

SENT VIA EMAIL: treasurer@lso.ca

September 23, 2020

Treasurer Teresa Donnelly
Law Society of Ontario
130 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N6

Dear Treasurer Donnelly,

Re: Fee Reduction Motion

On September 1, 2020, two benchers gave notice of a motion to Convocation, returnable on September 24, to require that the 2021 licensing fees for all members of the Law Society of Ontario (“LSO”) be reduced by no less than 25%. According to the Notice of Motion, the rationale for the proposed fee reduction is that “virtually all members in private practice” have suffered a “devastating financial impact” as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is asserted that the proposed fee reduction is necessary to ensure members of the LSO are “able to remain financially viable”.

I am writing on behalf of the Women's Law Association of Ontario (“WLAO”) to voice our objection to the motion, both in substance and the manner it is being advanced. There is no doubt the current global public health crisis has impacted the legal community in different ways. The WLAO supports efforts by the Convocation to look at options to mitigate financial hardships experienced by lawyers and paralegals. However, any such effort must place the regulatory function of the LSO and the public interest at front and centre. It must be also based on research and a proper cost-benefit analysis. The motion in its current form fails to meet these requirements. There is little to no information about the proposed fee reduction, nor has a rationale been provided for the 25% figure. As recently noted by Malcom Mercer, the proposed reduction is arbitrary and fails to consider the impact on the regulation of the profession and access to justice.

It is also troubling that, once again, a motion on an important issue such as this was brought in Convocation with only two weeks’ notice to members. The lack of supporting research, action plan, and meaningful analysis marks a clear departure from the LSO’s long standing process of engaging in cost-benefit examination of the annual budget through internal consultations. In the interest of good governance, issues of this nature should be considered in accordance with long-established processes and be based on data, not bald assertions.



WLAO calls on the Benchers to oppose the fee reduction motion. This correspondence may be shared with Convocation and any colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Gold". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Gold
President

