



MINUTES

Benchers

Date:	Thursday, May 15, 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 Patrick Fortier Sharyne Hamm Simon Jack	Teresa Jaenen Tehani Jainarine Dr. Richard Jochelson Timothy Kurbis Mathieu Lafrenière Kenneth Mandzuik, KC Penny Piper Trent Sholdice Joshua Weinstein Deanna Wilson
Regrets:	Serena Ehrmantraut Rhea Majewski	Leah Unruh
Guests:	Erin Wilcott	
Staff:	Leah Kosokowsky Rennie Stonyk Sandra Alleyne Noelia Bernardo Pat Bourbonnais Tana Christianson Eileen Derksen	Joan Holmstrom Elaine Kinchen Sharon Kravetsky Deirdre O'Reilly Sean Rivera Alissa Schacter Amy Tung

Chris Donaldson
Linda Fontaine

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. Treaty territories 1, 2 and 5 were acknowledged with gratitude.

2.0 IN MEMORIAM

Benchers observed a moment of silence for James Edward Gordon Fielder.

3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

3.1 Minutes of March 20, 2025 Meeting

Benchers considered the minutes of the March 20, 2025 bencher meeting.

3.2 Discipline Committee Report

Benchers received the report of the Discipline Committee for information.

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

MOVED: Ms Basarab
Seconded: Mr. Fortier
Carried.

4.0 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

4.1 President's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Wiebe's report dated May 12, 2025.

4.2 Chief Executive Officer's Report

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's report dated May 7, 2025. Benchers were advised that approximately 800 students from Thompson and The Pas will receive presentations on June 11 and 12 from members of the profession, the judiciary and the Faculty of Law about the practice of law. This initiative is intended to raise awareness about a pre-law program which has been developed by the Faculty of Law and the University College of the North for Indigenous and northern students and to encourage students to consider law as a career. Simultaneously, the Manitoba Law Foundation has provided a grant of \$4.5 million to the Faculty of Law to create three bursaries which will enhance access to legal education for students who come from Indigenous and underrepresented communities. Benchers were also advised that while not yet finalized, it is anticipated that the insurance levy for the 2025/2026 practising year will be set at the same rate as in 2024/2025.

4.3 Strategic Plan Progress Report – May 2025

Benchers considered a Strategic Plan Progress Report covering the period January 2022 to May 2025. Benchers were advised that at their next meeting they will receive a final activity report which will detail what has been accomplished, what is in progress and what remains outstanding under the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan. A new Activity Plan for the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan will also be presented to benchers at the June meeting.

5.0 NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

5.1 2025-2026 Committee Composition

Benchers considered the report of the Nominating Committee, dated May 5, 2025, which set out the proposed membership of all Law Society standing and special committees and also

identified the candidates who will serve as Law Society representatives to external committees and boards for the coming year.

It was noted that committee assignments have been allocated for the two successful candidates in the June 11, 2025 bencher by-election, and that it is anticipated that the Indigenous Advisory Committee will soon provide its recommendations to fill the vacancies on that committee.

Motion: That the report of the Nominating Committee, dated May 5, 2025, be approved as presented.

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

5.2 Awarding of Life Bencher Status to Gerri Wiebe, KC

Ms Dear thanked Ms Wiebe for the contributions she had made to the Law Society during her tenure as President.

Motion: That, having concluded her term as President of the Law Society of Manitoba, Ms Wiebe be appointed a Life Bencher.

MOVED: Ms Basarab
Seconded: Mr. Weinstein
Carried unanimously.

Ms Dear assumed the role of President and chaired the balance of the meeting. Mr. Mandzuik assumed the role of Vice-President.

5.3 Thank You to Past President Wayne Onchulenko

Mr. Onchulenko was recognized for the many contributions he had made to the Society during his tenure as a bencher and executive member of the Law Society.

Ms Wiebe was excused from the meeting 1:25 pm.

6.0 DISCUSSION/DECISION

6.1 Practice and Ethics Committee – Proposed Model Code Amendments: TRC Call to Action 27

Benchers considered a memorandum from the Practice and Ethics Committee, dated May 5, 2025, which invited benchers to consider and approve the committee's draft submission in response to proposed amendments to the Federation of Law Societies' Model Code of Conduct arising from Call to Action 27 of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. Benchers were reminded that the committee had consulted with the Indigenous Advisory Committee on this matter and that the feedback provided by the committee, which encouraged meaningful cultural competence across the country, had been incorporated within the committee's response.

Motion: That the draft response prepared by the Practice and Ethics Committee be accepted as the Law Society of Manitoba's official submission to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada in response to its Consultation Report on proposed amendments to the *Model Code of Professional Conduct* related to Call to Action 27.

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

Benchers were advised that a second draft of the proposed amendments to the *Model Code of Conduct* will be provided once the Model Code Committee has had an opportunity to consider all of the feedback received.

6.2 Proposal for Public Education Campaign

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Schacter, dated May 1, 2025, which invited benchers to consider a proposal to develop a campaign which would educate the general public on the importance of the rule of law to all Canadians. Benchers were advised that leaders from other jurisdictions have expressed interest and support for this initiative and as a result it was proposed that all Canadian law societies be invited to participate. Given the need to proceed swiftly, it is intended that the Federation of Law Societies would be invited to provide support for this initiative but would not be asked to coordinate or oversee the campaign.

Dean Jochelson advised that the Faculty of Law would be in a position to provide a variety of resources to support this initiative.

Ms Wiebe rejoined the meeting at 1:30 pm and left the meeting at 1:55 pm.

Benchers expressed general support for this initiative, indicating a preference to partner with other law societies who are aligned with Manitoba's objectives rather than work independently, but continue to maintain a leadership role.

Motion: That staff further explore what might be entailed in the delivery of this initiative.

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

Motion: That staff (i) seek out proposals from local and national marketing agencies with the prerequisite expertise to develop and deliver a campaign of this nature in a timely manner; (ii) explore opportunities to partner with other law societies who share a common interest in the objective of this campaign; and, (iii) provide a detailed project proposal and budget for consideration and approval by benchers in due course.

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

7.0 MONITORING REPORTS

7.1 Continuing Professional Development

Benchers considered a monitoring report on Continuing Professional Development, dated May 7, 2025, which provided a detailed report on the work of the Education and Competence Department and the activities and initiatives which support continuing professional development within the profession. Benchers were invited to provide direction on whether the current framework for the Society's mandatory continuing professional development program continues to meet the needs of the profession or whether new opportunities and enhancements ought to be explored. In doing so, benchers were encouraged to be mindful of their decision to reduce the regulatory burdens placed upon members and students where possible as part of the Society's goal to support the well-being of the profession.

Mr. Daman and Dr. Jochelson were excused from the meeting at 2:30 pm.

Benchers were of the view that the existing MCPD program continues to ensure competence while also meeting the needs of the profession but agreed that it would be beneficial to conduct a thorough review to determine whether there were areas where improvements might be made to the program. Benchers directed that the review be conducted by the Admissions and Education Committee. It was confirmed that this review would be added to the new Activity Plan.

Benchers took a health break at 2:35 pm. The meeting was reconvened at 2:40 pm.

7.2 Investment Compliance – March 31, 2025

Benchers considered a monitoring report prepared by Ms Alleyne, dated May 2, 2025, which provided a detailed report on investment performance in both the Reserve Fund and the Office Staff Pension Plan for the period ending March 31, 2025 and confirmed that investments remained in compliance with investment guidelines.

8.0 MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

8.1 Articling Survey Update – Cross-Provincial Comparison

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Stonyk, dated May 6, 2025, which provided a cross-provincial comparison of data which had been collected from an articling survey conducted by the four western law societies and Nova Scotia in May of 2024. Benchers were reminded that at their meeting on October 31, 2024 they had received and considered the Manitoba-specific survey results which highlighted two areas of inequity, namely, discrimination/harassment and a failure to provide adequate compensation to a large segment of internationally trained lawyers. The cross-provincial data further highlighted that Manitoba students were of the view that feedback from principals on work performance and skills development was lacking and that training was predominately focused on one area of practice. It was noted that some of the data may be skewed due to the limited number of participants from Manitoba, however, it is intended that these issues will be addressed as part of the new Strategic Plan.

Due to the significant size of the data received, it was recommended that staff seek assistance from someone with expertise in data analysis. It was agreed that staff would

contact the consultant who had conducted the survey to see if she would be willing to provide further assistance.

8.2 *The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act*

Ms Basarab, Mr. Fortier, Ms Jaenen and Ms Wilson were excused from this discussion due to a conflict.

Benchers considered Ms Kosokowsky's memorandum, dated May 6, 2025, which reported on Bill 227 - *The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act* which had been introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba by a member of the opposition on April 15, 2025 out of concern that the provincial government was failing to take timely action to put in place legislation which would remove interprovincial trade barriers. Of concern to the Law Society was the fact that Bill 227 did not provide an exemption to lawyers or other professions that have already removed mobility barriers within Canada. Benchers were advised that if the bill advanced to committee stage, Ms Dear or Mr. Mandzuik would speak to the matter on behalf of the Law Society. It was subsequently confirmed that the bill had been defeated on second reading.

Ms Basarab, Mr. Fortier, Ms Jaenen and Ms Wilson rejoined the meeting.

8.3 **Richard J. Scott Award Selection Committee**

Benchers considered a memorandum prepared by Ms Kosokowsky, dated April 24, 2025, which reported on the meeting of the Richard J. Scott Award Selection Committee on April 24, 2025. At this meeting, the committee had selected the newest recipient of the Scott Award, Karen Busby. The committee also considered the criteria and selection processes for the Law Society Medal and Certificate of Merit. Benchers were advised that the committee had agreed to recommend that rather than inviting calls for nomination for these two awards, the Executive Officers would consider on an annual basis whether they should be bestowed on worthy candidates and bring forward their recommendations to benchers for approval. Benchers were invited to consider the criteria recommended by the Selection Committee for each award.

Benchers confirmed their support for the recommendations made by the Selection Committee for the criteria and selection process for each award as set out within the memorandum.

8.4 Access to Justice Initiative – Phase I Update

Benchers received for information Ms Kosokowsky's memorandum, dated May 7, 2025, which provided a progress report on Phase I of the Access to Justice Initiative.

8.5 CPLED – May 2025 Update

Benchers received for information a memorandum prepared by Liza Worthington, CEO of the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education, dated May 5, 2025, which reported on recent CPLED activities and provided an update on PREP program activities.

9.0 IN CAMERA

Mr. Onchulenko advised that he had one matter he wished to discuss with benchers *in camera*. All staff and guests were excused from the balance of the meeting at 3:15 pm. Dr. Jochelson rejoined the meeting at this time.

Motion: That the meeting proceed *in camera*.

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

Motion: That the meeting proceed out of camera.

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

10.0 FOR INFORMATION

Benchers considered the materials provided for information.

There being no further business, Ms Dear adjourned the meeting at 3:25 pm.