



**TAB 7**

**Report to Convocation  
May 28, 2015**

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**Paralegal Standing Committee**

**Committee Members**  
**Michelle Haigh, Chair**  
**Susan McGrath, Vice-Chair**  
**Marion Boyd**  
**Robert Burd**  
**Cathy Corsetti**  
**Ross Earnshaw**  
**Robert Evans**  
**Brian Lawrie**  
**Marian Lippa**  
**Malcolm M. Mercer**  
**Barbara Murchie**  
**Baljit Sikand**  
**Catherine Strosberg**

**Purpose of Report: Decision and Information**

**Prepared by the Policy Secretariat  
Julia Bass 416 947 5228**

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## COMMITTEE PROCESS

1. The Committee met on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Committee members present were: Michelle Haigh (Chair), Susan McGrath (Vice-Chair), Marion Boyd, Robert Burd (by telephone), Cathy Corsetti, Ross Earnshaw, Robert Evans, Brian Lawrie, Marian Lippa, Malcolm Mercer, Barbara Murchie, Baljit Sikand and Catherine Strosberg.
2. The meeting was joined by newly-elected Benchers (taking office May 28<sup>th</sup> 2015) Raj Sharda and Anne Vespry.
3. Staff in attendance were: Diana Miles, Terry Knott, and Julia Bass.

*THIS SECTION CONTAINS  
IN CAMERA MATERIAL*

**FOR DECISION**

**WILLIAM J. SIMPSON AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE**

**Motion**

14. **That the Selection Committee for the William J. Simpson Paralegal Award be expanded to include two additional members: one justice, or retired justice, of the Ontario Court of Justice and one Justice of the Peace or member of a judicial tribunal.**

**Background**

15. In September 2011, Convocation approved the creation of The Law Society Distinguished Paralegal Award, to recognize a paralegal who has demonstrated the following criteria:
  - a. outstanding professional achievement;
  - b. contribution to the development of the profession;
  - c. devotion to professional duties;
  - d. adherence to best practices and mentoring of others in best practices;
  - e. a history of community service, and
  - f. personal character that brings credit to the paralegal profession.
16. On May 22, 2014, Convocation renamed the award the William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award, in honour of Mr Simpson's outstanding role in the creation of the paralegal regulatory model.
17. Recipients of the award have been as follows:
  - a. 2012, Brian James Lawrie;
  - b. 2013, Elaine Page;
  - c. 2014, Paula Stamp.
  - d. 2015, Paul Dray (to be presented in May).
18. The nominations for the award are currently reviewed by a selection committee comprising all five paralegal members of the Paralegal Standing Committee, the Vice-Chair of the Paralegal Standing Committee, a lay bencher member of the Paralegal Standing Committee and the Treasurer of the Law Society (or designate).
19. Other Law Society awards are considered by a Selection Committee with several outside representatives, including the Chief Justice of Ontario and a representative of the Ontario law deans.

**Proposal**

20. The Committee was of the view that the Selection Committee's deliberations on the most appropriate award recipient would be enhanced by the addition of a judge and a Justice of the Peace or judicial tribunal member. Within these parameters, the choice of the two additional members would be at the Treasurer's discretion.

**FOR INFORMATION**

**UPDATE ON COMPETENCE INITIATIVES**

21. The Executive Director of Professional Development & Competence, Diana Miles, provided a review of current initiatives with regard to paralegal competence, including the new substantive examination, approved by Convocation in October 2012, which will be launched this August, the new accreditation and audit process for paralegal colleges, approved by Convocation in February 2014, and possible further enhancements to paralegal education.

## FOR INFORMATION

### LAW SOCIETY REFERRAL SERVICE

22. The Executive Director of Client Service, Terry Knott, provided a review of recent developments regarding the Law Society Referral Service (LSRS), used by members of the public seeking a free half-hour consultation with a lawyer or paralegal.
23. The LSRS has evolved from a primarily phone-based system to a primarily online service. In the past, members of the public using the online feature of the service made their request but had to wait for LSRS staff to process the referral and send them an email. There was thus a delay in receiving the referral. The online service has now been automated, which means that the referral is immediate when a match is available. Work is underway to make the online service more visible on the Law Society's website and to revise the material sent to community organizations.
24. Callers to the LSRS main line (416-947-3330 or 1-800-268-8326) will be directed to an interactive website at <http://lsrs.lsuc.on.ca> for an immediate referral where a match is available. Members of the public may also reach LSRS staff lawyers and paralegals for assistance through the addition of a new email address, [lsrs@lsuc.on.ca](mailto:lsrs@lsuc.on.ca).
25. The online service is available at any time of day and the system will email the information about the referral so the person has all of the details they need immediately. The online service is now available at: [www.lawsocietyreferralservice.ca](http://www.lawsocietyreferralservice.ca)

#### **Crisis Line**

26. Legal professionals in LSRS will continue to assist callers in need through the addition of a crisis line: 416-947-5255 or toll free 1-855-947-5255. This is intended for people who are unable to use the online service, such as those in custody, in a shelter, or in a remote community without access to a computer.
27. LSRS staff will be directing people who are not in such a situation to the online service, as callers in crisis may not be able to get through if referrals over the phone are provided to everyone who calls.
28. Automating the service allows Legal Information Officers, who are trained lawyers and paralegals, to spend more time with those truly in need of assistance.

#### **Web Referral Statistics**

29. There is a trend of increased requests for referrals online. In 2014, the number of referrals issued online increased by 48.47%. Comparing the first quarter of 2015 with

the same time period in 2014, the number of online requests for referrals increased almost sevenfold.

30. The Lawyer & Paralegal Directory has been enhanced to allow members of the public to search for licensees who provide services in a particular area of law/legal services. LSRS promotes the use of the directory where a referral is not appropriate, so that in addition to searching for a paralegal by name, city, and postal code, members of the public can now search by area of legal services.

#### **Legal Resources Page**

31. With the move towards increasing efficiencies by offering more self-service applications online, the Law Society is adding a page to the website that lists legal resources. The webpage will serve as a centralized location of contact information and links to alternative legal resources for members of the public.
32. Resources are listed under main categories such as Family, Criminal, Civil, Tickets and Fines, Wills and Estates, Immigration, Government Resources, Boards and Tribunals, as well as a list of more general resources.

#### **Paralegal Use of LSRS**

33. As of May 1, 2015, it will be three years since the Law Society enhanced the service to include paralegals. Since May 1, 2012 when paralegals joined the service, LSRS has provided almost 10,000 referrals to paralegals (9,758 as of April 20, 2015). In the first quarter of 2015, there were 828 referrals to paralegals.
34. At the end of the first quarter of 2015, there were 89 active paralegals on the service (as of March 30, 2015).

#### **LSRS Statistics on Paralegal Referrals**

35. In 2014, 3,286 referrals were provided to paralegals. 54% of referrals to paralegals in 2014 were for Civil Litigation (Small Claims Court) matters, 33% were for Administrative Boards and Tribunals, while 13% were for Criminal and Quasi-Criminal matters.