Message from the Executive Director

I became executive director of the LCO about five months ago. In that time, I have been very impressed with the extraordinary skill and commitment of LCO staff, board members, advisory groups, friends and partners.

Why are so many people committed to the LCO? The answer is complicated, but I think it comes down to four, related factors:

- **Independence:** The Commission takes an impartial, clear-eyed, long-term view of complex and controversial issues.
- **Engagement:** The LCO is a leader in participatory, transparent and inclusive consultations and policy-development.
- **Rigour and Fairness:** The LCO’s reports are authoritative, multidisciplinary, evidence-based and balanced.
- **Impact:** The LCO develops practical and principled solutions to issues that often affect hundreds of thousands of Ontarians.

These attributes give the Commission a strong foundation. Still, there are many issues and challenges on the LCO horizon, including:

- Completing our current projects and starting new ones;
- Broadening the impact of our work;
- Improving our outreach to Ontario’s vulnerable and diverse communities;
- Improving our partnerships with law schools, justice and law reform organizations; and
- Improving our digital strategy.

With your support and advice, I am confident the Commission will tackle these issues, and others, as we move ahead.

Nye Thomas
**Open Data conference contributes to provincial mandate**

How open should open data be? This was one of the questions explored by 50 lawyers, academics and provincial government representatives at an April 15 workshop hosted by the LCO, Legal Aid Ontario and the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice. “Open Data in the Justice System: Opportunities, Challenges and Lessons Learned” featured panel discussions exploring issues of open data, privacy, and strategies for collecting, releasing and using data.

The event was a response to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne’s Open Government initiative. “Open data has the potential to significantly improve our understanding of the justice system,” says LCO executive director Nye Thomas. “But we also learned there are risks. The discussion helped everyone focus on how to make the open data initiative successful.”

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**Defamation project involves wide-ranging stakeholders**

A diverse group of experts from the bench, legal practice, academia and the media are among those advising the LCO on its newest project, Defamation Law in the Age of the Internet. “This is a multidisciplinary endeavour,” explains LCO research lawyer Sue Gratton. “It’s not enough to involve legal experts. We must also take into account the opinions of the media, academics, the internet industry and complainants in Canada and around the world.”

Since November, she has held more than 30 stakeholder interviews to help define the project. The result is a scoping document released by the LCO this spring, to be followed later this year by a consultation paper.

“We plan on revisiting classic issues in defamation law like presumption of harm and asking whether or not the unique features of the law are still appropriate today,” says Gratton. The project will also tackle anonymity and explore questions of jurisdiction when potentially defamatory comments are posted online and accessible anywhere in the world.

The project will include focus groups, an online webinar and creative ways of engaging the project’s youngest stakeholders—Internet-savvy youth.

“It’s clear we have a need for a defamation law that is responsive to technological advancements and changing social mores.”