



11 APRIL 2025  
IN-PUBLIC BENCHERS' CONVOCATION

MINUTES OF THE SPRING TERM CONVOCATION OF THE BENCHERS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HELD AT THE OFFICES OF THE LAW SOCIETY AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE ON FRIDAY, THE 11<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL 2025, COMMENCING AT 9:30 A.M.

The following Benchers were present:

Elective Benchers: Gladys Dunne, KC, President  
Scott Worsfold, Past President  
Rod Zdebiak, KC, Vice-President  
Lauren Chafe, KC  
Johnathan Earle  
Greg French  
Valerie Hynes, KC  
Mark Mills  
Jonathan Regan  
Steve Scruton  
Lorilee Sharpe  
Alex Templeton  
John Whelan  
David Williams

Appointed Benchers: Linda Harnett  
Allan Skanes

Regrets: Ross Elliott  
Derek Ford  
Carey Majid, KC  
Sheilagh Murphy, KC  
Glenda Reid  
Doug Wright

Law Society Staff: Brenda B. Grimes, KC  
Aimee N. Rowe

The President stated that a notice of the Benchers' Convocation was provided to all Benchers in accordance with the Rules of the Law Society. A quorum of Elective Benchers and Lay Benchers being present, the President declared the Convocation regularly constituted.

\*Unless otherwise specified in the minutes, all motions were carried by a unanimous vote of Benchers.

## INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

### 1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting and formally acknowledged that the Island of Newfoundland is the ancestral homeland of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq.

### 2. Excusal of Benchers unable to attend Convocation

*On Motion by David Williams and seconded by Johnathan Earle: that Benchers unable to attend Convocation be excused. CARRIED.*

### 3. Motion to move any Agenda Item to the In-Camera Agenda

There was no motion.

### 4. Adoption of Agenda

*On Motion by Allan Skanes and seconded by Alex Templeton: that the Agenda be adopted. CARRIED.*

## ITEMS FOR DECISION/DISCUSSION

### 5. Strategic Planning Work Plan

#### *Promote Access to Justice – Access to Justice Committee – Use of Alternate Legal Service Providers*

Benchers were provided with a memo from the Access to Justice Committee requesting that Benchers consider whether the Law Society should develop a program to regulate paralegals in the province, seek amendments to the *Law Society Act, 1999*, to expand the scope of services paralegals are able to provide, and amend the Rules of the Law Society to give effect to any such legislative changes.

The Chair of the Committee, Lauren Chafe:

- i) gave Benchers an overview of the term “paralegals”;
- ii) outlined how expanding the scope of services paralegals are able to provide can respond to the needs of the public and improve access to justice;
- iii) explained why paralegals should be regulated;
- iv) identified why the Law Society is in the best position to regulate paralegals; and
- v) provided jurisdictional examples.

Benchers discussed generally:

- i) the current volume of paralegals in the province;
- ii) the unauthorized practice of law and how it is regulated;
- iii) whether the provincial government is asking the Law Society to consider this issue; and
- iv) how the regulatory scheme would operate.

Benchers agreed that the regulation of paralegals and expanding their scope of practice would promote access to justice but noted that any “program” would have to be fully considered and reviewed by Benchers before any steps are taken

to give effect to the program, particularly as it relates to petitioning the government for legislative change.

The Executive Director noted that, if approved by Benchers, the item would be included in the next Strategic Workplan, with milestones toward completion.

*On Motion by Lauren Chafe, KC and seconded by Allan Skanes: that Benchers direct staff to develop a draft program for the regulation of alternative legal service providers in the province for Benchers further review and consideration.*  
**CARRIED.**

### ***General Discussion about Strategic Workplan***

The Executive Director noted that staff is working on the development of a new Strategic Workplan, which will take into consideration the priorities identified by Benchers. The draft Workplan is anticipated to be presented to Benchers at the June meeting.

## **6. Education Committee Report**

### ***Minutes – 21 February 2025 Call to Bar***

Benchers were asked to approve the minutes from the 21 February 2025 Call to Bar.

*On Motion by Allan Skanes and seconded by John Whelan: that the minutes from the 21 February 2025 Call to Bar be approved.* **CARRIED.**

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

## **7. President's Report**

A report was provided.

The President highlighted the following:

- She attended the Federation of Law Societies of Canada's strategic planning, including their opening ceremony at the Federation's new offices;

- She had a couple of meetings with Chief Judge Fowler and noted his willingness to include the Law Society in several initiatives.

## 8. Education Committee Report

### *Update re: Competency Framework*

Benchers were provided with a draft Competency Framework for Entry to Practice.

The Chair of the Education Committee, Allan Skanes, noted that the draft framework is provided for information purposes at this time as consultations on the framework will continue. He advised Benchers to contact the Director of Admissions and Education, Christian Hurley, should they have any questions.

### *Notice of Resumption of Practising Status*

A report was provided. There were no questions arising.

## CONCLUDING MATTERS

## 12. Other Business

There was no other business.

## 13. Adjournment

The President noted that Benchers would move to the *in-camera* portion of the meeting and that the public portion of the Benchers' Meeting was adjourned.

*On Motion by Greg French and seconded by David Williams: that the in-public portion of the Benchers' meeting be adjourned. CARRIED.*

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GLADYS DUNNE, KC

