



MINUTES

Benchers

Date:	Thursday, March 20, 2025	
Time:	12:30 pm	
Location:	Law Society Offices and via Videoconference	
Present:	Gerri Wiebe, KC, President Wayne Onchulenko, Past President Carmen Nedohin, Officer-at-Large Kassy Baker Kathrine Basarab Gordon Daman Kyle Dear Kalanit Faingold Sharyne Hamm Simon Jack	Teresa Jaenen Tehani Jainarine Dr. Richard Jochelson Timothy Kurbis Mathieu Lafrenière Kenneth Mandzuik, KC Trent Sholdice Joshua Weinstein Deanna Wilson
Regrets:	Serena Ehrmantraut Patrick Fortier	Penny Piper Leah Unruh
Guests:	Andrew Norton Lynda Troup	Erin Wilcott
Staff:	Leah Kosokowsky Rennie Stonyk Sandra Alleyne Pat Bourbonnais Tana Christianson Eileen Derksen	Elaine Kinchen Kathy Levacque Deirdre O'Reilly Richard Porcher Sean Rivera Alissa Schacter

Chris Donaldson
Joan Holmstrom

Betta Wishart

1.0 PRESIDENT'S WELCOME AND TREATY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ms Wiebe, President, called the meeting to order at 12:40 pm. Benchers, staff and guests were welcomed to the meeting, including Andrew Norton, Chief Information Officer and Director, Business Operations of the Law Society of Alberta. Treaty territories 1, 2 and 5 were acknowledged with gratitude.

2.0 IN MEMORIAM

Benchers observed a moment of silence for Margaret Anne MacLeod, Robert Allan Simpson, Marston Welland Grindey, Sheldon Edward Pinx, KC, Marion Lillian Ironquill Meadmore, Boris Alexander Hwozdulych, Kenneth Mark Tennenhouse and Joseph Jean Marcel Romuald Gregoire.

3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

3.1 Minutes of February 6, 2025 Meeting

Motion: That the minutes of February 6, 2025 at agenda item 5.1 be amended as follows:

"There was a general consensus that the statements made by the member were not in alignment with the values and goals of the Society, however..."

MOVED: Ms Dear
Seconded: Mr. Kurbis
Carried.

The reports of the Complaints Investigation Committee and the Discipline Committee were received for information.

4.0 STRATEGIC PLAN

Ms Faingold, Ms Jaenen and Ms Wilcott joined the meeting at 1:05 pm.

4.1 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan For Review and Approval

Ms Wiebe provided a detailed report on the work of the Strategic Planning Committee in drafting the 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan and confirmed the recommendation of the committee to adopt the Plan in full. Mr. Norton noted that this was an ambitious Plan but also realistic and achievable over its three-year period.

Motion: That the 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan be adopted as presented.

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

Mr. Norton was thanked for assisting the Strategic Planning Committee, benchers and staff in the development of the new Strategic Plan.

Mr. Norton was excused from the meeting at 1:20 pm.

5.0 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

5.1 President's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Wiebe's report dated March 13, 2025.

5.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's report dated March 11, 2025. Benchers were asked to consider if and how the Law Society might respond to recent developments in the United States which have threatened the independence of the legal profession and the judiciary. Ms Kosokowsky reported that she has reached out to her counterparts across Canada as well as to Mr. Herman, Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Law Societies, to explore whether there was interest in issuing a collective statement. Mr. Herman advised

that he had made a recommendation to the FLSC executive that a statement be issued and confirmed that a draft would be shared with all law societies in due course. Benchers directed that the matter be held in abeyance until the Law Society's executive have had an opportunity to review that statement to determine whether there is a need to do more.

Benchers were reminded that at their meeting on December 12, 2024 they had directed that an award be created in honour of the late Honourable C. Murray Sinclair and that the Indigenous Advisory Committee be charged with creating the criteria and selection process for the award. Benchers were advised that the chairperson of the IAC had reached out to Mr. Sinclair's family to obtain their consent for the creation of this award. The family has advised that it will consider a formal request following the one-year anniversary of Mr. Sinclair's passing.

5.3 Strategic Plan Progress Report – March 2025

Benchers considered the Strategic Plan Progress Report covering the period January 2022 to March 2025.

6.0 DISCUSSION/DECISION

6.1 Electronic Banking Initiative – Proposed Rule Amendments

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Stonyk and Ms Levacque, dated March 11, 2025, which invited benchers to consider draft rule amendments which, if adopted, will permit firms to electronically withdraw funds from their trust accounts.

Ms Stonyk noted an error in the proposed amendment to Rule 2-78(2), advising that the rule should make reference to rule 5-44(2)(b) rather than rule 5-44(1)(c).

Motion: That the draft rule amendments to Part 5, Division 4 - Financial Accountability and Part 2, Division 8 - Members be approved in principle as presented, subject to the noted correction to Rule 2-78(2).

MOVED: Mr. Onchulenko
Seconded: Mr. Mandzuik
Carried unanimously.

Benchers were advised that these rule amendments will return to them for approval in final form once the French translation is received. In the interim, staff will continue to prepare educational resources and develop a communications plan.

7.0 MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

7.1 FLSC Council Report – March 2025

Benchers received for information Ms Troup's report, dated March 5, 2025, which provided a detailed report on the Federation Council meeting which was held in Ottawa on March 5, 2025.

7.2 Anti-Money Laundering Activities

Benchers considered Ms Kosokowsky's memorandum, dated March 11, 2025, which provided an update on activities which are underway at the national level to combat the facilitation of money laundering in Canada's legal profession. Benchers were reminded that an anti-money laundering training session will be held on April 25, 2025 for all members of the Complaints Investigation Committee and the Discipline Committee. All benchers were encouraged to attend the session.

7.3 The Path

Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Derksen reported to benchers on completion of The Path by members of the profession. Benchers were reminded that this mandatory education program was launched on October 1, 2023 and that members with active practising status are required to complete the course by April 1, 2025. Benchers were advised that as of March 17, 2025, 60% of practising members have completed the course and targeted reminders have been sent to the remaining cohort. Requests for extensions and accommodation have been received from a small number of members. Thus far, feedback from participants has primarily been positive.

7.4 Access to Justice Initiative – Phase I Update

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's memorandum, dated March 11, 2025, which provided a progress report on Phase I of the Access to Justice Initiative. Benchers were reminded that Phase I is being funded by the Law Society using a portion of the statutory grant received from the Manitoba Law Foundation. It is intended that the Law Society will apply to the Foundation in the fall of 2025 for a discretionary grant to complete Phase II of the project.

Mr. Weinstein was excused from the meeting at 2:05 pm.

7.5 Public Engagement Activities

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's memorandum, dated March 11, 2025, which provided a detailed report on the delivery of four public engagement sessions between November 2024 and February 2025 entitled: *Know Your Rights: What to Expect from Your Lawyer*. Anecdotal information gathered from these sessions will assist in setting engagement activities under the new Strategic Plan.

7.6 CPLED Report – March 2025 Update

Benchers received for information a report prepared by Liza Worthington, CEO of the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education, dated March 18, 2025, which: (a) outlined the enhancements which will be introduced in the 2025 PREP and Accelerated PREP programs; (b) provided evaluation data on the September 2024 Capstone for all PREP candidates as well as separate data for Manitoba candidates covering the period March 2021 to September 2024; and (c) provided evaluation results on performance based on candidates with a common law degree and those who are internationally trained.

It was noted that internationally trained candidates who have completed the CPLED Legal Research and Writing Course are now performing better on the Capstone Evaluation. Benchers suggested that it might be useful for CPLED to compile data on the origins of the law degrees obtained by candidates who fail the Capstone.

Benchers were reminded that at their October 2024 meeting, they had discussed data derived from an articling survey which indicated that almost half of internationally trained articling students in Manitoba were not being compensated for their services and that 19% of these individuals identified as being part of an equity-deserving demographic. Benchers were advised that CPLED does not collect data on compensation, however, it does conduct a needs assessment of this group of participants from which information of this nature might

be collected. It is intended that this matter will be explored further as part of the Society's new Strategic Plan.

8.0 MONITORING REPORTS

8.1 Audit Department

Benchers considered a monitoring report prepared by Ms Stonyk and Ms Levacque, dated March 11, 2025, which provided a detailed report on operations within the Audit Department.

9.0 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

9.1 Election of Executive Officers and Bencher and Committee Appointments

Benchers considered the memorandum of the Nominating Committee, dated March 14, 2025, which reported on the work of the committee to date.

Mr. Onchulenکو advised that following a call for applications to fill the existing appointed practising bencher vacancy and completion of interviews of a select group of applicants, the Nominating Committee agreed to recommend the appointment of Rhea Majewski to fill this vacancy.

Motion: That Ms Majewski be appointed to fill the existing appointed practising bencher vacancy.

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

9.2 Appointment of Election Scrutineers

As the election of the incoming vice-president was being conducted in person and also by remote participation, benchers were advised that Ms Kosokowsky and Ms Stonyk would

oversee the casting and counting of the paper and electronic ballots for the election of the vice-president and then review the election results with Mr. Onchulenko.

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

MOVED: Ms Basarab
Seconded: Ms Nedohin
Carried unanimously.

9.3 Election of Incoming President

Mr. Onchulenko confirmed the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to put forward Ms Dear's name as candidate for the position of incoming president. He then invited nominations from the floor. As none were received, Mr. Onchulenko declared nominations to be closed and announced the acclamation of Ms Dear as incoming president of the Law Society, to take office at the May 15, 2025 bencher meeting. Congratulations were extended to Ms Dear.

Mr. Onchulenko advised that the Nominating Committee agreed to recommend that following the election of the incoming president, the incumbent should immediately be appointed to the Nominating Committee so that they are able to participate in the remaining work of the committee.

Motion: That Ms Dear be appointed to serve as a member of the Nominating Committee.

MOVED: Mr. Lafrenière
Seconded: Mr. Kurbis
Abstention: Ms Dear
Carried.

9.4 Election of Incoming Vice-President

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

With the exception of Ms Kosokowsky, Ms Stonyk, Mr. Rivera and Ms Bourbonnais, all staff and guests were excused from the remainder of the meeting at 2:25 pm.

Ballots for the vice-president election were distributed to benchers. Benchers were advised that four ballots had been submitted in absentia.

Benchers took a break at 2:30 pm while ballots were completed and votes counted. The meeting was reconvened at 2:50 pm.

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

9.5 Motion to Destroy Ballots

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

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

Mr. Onchulenko advised that the Nominating Committee had discussed the filling of the existing bencher vacancy in the Winnipeg Electoral District arising from Mr. Monnin's recent appointment as a justice of the Court of King's Bench. As a second vacancy will arise in the Winnipeg district following Ms Wiebe's appointment as a Life Bencher at the May 15, 2025 bencher meeting, the committee agreed to recommend that a by-election be held to fill these two vacancies. The election would be held after the second vacancy comes into effect.

Ms Wiebe noted a general consensus among benchers that, following the May 15, 2025 bencher meeting, a by-election should be held to fill both bencher vacancies in the Winnipeg Electoral District.

10.0 FOR INFORMATION

Benchers considered the materials provided for information.

There being no further business, Ms Wiebe adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.