



TAB 5

**Report to Convocation
February 22, 2018**

Strategic Communications Steering Group

Steering Group Members

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Purpose of Report: Decision

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FOR DECISION

**REPORT OF
THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS STEERING GROUP
Public Awareness and Licensee Engagement Campaign**

MOTION

1. **That Convocation**
 - a. **Approve the implementation of the public awareness and licensee engagement campaign as outlined in this report;**
 - b. **Direct the Steering Group to continue to work with staff to provide guidance and input on the implementation of the awareness campaign; and**
 - c. **Direct the CEO to provide updates to Convocation, as appropriate.**

Summary

2. As part of its strategic plan for 2015-2019, Convocation set the improvement of communications and engagement with licensees and the public as initiatives.
3. In 2016 and 2017, key activities in support of these priorities were undertaken. A consultant was retained to conduct research and recommend a framework for an awareness and engagement campaign and the Treasurer appointed the Strategic Communications Steering Group to provide input and strategic direction.
4. With the approval of the name change in late 2017, the Law Society is now positioned to proceed with the operational implementation of a public awareness and licensee engagement campaign.
5. The campaign, which is outlined below, will be integrated with and responsive to communication and stakeholder engagement plans connected to ongoing priority initiatives of the organization. Together with these communications, the campaign will act as foundational element of the Law Society's overall strategic communications and engagement strategy.

Background

6. The Strategic Communications Steering Group was established in February 2017 to inform the outcomes of the operational implementation of the Law Society's strategic communications priority, as reported by the Priority Planning Committee in December 2015:

THE LAW SOCIETY WILL ENHANCE ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC WITH RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The Law Society will focus on:

- enhancing communication to the public through Law Society outreach and other efforts, and
 - enhancing communication to lawyers and paralegals as a matter of accountability and transparency,
- with the goals of building a better public understanding of and educating the public on the role of the Law Society, and better enabling input from and engagement with lawyers and paralegals.

7. The services of an external communications consultant were retained to conduct qualitative and quantitative research with the public and licensees and develop a framework for an integrated communications strategy, in support of this priority. The objectives were to:
- a. Build a greater public understanding of the role of the Law Society in serving the public interest:
 - i. What lawyers and paralegals do, and the role they play in the justice system, including the types of legal services they provide;
 - ii. What the Law Society does to regulate the conduct of lawyers and paralegals and support their competence;
 - iii. How the Law Society facilitates access to justice.
 - b. Improve the public perception of the effectiveness of the Law Society in regulating conduct and competence and facilitating access to justice.
 - c. Improve communication and engagement with the legal community by:
 - i. Increasing awareness of Law Society services and supports;
 - ii. Identifying more outreach opportunities with diverse segments of the legal profession and actively engaging them around important issues; and
 - iii. Determining the best ways to engage and communicate with the legal profession, when and how.

Research methodology

8. Research was undertaken in late 2016 / early 2017 to understand public and licensees' opinions of the Law Society, the level of awareness of Law Society services amongst the public, and to understand licensee perceptions of the organization's communications and outreach and areas of improvement.
9. An environmental scan was conducted as the first phase of research, involving media analysis, social media analysis and a best practices review. Qualitative and quantitative research was then undertaken with both licensees and the public. This consisted of a series of one-on-one interviews with external and internal stakeholders, a qualitative online Citizens Board with Ontarians, and quantitative public and licensee surveys.

Organizational Strategic Priorities for Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

10. In developing and implementing the awareness and engagement campaign consideration will be given to ongoing initiatives that include significant communications and stakeholder engagement components. These include the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiative, Family Legal Services Review, the work of the Advertising and Fee Arrangements Issues Working Group, the Name Change, Compliance Based Entity Regulation and the redesign of the Law Society website.
11. Communication and engagement plans for these ongoing high-profile initiatives significantly impact broader communications strategies and messages to licensees and the public. The awareness and engagement campaign will be integrated with these communications as a key component of an overall, responsive organizational communication strategy.

Enhancing communication to the public

Public research – key points

12. The research showed that while 81 per cent of people who had used a lawyer were satisfied with the experience, only 29 per cent of the public were familiar with the services that lawyers provide.
13. These findings were echoed with paralegals: while only one in ten people had hired a paralegal, 73 per cent of those who did were satisfied with the experience. However, only 10 per cent of the public were familiar with the services that paralegals provide.
14. The research also showed that the public do not know how to find information on legal issues or find a lawyer or paralegal. Eighty-one per cent indicated they would ask a friend and 72 per cent would search online.

15. The research also showed that only 7 per cent of the public were familiar with the Law Society and that the words 'Upper Canada' in the Law Society's name was misunderstood and acted as a barrier to interaction.

Analysis and response to public research

16. This research highlighted to the steering group that a significant opportunity exists to educate the public about what lawyers and paralegals do and how to find legal help and legal representation.
17. As the regulator that governs lawyers and paralegals in the public interest, the Law Society is in a unique position to assist to educate the public and be a conduit for accessing legal services.
18. The steering group agreed that a public awareness campaign is required to increase the Law Society's profile and to build a better understanding among Ontarians of the role of the Law Society and its services, and the role of lawyers and paralegals in assisting the public.
19. To address the finding that the name "Upper Canada" was a barrier to connecting with the public, the steering group recommended that the first step in preparing for the development of the awareness campaign would be to change the name of the organization to better reflect the public it serves.
20. The name change was approved at the November 2017 Convocation. The Law Society is working with the government to facilitate the legislative amendments necessary for full implementation of the new name. Operationally, a 12 month transition plan has been developed and is now in progress.
21. This positions the Law Society to move forward with the design and launch of an awareness and engagement campaign.

Public awareness campaign

22. The objectives of the awareness campaign will be to generate greater understanding among Ontarians of what to do when they need legal help, how to find a lawyer or paralegal, and how the Law Society is working to ensure they have access to the right legal services when they need them. In addition, the campaign will assist to educate the public about the Law Society's role as a regulator and in ensuring access to quality legal services.
23. The campaign will be aimed at the general public with the intention of establishing the Law Society as the 'go-to' place for obtaining information about legal resources and referrals to lawyers and paralegals.

24. The campaign will also seek to shine a positive light on the legal professions and highlight the importance of the professions in access to justice and upholding the rule of law.
25. A key aspect of the campaign will be a call to action for the public to visit the Law Society's website to find out more about accessing Law Society services, and to better understand the role of lawyers and paralegals.
26. It is anticipated that the campaign will include a mix of the following communications tactics, and will involve benchers as spokespeople and champions to help communications efforts:
 - a. **Advertising** on transit, radio, billboards and digital (search engine optimization/ social media advertising);
 - b. **Public relations** – securing earned media around the launch of the campaign and why the Law Society is embarking on the campaign, utilizing the Treasurer and benchers for interviews and to emphasize key messaging concerning the Society's role as a regulator and the support and services it provides to the public;
 - c. **Sharing of information with equity partners and community groups** in different languages for use in community centres and other frequently visited locations. Enlist the support of benchers for outreach and speaking engagements to specific groups; and
 - d. **Social media campaign** to engage the public and ensure a wide demographic receives the Law Society's messages utilizing the Law Society's social channels, benchers who are active on social media, and by partnering with other stakeholders.
27. The particulars of the tactics used in the campaign (advertising, public relations etc.) are dependent on advice and guidance received from the external advertising agency that will be appointed following the Law Society's procurement process.
28. Key markets for communications activities include London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Greater Toronto Area, Sudbury, and Windsor. These markets are recommended due to their density, population coverage by advertising medium (i.e., advertising on some Toronto-based radio stations ensures coverage of South West Ontario and cottage country), and to ensure that we reach remote communities.
29. Ongoing evaluation of the campaign will include measurements such as:
 - a. number of impressions from the advertising

- b. number of visitors to the website
 - c. call centre inquiries
 - d. usage numbers for the Law Society Referral Service
 - e. positive media coverage
 - f. quality and quantity of social media engagement.
30. The campaign will begin with the selection of a vendor according to the Law Society's procurement process. The vendor will develop and focus test the creative and manage the buying of ad space.

Enhancing communications to lawyers and paralegals

Licensee research – key points

31. There was strong alignment between licensees and the public on the focus for the public awareness campaign. Both groups want the campaign to focus on how to find legal help, what to do when legal help is needed, and what services lawyers and paralegals provide.
32. Licensees were also asked about their familiarity with Law Society communications. Awareness of the Ontario Reports is greatest at 95 per cent, followed by the Portal at 92 per cent, CPD programs at 88 per cent and the website at 85 per cent.
33. The majority of licenses (53 per cent) had positive impressions of the Law Society, 26 per cent were neutral and 21 per cent had a negative impression.
34. Licensees would like to hear more about rule changes and would also like a better Portal experience and targeted, less frequent emails.
35. Licensees were asked to describe their views on the approach the Law Society should take on the future. Almost half (49 per cent) felt the Law Society should be an agent of change for the professions while just 24 per cent preferred maintaining the status quo.

Analysis and response to licensee research

36. The research made apparent that licensees would like to see curated, simple and clear communications, which could involve consolidating current licensee communication vehicles.
37. After a review of the research, the steering group agreed that there is a need to refresh and enhance licensee communications to build engagement and develop a greater

understanding of Law Society activities and how the Law Society is advancing the profession to be responsive, inclusive and progressive.

38. Work has already begun and benchers will have seen the new Convocation Update, which was redesigned in early 2017, increasing click-throughs and driving more traffic to the Law Society Gazette. Additional enhancements to Convocation Update and other licensee newsletters will be considered as the engagement campaign is further developed in 2018.

Licensee engagement campaign

39. The objective of the licensee engagement campaign is to build recognition of the Law Society as a regulator that provides resources and tools to aid licensees' success.
40. The campaign will include a component of the public awareness campaign, to develop an understanding in the legal community of how the Law Society is educating and assisting Ontarians in accessing the legal services they require.
41. To move forward with the licensee engagement campaign, the Law Society will undertake a detailed audit of licensee communications with the aim of improving communications to be clearer and more focused on the issues of greatest importance to licensees. This may involve enhancing existing channels and/or developing new channels for communication.
42. Evaluation of other options to increase engagement will also be undertaken, including involving benchers as champions for certain initiatives to help spread awareness amongst the professions.
43. Improving the website experience with easier navigation, fewer clicks and a better mobile experience, was also expressed as key for licensees to help them locate information and resources relevant for them. A new website that addresses these points will be launched later in 2018.

Budget

44. The resources required for the awareness and engagement campaign were determined as part of the 2017 planning stage. As such, they were approved in November 2017 with the Law Society's 2018 budget, and are included in the \$900,000 budget amount for strategic communication initiatives.

Evaluation and reporting

45. Ongoing evaluation will be conducted to assess the success of the campaign and highlight any challenges, with the objective of informing plans for subsequent stages.

46. Consideration will be given as to whether to repeat, in subsequent years, some or all of the public and licensee research in order to assess the campaign against the benchmark of the 2017 research.
47. The External Relations and Communications division will lead the implementation of the awareness and engagement campaign, under the direction of the Executive Director, ERC and the Chief Executive Officer.
48. The CEO will provide regular reports to Convocation, as appropriate, on the status of the implementation of the campaign, evaluation of results, and proposals for subsequent stages.

Conclusion

49. The steering group believes the campaign outlined above is an essential component of the Law Society's overall strategic communications strategy and is integral to achieving Convocation's priority of engaging licensees and the public with responsive communications.
50. Moving forward with a comprehensive and strategic awareness and engagement campaign will reinforce the relevance of the Law Society among Ontarians and licensees, and elevate the organization's reputation across all stakeholder groups. Additionally, it will provide a solid framework to map future initiatives and measure their success.