

HEATHER HANSEN

heather@mccarthyco.ca

Region	Incumbency	Slate or Coalition Affiliation	Law Association Membership
Toronto	Not An Incumbent	Good Governance Coalition	Peel

LiRN Funding and Libraries

Will you support the Law Society maintaining its current level of funding for LiRN, adjusted annually for inflation?

Yes

Do you recognize the importance of the Law Society’s support for the LiRN budget in maintaining licensee competence across Ontario?

Yes

As a family lawyer I spend a lot of time in regional courthouses across the province. I see (and personally benefit from) access to the resources made available through LiRN. Smaller firm lawyers and/or lawyers who practice in regional settings depend on these resources to ensure timely, current and reliable information to service their clients.

If you are an incumbent, do you regret voting to cut the LiRN budget by 10% in November 2020?

N/A

N/A - not an incumbent.

Do you support offloading funding for LiRN/law libraries to the Law Foundation of Ontario?

No

Funding for the LiRN is an LSO mandate and obligation and it should continue to be so. To "offload" funding to the LFO would be placing a critical funding issue in the mix with other competing funding considerations and place the security of this resource at risk. The LSO needs to protect and ensure the continued funding of the critical resources provided through the LiRN for the benefit of the profession. Lawyers across the province need to be assured that their library funding is secure.

Legal Aid Funding

Will you advocate for Legal Aid Ontario funding improvement and sustainability to ensure that being a Legal Aid-empanelled lawyer remains a viable area of practice for the private bar?

Yes

👉 If you answered “yes”, how?

As a family law lawyer I see firsthand how critical proper funding is for LAO. While there will always be a small cohort of litigants who elect to represent themselves the vast majority of litigants who are self-represented do not do so by choice and they are overwhelmingly engaged in family law litigation. This places a burden on not just the self-represented litigant but also the system. Whenever we make strides in family law reform we are often just putting a band-aid on a larger, systemic problem. It also goes without saying that those most often impacted by insufficient funding are those who need it most: we see this in particular in child protection litigation where parents are not able to afford proper representation on critical issues for themselves and their children.

Please describe efforts that you believe should be undertaken by the Law Society to advocate for investment in LAO and increased financial allocation to LAO from the provincial and federal governments’ budgets.

From a family law perspective we need to continue to push for data and research on how SLR's are navigating the system. There is limited research to date on volume, impact, and outcomes. As a partner in advocating for investment in LAO and increased funding, the LSO can and should be a leader in understanding the real impact that the lack of funding has on our system.

Paralegal Scope of Practice

On December 1, 2022, Convocation approved the Family Legal Service Provider (FLSP) license to allow paralegals who complete specified training to assist clients with certain family law services. The FLSP is to be reviewed in 3 years. Should paralegals’ scope of practice be expanded?

Yes, it should be expanded.

👉 If you answered “yes”, in what ways, why, and what additional training (if any) should be required of paralegals?

It is premature for me to say how or on what terms the FLSP should be expanded at the time of the review. I am broadly in support of an increased role for paralegals in family law but I hear and understand the concerns of many stakeholders who have concerns. I supported the FLSP license. On the review I will want to see how paralegals have engaged with that process and advanced this mandate. It will not be an answer for me that the FLSP created barriers or challenges for paralegals: this is the model and in order to evaluate how or if there should be further expansion we need to first see how the existing licensing process works.

Lawyer licensees pay an annual competency levy as part of their annual fees that contributes towards LiRN, which funds courthouse libraries. Would you support a requirement for paralegals to also pay an annual competency levy?

Yes

As we continue to dialogue about the expanded role for paralegals in providing legal services in the province that expanded role needs to run alongside ensuring that our critical resources remain accessible for all stakeholders. Whether the levy needs to be at the same level as lawyers and/or on a sliding scale are options to consider but as a general proposition I believe that paralegals should also pay an annual competency levy.


Law Association Involvement

When did you become a member of each of the associations you selected above? Which board or executive roles, if any, have you served in as part of these associations? Please list relevant dates and roles.

2022, member at large

Why are you a member of each of the associations you selected above?

I joined the Peel Law Association so that I could access the resources at the Brampton SCJ!

 Federation of Ontario  
Law Associations