

 **Banack's Bencher News**

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The End of the Bar Admission Course?: Convocation received a Task Force Interim Report describing a possible framework for a new direction in the Law Society's approach to the licensing process. Further input will be sought from the various interested parties so that in the future, law students, law schools and the profession will each know their respective responsibilities relating to pre-call education. In the proposed system, the Law Society will no longer teach substantive law and procedure, however, will provide reference materials and a professional responsibility course upon which candidates will be examined. Licensing examinations, offered three times a year, will be developed for the Law Society by professional educators. There is to be a renewed commitment to ensure that articling provides a meaningful experience for students. It is anticipated that the new process will improve access, equity and diversity within the legal profession. The Task Force report is to be available on the Law Society web site and will be debated at May Convocation.

Face of the Profession: In the last three years, approximately 1,000 new members were called to the Bar. In each of those years, the number of female lawyers equalled or exceeded 50%. The 2001 Bar Admission Course enrolment statistics, based on voluntary self identification disclosed that 53% were women, 20% visible minorities, 5% francophones and 1% were aboriginal persons. The trends and current statistics indicate that the increasing diversity of the Ontario legal profession will become more apparent in successive years. However, continued study will be necessary to determine whether the equity objectives of the Law Society are achieved as these lawyers progress through the traditional roles of junior lawyer, associate and partner.

Video Conferencing CLE: Benchers recently received a letter from a Nepean lawyer praising an interactive video conference broadcast to Ottawa, which saved the lawyer significant out-of-pocket expense and loss of productivity that would have arisen if it had been necessary to travel to Toronto for that educational opportunity. It is anticipated that similar educational opportunities will continue to be provided in a cost-effective and timely manner in various centres throughout the Province.

New Law Society Award: Convocation has decided that the Law Society will establish an award in the name of Colonel The Honourable Lincoln Alexander whose lifetime work demonstrated his long-standing interest and commitment to matters of a public nature

and the pursuit of community service on behalf of Ontario residents. The award is to be conferred annually to a member of the profession who demonstrates those qualities.

Law Society Medal: The Law Society Medal has been awarded since 1985 to individuals who have performed the ordinary tasks of a lawyer but with such diligence or effectiveness or so much to the benefit of the profession, as a whole, that they deserve recognition. The recipients of the Award this year are Lincoln Alexander of Hamilton, David Bristow of Toronto, Harvey Haber of Toronto, Hugh Lawford of Kingston, Marshall Crowe of Ottawa, John McCamus of Toronto and Julien Payne of Ottawa.

Publication of Discipline Cases: Lawyers' names will be published in the Ontario Lawyer Gazette following determination of discipline matters by a Hearing Panel, even where an appeal has been filed. Publication of the results of the proceedings will include notice that the member has appealed the decision, if applicable. However, in appropriate cases, a member appealing the decision of the Hearing Panel may immediately apply to the Appeal Panel for an Order that the Law Society not publish the finding of the Hearing Panel.

Emerging Issues: A Convocation Committee responsible for providing long-range insight on developments relevant to the Law Society's regulatory role has identified a series of broad categories for consideration for future study. The areas assigned first priority include globalization and its effects on law practice, the effectiveness and efficiency of the justice system, training of lawyers, balancing career and family, effects of information technology and the Law Society's role in the Federation of Law Societies of Canada. The Committee's effort is a work in progress and Convocation is to be provided with a proposal for study of some of the issues.

Receipt of Property Relevant to a Crime: Convocation received the report of a special committee examining lawyers' ethical duties in connection with property relevant to a crime in order to address the relevant professional conduct issues. The report, available for review on the Law Society web site, is to be debated in April Convocation. A large number of submissions were received from various organizations reflecting opposing views in respect of the difficult issue. A proposed Rule of Professional Conduct, if adopted, will provide important clarification to deal with the situation confronting lawyers when representing clients in uncertain circumstances.