



The Law Society of
Upper Canada | Barreau
du Haut-Canada

May 28, 2015

Update Report TAG – The Action Group on Access to Justice

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Reference Group Meeting

Reference Group Meeting #8 is scheduled for May 29, 2015. David Hole, Project Manager for Connecting Ottawa¹, will be speaking to the group about the practical application of collective impact methods. Hole will share best practices for developing a shared agenda, success metrics and communication processes. The meeting will also include updates from Grant Wedge and Sabreena Delhon about cluster and outreach activities.

OUTREACH

Innovation in Access to Justice Conference

Submissions are invited to the Innovation in Access to Justice Conference taking place in Montreal from October 1-2, 2015. Provided there is sufficient interest, this could be an opportunity to submit a joint proposal from the Law Society and TAG. The proposal deadline is June 15. The conference “will provide an opportunity in a non-academic setting for a wide array of stakeholders, practitioners, and individuals to contribute to frank and direct discussions about innovation and access to justice. The conference will explore creative ways of thinking about justice. It will offer participants new methods, ideas, and tools to build capacity for innovation in the justice system. It will also provide opportunities for hands-on learning through panel discussions and innovation workshops.”²

The County & District Law Presidents’ Association (CDLPA) Spring Plenary

Grant Wedge and Sabreena Delhon attended the CDLPA Spring Plenary in Thunder Bay on May 14- 15, 2015. Mr. Wedge gave a presentation about TAG on an access to justice panel that also featured Lee Stuesser (Dean, Faculty of Law, Lakehead University) and former Attorney General Chris Bentley (Executive Director, Legal Innovation Zone, Ryerson University). CDPLA members expressed interest in being part of the efforts to improve access to justice across Ontario, particularly outside Toronto and especially in small towns, rural, remote and Northern Ontario.

¹ Connecting Ottawa aims to improve access to justice for linguistic minorities by drawing upon a network of 40 community health, legal, immigration, disability, and social services agencies.

² <http://iaj2015.openum.ca/>

Ryerson University's Legal Innovation Zone

On April 29, 2015 Sabreena Delhon attended the launch of Ryerson's Legal Innovation Zone (LIZ) where Attorney General Madeleine Meilleur provided opening remarks. Described as Canada's first legal incubator, LIZ aims to "foster, support and develop innovative solutions and technologies that will help make Canada's legal system smarter, faster, better and more accessible."³ LIZ works with students, entrepreneurs, technology experts, government members and licensees. The Executive Director of the organization is Chris Bentley. TAG currently has a legal innovation cluster in early stages of development and is exploring a potential partnership with LIZ.

Ismali Conciliation & Arbitration Board Roundtable

On April 28, 2015 Grant Wedge attending a roundtable organized by the Ismaili Conciliation & Arbitration Board titled "ADR in Cities of Arrival – How do Immigrant and First General Populations Access Dispute Resolution." John McCamus (Legal Aid Ontario), Patricia Hughes (Law Commission of Ontario), Lai King Hum (Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers), Avvy Go (Toronto Chinese & Southeast Legal Clinic), Orlando Da Silva (Ontario Bar Association) and Barbara Caruso (Canadian Bar Association) were among the 25 invited attendees. There was an in-depth discussion of accessible, culturally sensitive, community-based dispute resolution options.

Courthouse Consultation

On April 27, 2015 Sabreena Delhon along with Terry Knott, Sheena Weir and Moni Elali of the Law Society participated in a consultation session for the proposed Toronto Courthouse slated for construction within the coming years. Discussion revolved around how the new building could promote access to justice for the public.

CLUSTER ACTIVITIES**Targeted Legal Services Symposia**

The Targeted Legal Services symposia co-organized by TAG, the Law Society of Upper Canada and Social Justice Tribunals Ontario held its second event on May 12, 2015. At the first symposium in February, participants explored new ideas about how targeted legal services could be implemented in a variety of practice settings. The second symposium focused on success stories with an eye to the innovative ways that practitioners are responding to the public's need for competent, professional and customized legal services. The event had approximately 100 attending in person and 145 viewing by webcast. Access to Justice Committee Co-Chairs, Paul Schabas and Cathy Corsetti spoke on the panel titled "Targeted Legal Services as a Business Model: From Concept to Reality in a Changing Landscape".

³ http://www.ryerson.ca/news/news/General_Public/20150504-right-brain-meets-left-at-legal-innovation-zone.html

Custody & Access Assessor Task Force

For the past five years, family justice system participants, including lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists have been calling for reforms to address the shortage of qualified custody and access assessors in the family court system. One of the major concerns that has repeatedly been identified as contributing to this problem is the impact of frivolous complaints on the willingness of assessors to do this important and challenging work. On June 3, 2015, the Custody & Access Assessor Task Force will meet to explore potential solutions for this access to justice problem. Professor Nicholas Bala (Faculty of Law, Queen's University) will speak about his current research aimed at improving access and outcomes in the family justice system. A facilitated session with meeting attendees will follow Professor Bala's presentation.

Online Family Law “Shared Steps” Resource

This initiative focuses on common legal problems faced by people who have low or moderate incomes or face other disadvantages. It enhances Community Legal Education Ontario's existing “Shared Steps” materials. The project is aimed at the first-contact community workers whom these people trust and turn to for help. The aim with this initiative is to adopt a “no wrong door” approach by embedding the same content into multiple, targeted websites. Planning is currently underway to operationalize content production and embedding processes.

Mental Health

TAG was pleased to participate in the May 6, 2015 Mental Health Event organized by the Law Society and looks forward to attending the May 22, 2015 All Rise: A Summit on Mental Health in the Professions organized by the Ontario Bar Association. These events will advance the development of a mental health cluster. Currently ideas for this cluster involve consideration of social determinants of health/justice and the inclusion of a trauma informed approach that ultimately equips licensees with the necessary tools for success in their respective practices. TAG is working with Legal Aid Ontario as well as the Advocate's Society, the County & District Law Presidents' Association and other organizations beyond the justice sector in order to develop an informed cluster that is coordinated with substantive, existing strategic objectives.

Other Clusters

Other clusters that are in progress and/or in early stages of development pertain to:

- Access to justice issues faced by the trans*⁴ community.
- Access to justice issues faced by those with limited or constrained access to technology with a specific focus on the internet. There is interest from the Law Commission of Ontario to convene a symposium in the fall that facilitates the

⁴ Trans* (with the asterisk) is an umbrella term that refers to all identities within the gender identity spectrum.

development of principles on technology use in court. This approach is informed by Access to Justice Technology Principles developed by the Washington State justice system.