

LCO / CDO

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Follow Executive Director Patricia Hughes @phugheslco to receive updates

on the LCO's projects, activities, events and more.

HOLLOWAY GOES WEST



Ian Holloway

Congratulations to LCO Board member Ian Holloway! Dean of the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Law since 2000, Holloway is riding the tide west as incoming dean of law at the University of Calgary. Watch soon for news of his successor as law deans' representative on the LCO Board.

Message from the Executive Director



The LCO is branching out! In a twist on our usual projects, we're developing law school curriculum modules designed to introduce all law students to issues around violence against women.

We're looking to law school profs, judges, service providers, students and others to make sure we're responsive to today's pluralist Ontario. See more inside.

Our research always "branches out" to other jurisdictions. As Stefan Kok says in our story on the family law project, the problems facing Ontario are not unique. We're lucky to have in-person comparative knowledge in Stefan, our family law project head, familiar with the European context, as well as summer graduate student Julia Rendell, who did a four-year stint at the New Zealand Law Commission.

We won't be resting over the summer. I can't say enough about our LCO staff members who are remarkable in their commitment to producing high quality work and in their dedication to hearing from those affected by our projects. You'll see the results in the many documents we'll be releasing this summer and fall in all our projects. Learn more at www.lco-cdo.org.

You can also keep track of LCO activities @phugheslco. I'm particularly looking forward to tweeting from Hong Kong when I present at a law reform conference there in September — more on that "branching out" experience in our fall issue!

Have a terrific summer, everyone!

Patricia Hughes

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- Long distance lessons
- Enforcing workers' rights
- LCO's novel initiative



Thinking globally,

Ontario family law challenges not unique

The LCO's new research lawyer is keeping his eye on the world as he works to advance law reform and improve access to justice for Ontario families. A former strategy analyst and policy officer with the Dutch Council for Refugees, Stefan Kok believes many of the challenges facing the province in the area of family justice are shared by other jurisdictions in North America and overseas. As the new lead for the LCO's family law reform project, he plans to draw on his experiences with refugee protection.

"The big picture issues are in some ways similar. No one asks to become a refugee or to have their family relationship go wrong. These situations both involve highly complex and emotionally charged issues that demand creative solutions."

In September, the Commission released the results of consultations highlighting the experiences of individuals and

Counsel-in-Residence values meaningful work

A year from now Mohan Sharma hopes to say he's had a positive impact on the people of Ontario. As LCO's new Counsel-in-Residence accountable for the vulnerable workers project, he's working hard to deliver on his goal.

Sharma joined the Commission last fall, on secondment from the Office of the Chief Justice, Superior Court of Justice. He plans to meet with more than 40 groups representing unions, employers, workers' community groups, government and academics to get their take on the challenges faced by Ontarians with temporary, part-time, low-paid or insecure employment.

"Few jurisdictions have tackled this issue," he says. "This is a great opportunity for Ontario to be a leader."

By year end, the LCO plans to publish an interim report, to be followed by final recommendations in Spring 2012.

LCO developing education modules

The Law Commission of Ontario is embarking upon a novel initiative to help make the practise of law more effective. With funding from the Ontario Women's Directorate, the LCO is developing law school curriculum modules on violence against women. Each module — available to every Ontario law school — may be integrated into existing courses, combined to form a full course or serve as a freestanding intensive program.

"Our goal is for all law students, not just those planning to practice family, criminal or tort law, to learn how to address these issues and work with clients who have experienced violence," says LCO Executive Director Patricia Hughes.

The modules, to be developed and tested toward a September 2012 launch, may range from identifying at-risk cases and clients, to how to inspire trust.

"This is a matter of professionalism," says Martha Jackman, the University of Ottawa's Shirley E. Greenberg Chair for Women and the Legal Profession. "Too often we tend to focus on the underlying legal policy issues without remembering lawyers are service providers. Every legal service provider should have training in this issue."

The LCO has retained consultant Pamela Cross, an expert in violence against women and experienced in helping develop law-related curricula, to lead the initiative in consultation with an advisory group of academics, judges, lawyers, service providers, police and students.

acting provincially

workers, including social workers, lawyers, judges and counsellors. Using public feedback and findings from two commissioned research studies, Kok is now preparing an interim report that will address how the family justice system might be improved.

“We’re focused on points of entry into the family law system — community legal centres, the courts, the Internet and other places where people go with questions,” he says. “This report will explore how we might provide better information and practical pathways to solutions.”

Kok is also exploring how Ontario might learn from other jurisdictions. “Most jurisdictions go through a major revision of their family justice system every 10 or 15 years. Our challenge is to identify what works and then incorporate it in a way that makes sense for us.”

The LCO’s family law interim report will be released for feedback this summer, with final recommendations expected in 2012.



Stefan Kok



Julia Rendell, second from right, will be joined this summer by undergraduate law students (L to R) Jerri Phillips of Queen’s University, Michael Da Silva from the University of Toronto and Osgoode’s Safina Lalani. Others in photo are Patricia Hughes, Executive Director and Lauren Bates, Staff Lawyer.



From New Zealand with love

New Zealand may be a world away, but Julia Rendell is feeling right at home as one of four students hired by the LCO this summer. Rendell completed her undergraduate law degree at the island country’s Victoria University of Wellington and four years as a legal and policy advisor with the New Zealand Law Commission before moving to Ontario this fall to begin a graduate law degree at the University of Toronto. Her research involves a comparison of New Zealand’s Bill of Rights and Canada’s Charter.

“Canada is a similar jurisdiction to New Zealand and one that we often turn to as a point of comparison.”

Rendell hopes the similarities will serve her well as she embarks on her four-month tenure with the LCO. “Constitutional law, family law, the laws surrounding indigenous peoples — these are all issues our countries and law commissions share.”

“This opportunity was made for me. I hope we can learn from each other.”

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