

LCO / CDO

LIAISON

**NEW WEBSITE COMING SOON!**

Looking for more information on some of the success stories reported in Liaison? Watch later this fall for the launch of the LCO's new and improved website featuring expanded stories, online project feedback forms, and links to discussion strings, focus groups, videos, surveys and more.

WE'VE MOVED

The LCO team has settled into bright and spacious new offices at the heart of York University's campus. Effective October 9, we're located at 276 York Lanes. Our telephone and email contacts remain unchanged.

Message from the Executive Director

As you'll read elsewhere in this issue of Liaison, the LCO has ramped up its commitment to outreach and consultation with the addition of Margaret Hageman, our new Community Outreach Coordinator.

The broad nature of our outreach is illustrated by a recent trip I took to Thunder Bay. Over two days, I benefitted from meeting people from a diverse range of constituencies who took time from their day jobs to fill me in on their personal and their clients' experiences with the law.

Two multi-group meetings left me with greater insight into the issues facing injured workers, people with mental health challenges, those at risk or in the criminal justice system, persons with disabilities and women in the northwestern region, among others. A visit to the Ontario Native Women's Association highlighted the critical challenges facing First Nations women in this part of the province. Senior Regional Judge Helen Pierce spoke thoughtfully about issues of concern from the bench. And I value time spent speaking with legal aid administrators and workers at the Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic, and addressing the Thunder Bay Lawyers' Association.

These are the kinds of one-on-one and small group conversations we need to enrich the LCO's work with the reality of people's lives. My appreciation to all those who attended these meetings and articulated their concerns. Thanks, too, to Janice Vauthier, Research Advisory Board member and Jennifer Carten, Director of the Thunder Bay Area Legal Clinic (and her staff), who were great hosts while I was in Thunder Bay!

Patricia Hughes

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- **Community key to mutual success**
- **Leading from the bench and the trenches**
- **Taking stock**





Reaching out to more Ontarians

Community participation key to mutual success

The LCO's new Community Outreach Coordinator has hit the ground running since joining the organization this summer as part

of an ongoing effort to ensure every LCO project is informed by a diversity of knowledge and experience. Over the next year, Margaret Hageman will build on the Law Commission's demonstrated commitment to consultation.

"We're all excited to have someone with Margaret's expertise and knowledge helping us advance the LCO's consultation and outreach," says LCO Executive Director Patricia Hughes.

Hageman's top priorities include building on established relationships and engaging new organizations in the work of the LCO. She's reaching out to those whose experiences will inform the LCO's project consultations. Later this fall, the LCO will launch a website that includes multiple pathways for participation. "Discussion strings, online forums, maybe even social marketing sites — our long-term plans include an online consultation vehicle for every project," explains Hageman.

Bringing the social dimensions of the LCO's projects to the attention of interested community organizations is a crucial element of outreach and consultation.

"We can't do legal reform research without community input, and community organizations can't be effective in a bubble. We need each other," says Hageman. "We encourage people to speak from their own experiences on the issues we are researching: the family law system and how the law affects the lives of older adults and persons with disabilities, for example."

Four public consultations on deck

Ontarians can voice their opinions on everything from family law services to the laws governing age discrimination as part of four public consultations planned for this fall and winter:

- December 1 is the deadline for input on a consultation paper that asks "how do people find help when they have a family problem?" The LCO's **family law process project** will conclude in 2010 with a final report and recommendations.
- A second consultation paper is asking community members for their feedback on a list of Top 20 issues related to the **Provincial Offences Act**.
- Writing is nearing completion on a research report, part of a multi-phase effort to set out core principles for the development of **laws affecting older adults**. The report, including findings from three studies, will be the focus of intensive consultation this winter.
- Summarizing the perspectives of more than 200 stakeholders on 190 statutes affecting **persons with disabilities** is just one goal of consultations scheduled for this winter.



Six summer students played important roles in the LCO's projects in 2009.

Back L to R: Jason Burns, Christopher Missiuna
Front L to R: Stefanie Ligori, Geetika Bagga, Nazila Rostami, Feruza Djamalova

The next generation



New LCO Board Chair Larry Banack heads a powerful team

Larry Banack's first stop after being asked to serve as Chair of the Board of the Law Commission of Ontario was his rolodex. A Partner with Koskie Minsky LLP, a senior Bencher with the Law Society of Upper Canada and former

Chair of the Law Foundation of Ontario, he spoke to each of the then-serving members of the Board before accepting the job this summer.

"This is a bright, hardworking group of individuals who have achieved significant early successes," he says. "It was important that I hear their thoughts on how the LCO should move forward."

The Board of Governors includes representatives of the Law Foundation of Ontario, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario's law schools and the judiciary. Building on the achievements of his predecessor, Banack says the time is right for a next-generation approach to realizing the LCO's founding vision.

"We're in a very different place from when we started," agrees Neena Gupta, a member-at-large since 2007. "The views from the bench and the trenches are equally important as we tackle ever more challenging issues."

Says Banack: "We've only just scratched the surface. Ontario and its justice system will be better off because of the Commission's efforts."

LCO'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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*Special thanks to former Board
members:*

**Neil Finkelstein,
Bill Flanagan,
Marie Henein,
Justice Russell Juriansz,
Yves Le Bouthillier,
Justice James MacPherson
and Patrick Monahan (Chair).**

Looking back to move forward

Nearly three down and two years to go in its original mandate and the LCO is taking stock. This fall, the Law Commission embarked on an intensive evaluation of its activities in collaboration with Toronto's Cathexis Consulting. "We want to learn from our experience to date to prepare for where we'd like to go in the future," explains LCO Executive Director Patricia Hughes.

"Starting evaluation early in the evolution of an organization is generally considered best practice," says Senior Consultant Melissa McGuire. "It sets the stage for ongoing success."

Cathexis' findings and recommendations, expected in early 2010, will form the basis for a Board-led strategic planning session this spring.

The Law Commission of Ontario is funded by:



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LAW COMMISSION OF ONTARIO

276 York Lanes
York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
Tel: 416-650-8406
Toll Free: 1-866-950-8406
lawcommission@lco-cdo.org
www.lco-cdo.org