

LIAISON

LAW COMMISSION OF ONTARIO

Message from the Executive Director



I became executive director of the Law Commission of Ontario about one year ago. During this time, I have seen the extraordinary commitment of stakeholders, justice organizations and countless individuals to the success and sustainability of the LCO. Thank you all.

Throughout these final months of the LCO's second five-year mandate, the Board of Directors and I have focused intently on our renewed mandate. We've been working hard to ensure a third successful term through the renewal of our governance agreement, our funding and our strategic plan. I am pleased to announce that all three are complete or very nearly so. Read the details in our feature story.

The LCO will begin its third mandate in 2017 committed to expanding the reach and impact of our work and to prioritizing challenging issues that are important to the people of Ontario. It promises to be a great year with

- a new LCO strategic plan;
- a new LCO website;
- our final report on the Legal Capacity, Decision-making and Guardianship project;
- a discussion paper for the Improving the Last Stages of Life project;
- a discussion paper for the Defamation Law in the Age of the Internet project;
- a project kick-off for our Indigenous project;
- a major international conference on defamation; and
- a forum on law and technology issues.

I hope you will join us in our work and continue to support the LCO.

Nye Thomas

in this issue . . .

• **Signed, sealed and renewed**

• **Celebrating Judith**

• **New Year, new reports**

Three LCO papers scheduled for release in early 2017

The final report in a project that garnered the largest public consultation in the LCO's history will be unveiled in early March at an event also celebrating the LCO's renewal. Thousands of Ontarians weighed in on the LCO's study of the laws governing **legal capacity, decision-making and guardianship**. The Commission's recommendations are widely expected to attract international attention.

The LCO will also release its **Improving the Last Stages of Life discussion paper** in the Spring of 2017.

The Spring will also see the release of the LCO discussion paper on the **Defamation Law in the Age of the Internet**.



Copies of all three reports will be available at lco-cdo.org.



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COMMISSION DU DROIT DE L'ONTARIO

New governance agreement signed

Third, five-year mandate guided by new Strategic Plan

The founding parties of the Law Commission of Ontario have approved a new governance agreement to extend the LCO's mandate for a third five-year term. The agreement between the Law Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, the Law Society of Upper Canada, Osgoode Hall Law School and the Law Deans of Ontario covers the period January 1, 2017 to December 2021.

"The enthusiastic support of our funders and signatories is a reflection both of where we've been and where we're going," says LCO Executive Director Nye Thomas.

The LCO Board also recently approved a new Strategic Plan to expand the reach and impact of the LCO's work. Included in the priorities are improved outreach and accessibility, engagement with an even broader range of people and organizations, and a focus on Indigenous and technology law reform issues.

"We remain committed to working with and for Ontarians on projects that are relevant, practical and forward-looking," says Thomas.

IN BRIEF

Welcome students

The arrival of fall heralds the arrival of our new students Manasvin (Veenu) Goswami (U of T), Yasmeen Peer (Windsor) and Kate Withers (Queen's). Farewell and thank you to our Summer 2016 students.

New LCO lawyer

Ryan Fritsch is hitting-the-ground-running as the LCO's new lawyer responsible for the Last Stages of Life Project. Previously a policy counsel at Legal Aid Ontario, Ryan has extensive experience in health law, human rights, and community and provincial consultations. He is filling the role held by Sarah Mason-Case, who is currently on leave to pursue her PhD.

MAG secondment extended

It was a short-lived farewell to Fran Carnerie. We are pleased to report that Fran's term as the LCO Ministry of the Attorney General Counsel-in-Residence has been extended another year to July 2017.

POA report in the news

Lawyers representing victims of careless driving are calling on the provincial government to heed the LCO's recommendations to amend the *Provincial Offences Act*. The Commission's 2011 report showed courts were adopting as many as 23 separate factors to govern sentencing. According to an article in the *Law Times News*, Toronto lawyer Sean Robichaud is among those calling for changes to the Act to ensure judges have the tools they need to impose adequate sentencing.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

It's a match made in heaven

Long-time LCO volunteer at 10 years and counting



After more than 32 years as executive director of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, Judith Wahl is retiring, but "definitely not going anywhere" when it comes to her second love — as a pro bono lawyer with the LCO.

Wahl's ties to the Commission began with her first project — the development of a framework for the Law as it Affects Older Adults — and continue today. All told, she has served on four advisory groups, co-authored three commissioned papers and partnered with the LCO to co-host an international conference on elder law.

"The LCO has always looked at what the issues are and how they impact the day-to-day life of people," Wahl explains. "This kind of work has meaning and impact. It creates a real energy around important issues."

She's especially keen to see the results of her latest efforts involving the Last Stages of Life and Legal Capacity, Decision-making and Guardianship projects. She expects both reports will help inform her next career as consultant and author of a book on elder law.

"I cannot think of a more dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate contributor to the work of the LCO. We wish Judith well in retirement and look forward to our continuing friendship." — Nye Thomas

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2032 Ignat Kaneff Building
Osgoode Hall Law School, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Tel: 416-650-8406 | Toll Free: 1-866-950-8406
TTY: 416-650-8082
lawcommission@lco-cdo.org
www.lco-cdo.org
twitter: @LCO_CDO



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