawyers. However, recent efforts made by the Society and the Faculty of Law to encourage members of Indigenous communities to pursue an education and career in law will not be reflected in the data for at least another five years. In addition to targeted outreach efforts to high school students in rural and northern communities, staff are now working with the Manitoba Indigenous Law Students Association to identify the barriers faced by Indigenous students and young practitioners which the Society may be in a position to address. Dean Jochelson advised that the Faculty of Law has been working for several years to implement enhanced supports and services for Indigenous students in an effort to improve recruitment and retention. This has resulted in an increase in enrolment from 13% in 2022 to 17% in 2024 and 16% in 2025. The Law Society will begin to see the long-term results of those efforts in the coming years.

Benchers were advised that the Society remains non-compliant with the language proficiency testing requirements contained within the *Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* as certain of these requirements do not align with the testing standards of the National Committee on Accreditation. At a recent meeting with staff of the Fair Registrations Practices Office, Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Stonyk were advised that no action would be taken at this time unless the NCA modifies its language testing standards in a manner that is unacceptable to the FRPO.

7.2 Statements of Operations – April 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025

Benchers considered a monitoring report prepared by Ms Alleyne, dated August 15, 2025, which provided a detailed analysis of the Society's financial operations for the fiscal period ending June 30, 2025.

7.3 Investment Compliance – June 30, 2025

Benchers considered a monitoring report prepared by Ms Alleyne, dated August 15, 2025, which provided a detailed report on investment performance in both the Reserve Fund and the Staff Pension Plan and confirmed that investments in both funds remained in compliance with investment guidelines as at June 30, 2025.

8.0 FOR INFORMATION

Benchers considered the materials provided for information.

There being no further business, Ms Dear adjourned the meeting at 3:15 pm.