

SHALINI KONANUR

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

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

I come from the Legal Aid Clinic world where learning and training budgets were almost totally cut. Un understand how difficult it is to practice law and bear the cost of the resources that we need to actually practice. Funding for law libraries/practice resource centres are critical for the majority of lawyers who practice in Ontario from sole practices to small firms. For me this is an issue of access to justice that supports the provision on legal services. I would support continued funding of a sustainable budget for LiRN.

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

I believe that funding for LiRN should remain with the Law Society of Ontario, whose obligation it is to support the members of our profession with their ability to practice in Ontario. My legal clinic has been the recipient of Law Foundation funding and, while I am thankful for the support, shifting to LFO funding solely would mean that individual law libraries would have to apply for funding annually and would have to comply with the reporting requirements of the Law Foundation. This would time-consuming, inefficient, and would create uncertainty, which I understand all too well coming from the legal aid clinic world.

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?

I am the Executive Director of a Legal Aid funded legal clinic. I am fully supportive of greater funding for Legal Aid Ontario both for clinics and for private bar lawyers who take certificates. I have worked with thousands of clients over my past 20 years + in the clinic system and I have never had as much difficulty as I do now in connecting them to lawyers who are able to take legal aid certificates. The rates make it extremely difficult and often impossible for lawyers to take on certificates and have a viable practice, and for them to be able to serve clients in the ways they want to serve them. I believe strongly in creating a system of access to justice for our most vulnerable populations in Ontario, which means funding a robust legal aid system that give service providers (lawyers in private practice and lawyers and paralegal at legal clinics) the ability to provide high quality services and make a living doing it. I have spoken to many certificate taking lawyers about the restrictive rates and hours to do this incredibly needed work. With the cost of practice on the rise the rates and time allocations have not kept pace which is leading us to a crisis point in access to justice.

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.

While the Law Society of Ontario does not directly fund Legal Aid Ontario services, it should continue to be a strong advocate for funding for Legal Aid Ontario. Cuts to Legal Aid Ontario and refugee and immigration legal services have had a significant impact on access to justice for Canada’s largest population of low-income racialized people. The lack of sustainable legal aid / legal clinic funding has meant a reduction in the capacity to provide legal services in all areas of poverty law. As the Executive Director of a legal aid funded legal clinic and someone who has worked in the legal aid clinic system for their entire career I see directly the impact of the cuts to funding at Legal Aid Ontario on both the clients we serve and our profession. As a starting point, the LSO must focus on the “access to justice” component of its mandate. The LSO must work closely with both the provincial and federal governments to ensure that there is sufficient funding for legal aid using its unique and powerful connections. The LSO must continue to support the Alliance for Sustainable Legal Aid (ASLA) in its work in this area including a lead role in ensuring that ASLA has direct connection to provincial and federal ministers, their staff and the bureaucracy, and along with ASLA, work with LAO to ensure that legal aid resources actually flow to front line service providers (both private bar and clinics).

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?

It should be expanded no further than the FLSP

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

No response was required.

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

I may support a requirement for paralegals who are able to access LiRN supports to pay fees towards those programs. As mentioned, I think the LiRN budget is critical to the practice of law for many lawyers and paralegals and we required a reasonable and sustainable solution to ensure these supports remain available. I do however think that the issue needs to be studied to determine the balance between adding more fees and the cost implications for all lawyers and paralegals to be able to practice and make a reasonable living (a cost benefit review).


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.

2023 - member only

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

I was born and raised in York Region. I live there now, and part of my practice is with clients in York Region.

 Federation of Ontario  
Law Associations