



LAW SOCIETY

Newfoundland & Labrador

23 FEBRUARY 2026 IN-PUBLIC BENCHERS' CONVOCATION

MINUTES OF THE WINTER 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 MONDAY, THE 23RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026, COMMENCING AT 9:30 A.M.

The following Benchers were present:

Elective Benchers:

Rod Zdebiak, KC, President
Doug Wright, Vice-President
Gladys Dunne, KC, Past-President
Lauren Chafe, KC (For Agenda Items #6 - #11)
Johnathan Earle
Greg French
Valerie Hynes, KC
Carey Majid, KC
Mark Mills
Sheilagh Murphy, KC
Steve Scruton
Lorilee Sharpe
Alex Templeton
John Whelan

Appointed Benchers:

Ross Elliott
Linda Harnett
Monika Rumbolt
Allan Skanes

Regrets:

Derek Ford
Jonathan Regan
David Williams

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

It was noted that the Benchers unable to attend had provided reasonable explanations.

On Motion by Allan Skanes and seconded by Doug Wright: 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 Johnnanthan Earle and seconded by Greg French: that the Agenda be adopted. CARRIED.

ITEMS FOR DECISION/DISCUSSION

5. Strategic Planning Work Plan

General Discussion about Strategic Work Plan

The Executive Director, Brenda B. Grimes, KC, referred Benchers to the Strategic Work Plan posted on the portal which is updated prior to every Benchers' meeting. She noted that progress on the initiatives is on track.

Promote Truth and Reconciliation

With respect to the priority to Promote Truth and Reconciliation, Ms. Grimes noted that the Executive Director, the President and Bencher, Johnathan Earle, travelled to Labrador in January. While their trip to Nain had to be rescheduled, they were able to meet with various stakeholders, they attended a 2-day workshop on intimate partner violence, and they presented to students at the Sheshatshiu Innu School and Mealy Mountain Collegiate. They also met with representatives from the Labrador Justice Coalition.

A couple of issues identified in Labrador include: i) the availability of notaries in the area; ii) intimate partner violence and support for survivors; and iii) how lay Benchers are selected.

Benchers agreed that it is important that key takeaways be identified so that issues/concerns raised in Labrador can be actioned.

National Rule of Law Campaign

It was noted that the campaign has been successful thus far. This topic was addressed in more detail during the in-camera portion of the meeting.

6. Education Committee Report

Principal Training Program – Guidebook and Proposed Licensed Course

Benchers were provided with a memo from the Education Committee seeking approval to proceed with the adoption of a Principal Training Program for lawyers who act as principals to articling students. The proposed program would be adopted from an existing course developed by the Law Society of Saskatchewan and licensed to the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador for a one-time fee of \$5,000.

The Chair of the Education Committee, Allan Skanes, noted that the Committee has been reviewing the articling process and agreed that due to the role principals play in the process, they must have a general understanding of their obligations as principals and how to effectively mentor students. The Committee recommended the adoption of the Principal Training Program from Saskatchewan.

The Director of Admissions and Education noted that the program (approximately 3 hours) would count for CPD credits. He added that it would likely benefit any lawyer who mentors another lawyer and suggested that he can make it more available once the platform is set up.

On motion by Allan Skanes and seconded by Lauren Chafe, KC: that Benchers approve the adoption of a Principal Training Program adapted from the Law Society of Saskatchewan's course and approve the execution of the Content License Agreement with the Law Society of Saskatchewan for the one-time licensing fee of \$5,000. CARRIED.

Amendments to Rule 6

Benchers were provided with a memo from the Education Committee seeking amendments to Rule 6 respecting admission as a student-at-law and the articling process.

As outlined in the memo, the proposed changes are primarily housekeeping and modernization amendments, intended to improve clarity, eliminate redundancy, align the Rules with current practices and required forms, and provide the Education Committee and Benchers with appropriate procedural flexibility while maintaining fairness and transparency.

On motion by Allan Skanes and seconded by Doug Wright: that Benchers approve the proposed amendments to Rule 6. CARRIED.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7. President's Report

A report was provided. There were no questions.

8. Education Committee Report

*2025 Bar Admission Course – Participant Survey Results
Student Admission
Transfers under NMA
Notice of Resumption of Practicing Status*

A report was provided. There were no questions arising.

9. Continuum of Legal Education in Truth and Reconciliation Symposium Report

A report was provided. There were no questions.

CONCLUDING MATTERS

12. Other Business

*Letter to Government – Funding of a Permanent Gladue Report Program
and Support for Indigenous Courtwork Program Pilot*

Benchers were provided with a memo from the Indigenous Education and Action Committee (“IEAC”) seeking Benchers’ approval to send correspondence to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General, advocating for:

- i) Provincial cost-sharing and permanent funding of a Gladue Report Program in Newfoundland and Labrador; and
- ii) Provincial support for the implementation of an Indigenous Courtwork (ICW) Program pilot project in the province.

Benchers agreed that this is important work that must be supported.

On motion by Gladys Dunne, KC and seconded by Johnathan Earle: that Benchers authorize the IEAC to send the enclosed correspondence to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. CARRIED.

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 Allan Skanes and seconded by Greg French: that the in-public portion of the Benchers' meeting be adjourned. CARRIED.

ROD ZDEBIAK, KC