

# MINUTES

## Benchers

Date:	Thursday, March 19, 2026	
Time:	12:30 pm	
Location:	Law Society Offices 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 Gordon Daman Serena Ehrmantraut Patrick Fortier Jason Gisser Nicole Hamilton	Sharyne Hamm Teresa Jaenen Tehani Jainarine Dr. Richard Jochelson Timothy Kurbis Mathieu Lafrenière Rhea Majewski Kirsten Nynych Penny Pipier Trent Sholdice Deanna Wilson
Regrets:	Simon Jack Leah Unruh	Joshua Weinstein
Guests:	Lynda Troup	Erin Wilcott
Staff:	Leah Kosokowsky Alissa Schacter Sandra Alleyne Will Barnstead Noelia Bernardo Pat Bourbonnais Tana Christianson	Joan Holmstrom Jamie Jurczak Kelly Kintop Deirdre O'Reilly Richard Porcher Sean Rivera Amy Tung

Eileen Derksen  
Chris Donaldson  
Linda Fontaine

Betta Wishart  
Simon Young

## 1.0 PRESIDENT'S WELCOME AND TREATY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ms Dear, President, called the meeting to order at 12:40 pm. Benchers, guests and staff were welcomed to the meeting. Treaty 1, 3 and 5 lands were acknowledged with gratitude.

## 2.0 IN MEMORIAM

Benchers observed a moment of silence for Brenda Katherine Matte and the Honourable Gerald Oliver Jewers.

## 3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

### 3.1 Minutes of February 5, 2026 Meeting

Benchers considered the minutes of the February 5, 2026 bencher meeting.

### 3.2 Report of the Complaints Investigation Committee

Benchers received for information the report of the Complaints Investigation Committee dated March 9, 2026.

### 3.3 Reports of the Discipline Committee

Benchers received for information the reports of the Discipline Committee.

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

MOVED: Mr. Lafrenière  
Seconded: Mr. Gisser  
Carried unanimously.

## 4.0 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

### 4.1 President's Report

Bencher received for information Ms Dear's report dated March 10, 2026. Ms Dear reported on her attendance at the Northern Bar Association's annual CPD which was held in Thompson on March 13, 2026. She advised that the events she attended on March 12 and 13, 2026 offered a great opportunity to connect and engage with members of the profession practising in Manitoba's northern communities.

### 4.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Bencher received for information Ms Kosokowsky's report dated March 9, 2026. Ms Kosokowsky introduced and welcomed Ms Jurczak to the meeting. Bencher was advised that in her role as Director of Regulation, Ms Jurczak has begun to explore how the Law Society might respond to unreasonable complainants and vexatious litigants, a matter that has become increasingly challenging and time-consuming for the Law Society.

Bencher was advised that on March 12, 2026 a suspended member appeared before the Court of Appeal seeking leave to initiate new proceedings against the Law Society of Manitoba. As the member has been declared by the Court to be a vexatious litigant, the Law Society advised the Court that counsel would not be filing pleadings or appearing before the Court unless directed to do so. The presiding judge has reserved their decision in the matter. The Law Society is also awaiting a decision from the Supreme Court of Canada on three applications for leave to appeal filed by the same member. In the interim, the member has threatened to commence criminal proceedings against staff and two former Law Society presidents alleging corruption in their dealings with him.

Bencher was advised that the Western Canada Competency Profile Working Group will be conducting a consultation in April to explore how the competencies that students must obtain and demonstrate to be called to the bar are best achieved, which may be through the PREP program or the articling experience, or a combination of both. Members of the Bar in

British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia who hire articling students or are involved in student development will be invited to register for the consultation sessions in one of four categories: newly called lawyers, public sector employers, principals from all other workplaces, and a separate session in each jurisdiction for all other members. Representatives from CPLED will also participate in the consultation. Benchers were advised that the consultation will include a discussion on whether all CPLED students should complete the accelerated version of PREP before commencing articles. It was noted that this proposal could have significant implications for employers, and for the Crown and criminal defence bar in particular. Benchers expressed concern regarding the short notice provided for participation in the consultation and had reservations about the overall experience gained by students who have participated in the accelerated PREP program.

#### **4.3 2025-2028 Strategic Plan Activities Update – March 2026**

Benchers received for information the Strategic Plan Activities Update dated March 6, 2026. Ms Kosokowsky provided an update on the Rule of Law Campaign, advising that the participating jurisdictions are in the process of determining the financial commitment they are able to provide to meet the proposed budget for Phase III of the campaign. To date funding in the amount of \$310,000 has been confirmed, of which Manitoba has pledged \$150,000 for this phase.

Mr. Fortier joined the meeting at 1:05 pm.

Ms Wishart provided an update on the Northern Bar CPD program which was held in Thompson on March 13, 2026. She advised that the education sessions had been well-attended and that the events had provided a great opportunity for connection and community building with members. Benchers were advised that seven students from Robson Hall had also attended the events on a complimentary basis to encourage internships at northern community firms.

Benchers were advised that staff had met with representatives of the Manitoba Métis Federation to discuss the Access to Justice Ecosystem Initiative. Opportunities for engagement were discussed and the Federation will now consider if and how it is able to participate in this initiative.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION/DECISION

### 5.1 Review of Good Character Requirements

Benchers considered a memorandum from the Admissions and Education Committee, dated March 9, 2026, which set out a series of recommendations regarding the Society's good character requirement and assessment process in response to concerns raised by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association in March of 2021. The recommendations of the committee were as follows:

1. The Law Society of Manitoba should retain the term "good character" within the process to assess an applicant's suitability for admission.
2. The Law Society should retain the catch-all question that requires disclosure of anything else in an applicant's history that would reflect adversely on their character but it should be clearly stated that an applicant is not being asked to disclose their mental health history.
3. Applicants should be required to disclose all post-secondary discipline.
4. The Law Society should continue to require disclosure of criminal matters, including where charges were stayed, where there was a conditional or absolute discharge, or where the applicant was pardoned. However, applicants ought not to be required to disclose a charge or conviction for matters that are no longer considered to be a criminal offence.
5. The Law Society should not exempt disclosure of youth offenses.
6. The Law Society should take steps to mitigate the potential chilling effect of the disclosure requirements by:
  - communicating the Society's recognition of the impact of societal factors on marginalized communities;
  - providing statistics regarding the number of disclosures and the numbers of those denied admission; and
  - articulating the good character assessment process.

Motion: That the recommendations of the Admissions and Education Committee be approved as presented.

MOVED: Mr. Kurbis  
Seconded: Mr. Lafrenière  
Carried unanimously.

It was confirmed that any actions flowing from these recommendations which require endorsement by benchers would be brought forward in due course.

## 6.0 MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

### 6.1 Bencher Election Officers

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Schacter, dated February 20, 2026, which recommended the appointment of Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Alleyne to serve as scrutineers in the 2026 bencher election and that Ms Dear be appointed to serve as substitute chief electoral officer in the event Mr. Mandzuik is unable to serve in this capacity.

Motion: That Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Alleyne serve as scrutineers in the 2026 bencher election and that Ms Dear serve as substitute chief electoral officer.

MOVED: Ms Nedohin  
Seconded: Ms Ehrmantraut  
Carried unanimously.

### 6.2 FLSC Council Report – March 2026

Benchers received for information Ms Troup's report, dated March 3, 2026, which provided a detailed report on the Federation Council meeting which was held in Ottawa on March 3, 2026.

## 7.0 COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 7.1 Equity Committee

Ms Wishart provided an oral report on the meeting of the Equity Committee held on February 18, 2026. At this meeting the committee continued discussions on the implementation of a pilot project for the introduction of a mandatory minimum wage requirement for articling students. The committee identified two target groups who will be invited to participate in consultations regarding the pilot, namely: (i) new and recently called internationally trained

articling students; and (ii) principals (including current and former principals, and future principals from new firms and rural firms). The committee recognizes that additional engagement may be necessary to address other equity concerns which could arise during the consultation phase. The committee is expected to meet again over the next two months to consider bencher election eligibility and the part-time practising fees pilot program.

## **7.2 Investment Committee**

Mr. Kurbis provided an oral report on the meeting of the Investment Committee which was held on March 10, 2026. Benchers were advised that investment counsel from Mawer Investment Management had attended the meeting to report on investment performance in both the Reserve Fund and the Office Staff Pension Plan Fund. Investment counsel has recommended moving a portion of the portfolio which has been underperforming in both funds to a new investment, however, this would first require an amendment to the Society's Investment Policies. The committee is expected to meet in May to continue these discussions.

Ms Alleyne confirmed that investments in both the Reserve Fund and the Office Staff Pension Plan Fund remain in compliance with investment guidelines as of December 31, 2025.

## **8.0 MONITORING REPORTS**

### **8.1 Professional Liability Claims Fund**

Benchers considered a monitoring report, dated February 27, 2026, which explained how the annual insurance assessment is set by the Law Society.

## **9.0 OTHER BUSINESS**

### **9.1 CEO Performance Evaluation Process**

Ms Dear advised that this matter was being moved from the *in camera* agenda discussion.

Benchers were invited to consider and approve a new bencher policy which set out a detailed process for completion of the annual performance evaluation of the chief executive office.

Motion: That Bencher Policy #9 – CEO Performance Evaluation Process be approved as presented.

MOVED: Ms Basarab  
Seconded: Ms Hamm  
Carried unanimously.

Ms Piper was excused from the meeting at 1:45 pm.

## 10.0 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

### 10.1 Election of President and Vice-President and Recommendation for Lay Bencher Appointments

Bencher considered the memorandum of the Nominating Committee, dated February 20, 2026, which reported on the deliberations of the committee to date and provided recommendations for the election of the incoming president and vice-president, and for lay bencher appointments.

### 10.2 Appointment of Election Scrutineers

As the election of the incoming vice-president was being conducted in person and also by remote participation, it was proposed that Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Schacter oversee the casting and counting of the paper and electronic ballots for the election of the vice-president. The election results would then be reviewed with Ms Wiebe.

Motion: That Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Schacter be appointed scrutineers and ballot counters for the election of the incoming vice-president.

MOVED: Mr. Kurbis  
Seconded: Ms Basarab  
Abstention: Ms Hamm, Mr. Lafrenière  
Carried.

### 10.3 Election of Incoming President

Ms Wiebe confirmed the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to put forward Mr. Mandzuik's name as candidate for the position of incoming president. She then invited

nominations from the floor. As none were received, Ms Wiebe declared nominations to be closed and announced the acclamation of Mr. Mandzuik as incoming president of the Law Society. Congratulations were extended to Mr. Mandzuik, who will take office as president at the May 14, 2026 bencher meeting.

#### **10.4 Election of Incoming Vice-President**

Ms Wiebe confirmed the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to put forward the names of Ms Hamm and Mr. Lafrenière for the position of incoming vice-president. She then invited nominations from the floor. As none were received, Ms Wiebe declared nominations to be closed.

With the exception of Ms Kosokowsky, Ms Schacter, Mr. Rivera and Ms Bourbonnais, all staff and guests were excused from the meeting at 1:50 pm.

Ballots for the vice-president election were distributed to benchers. Benchers were advised that three ballots had been submitted in absentia. Ms Hamm and Mr. Lafrenière abstained from voting.

Benchers took a break at 1:55 pm while ballots were completed and votes counted. The meeting was reconvened at 2:10 pm.

Ms Wiebe announced the election of Ms Hamm as incoming vice-president and congratulations were extended to her. Mr. Lafrenière was thanked for having agreed to have his name stand for election.

#### **10.5 Motion to Destroy Ballots**

Motion: That the paper ballots and electronic data for the election of the incoming vice-president be destroyed.

MOVED: Ms Basarab  
Seconded: Ms Ehrmantraut  
Carried unanimously.

With respect to the lay bencher positions, benchers were asked to approve the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to recommend to the special committee chaired by the Chief Justice of Manitoba the appointment of Mr. Daman, Mr. Fortier, Ms Jaenen, Ms Jainarine, Ms Nedohin and Ms Wilson to fill the six lay bencher positions.

## Minutes

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Motion: That Gordon Daman, Patrick Fortier, Teresa Jaenen, Tehani Jainarine, Carmen Nedohin and Deanna Wilson be recommended to the special committee chaired by the Chief Justice of Manitoba for appointment as lay benchers for a term of two years.

MOVED: Ms Wiebe

Seconded: Ms Hamm

Abstention: Mr. Damon, Mr. Fortier, Ms Jaenen, Ms Jainarine, Ms Nedohin, Ms Wilson  
Carried.

Benchers were advised that the Nominating Committee will reconvene following the May bencher election to consider applications for the filling of the four appointed practising bencher positions.

## 11.0 FOR INFORMATION

Benchers considered the materials provided for information.

There being no further business, Ms Dear called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:15 pm.

MOVED: Ms Wiebe