



TAB 6

**Report to Convocation
April 23, 2015**

Heritage Committee

Committee Members

Constance Backhouse (Chair)
Patrick Furlong
Virginia MacLean
Nicholas Pustina
Jan Richardson

Purposes of Report: Decision

**Prepared by the Policy Secretariat
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Decision

Proposal for the Establishment of the J. Shirley Denison Award

TAB 6.1

COMMITTEE PROCESS

1. The Committee met on February 11, 2015. Committee members Constance Backhouse (Chair), Virginia MacLean and Jan Richardson participated. Professor Philip Girard also attended. Staff members Paul Leatherdale and Sophia Sperdakos also attended.
2. The Committee met with the Access to Justice Committee on April 8, 2015. Committee members Constance Backhouse (Chair), Jan Richardson and Pat Furlong attended. Staff member Sophia Sperdakos also attended.

DECISION

**PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
J. SHIRLEY DENISON AWARD****Motion**

3. That Convocation approve the establishment of the J. Shirley Denison Award as set out in paragraph 13 of this Report, with the first award to be made in 2016.

Proposal for Consideration

4. The Heritage Committee, with the support of the Access to Justice Committee, is recommending the establishment of a *J. Shirley Denison Award* to be awarded annually for significant contribution to access to justice and/or poverty issues. The award would be named in Mr. Denison's honour to recognize his commitment to helping others.

Rationale for the Project

5. John Shirley Denison K.C. was born in 1870, was called to the bar in 1892 and practised in Toronto. He was a bencher from 1931-1944, a life bencher from 1946-1951 and Treasurer from 1944-1947. He died in 1951. Mr. Denison's Treasurer's portrait hangs in the public area of the Law Society with a plaque describing his bequest, which became the J. Shirley Denison Fund.
6. He was particularly well known for his great interest and contribution to the work of the Law Society. In 1968 Mr. Denison made a significant contribution to the Law Society and the legal profession by leaving the residue of his estate to the Law Society to be used to assist impoverished or indigent members and their families.
7. His will contained the following provision: "my Trustee shall ... pay to or deliver to the Law Society of Upper Canada the residue of my estate the same to be applied from time to time by the Treasurer and Benchers and both as to capital and income as they may see fit for the relief of impoverished or indigent members of the Law Society and of their wives widows and children including among such wives widows and children those of any member of the Law Society who may have been disbarred or suspended."
8. The capital receipt in 1968 was \$190,005. There were times when payments from the Fund did not exceed the interest earned on the capital sum. More recently, payments increased due to factors such as increased publicity for the Fund. Since 2000, the Fund has paid a total of \$432,000 to 134 applicants. The final payment from the fund was made in November 2014.

9. The J. Shirley Denison bequest to the Law Society was noteworthy for a number of reasons, but in the context of the proposed award, is particularly noteworthy because it sought to assist the vulnerable within the profession and their families. Moreover, unlike many bequests of its day it contained no restrictions by race, gender or otherwise. It passed no judgment on those members or former members of the profession who had been suspended or disbarred.
10. Given J. Shirley Denison's significant contribution to the profession, the amount of money paid out of his estate to assist people and the number of years over which the bequest lasted it is important that Mr. Denison not be forgotten.
11. By naming an award in his honour the importance of his legacy will be recognized and celebrated each year as will the activities of recipients in making a significant contribution in the area of access to justice and/or poverty issues.

Key Considerations

12. In considering the nature of the proposed award the following considerations have been taken into account:
 - a. The award's purpose should be simply stated to ensure that nominees can be drawn from a broad spectrum of those working in the area sought to be recognized.
 - b. To reflect J. Shirley Denison's inclusive attitudes, the award should be open to both lawyer and paralegal nominees.
 - c. In recognition of the need to manage Law Society costs and use of resources, the award process and ceremony should make use of infrastructure already in place to determine recipients and present the award. As such there will be no significant additional costs to introducing the award or managing the process.

The Proposal

13. In keeping with these considerations the Heritage Committee, with the support of the Access to Justice Committee, proposes the following:

The award's name: The J. Shirley Denison Award.

The award's purpose: To recognize outstanding contributions to access to justice and/or poverty issues.

The criteria for the award: The recipient must have demonstrated an outstanding contribution (either a single outstanding contribution or over a long term) to efforts to promote access to justice and/or address poverty issues. The recipient must not have received the award previously. (The award, in consultation with the proposed recipient's family/next of kin, may be granted posthumously.)

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- Eligibility for the Award: Lawyer and paralegal licensees of the Law Society of Upper Canada.
- Frequency of the Award: Annually
- Process and Ceremony: The process should be similar to that followed for the Law Society Medal, Lincoln Alexander Award and Laura Legge Award, using the Law Society Awards Committee. To reflect that a recipient may be a paralegal the Committee's membership for consideration of this award should be expanded to include paralegal representation from the Paralegal Standing Committee.
- The award should be presented at the same event as the Law Society Medals.
- Award Commemoration: The details of this will be finalized once the award is approved, but would likely include an engraved award and a certificate.