



2010-11: The Year OBA Members Look Up

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*“Put your head down and work. When you look up, it will be fifteen years later.” **

These words of advice to a young lawyer in 1951 still capture the model partnership-ladder career or—as some call it—a life in the law. The number one challenge for lawyers in Ontario as we enter the second decade of the 21st Century is to preserve the essence of being a lawyer, despite pressure from the knowledge economy to reduce our ranks to the status of commodities. Some of our members are integrated into one of the most sophisticated financial markets in the world. Others provide essential legal services to those whose lives sit on the knife's edge of society. Chances are your practice or employment is somewhere in between. Whatever a “life in the law” means to you, your membership in the OBA will help you stay ahead of the pack, allow you to share ideas with like-minded colleagues, and stand up for your profession on the public stage.

This will be a transformative year. We have emerged from the same economic conditions which have challenged lawyers all across Canada. Lawyers buried under work, both in private and in public sectors, may once again surface for air. Thanks to the leadership and dedication of my predecessors, most recently Carole Brown and Jamie Trimble, the expertise of our staff, and the generous efforts of our volunteers: we are strong, we are inclusive, and we are heard. Now is a unique opportunity for renewal, and together we will:

- make the OBA a truly provincial association
- build a legal education infrastructure for all lawyers
- welcome and encourage lawyers into the work of the OBA, and thereby promote them as leaders in the bar.

No, we can't see Russia from our back yard, either.

But compared to the City of Wasilla, the OBA has more than twice its population spread out over distances as wide as all Alaska. The OBA's geography will not be an impediment to empowering lawyers in every region of Ontario to effect change, or to resist it, based on local realities. We start this work by planning an October Council meeting devoted en-

tirely to regional issues. We have to ensure membership dollars collected from all regions of Ontario are used to deliver relevant services, advocacy and networking opportunities to all regions of Ontario.

This initiative is founded on the same core enlightened self-interest behind all successful professional associations: connecting with someone outside your tent expands the tent. Furthering the interests of lawyers in neighbouring regions, as well as in those a region or two removed, will benefit the lawyers in one's own region. I have asked our eight regional board members-at-large to be paired off with their counterparts from geographical extremes. The intention is to channel the new regional structure of the OBA Board of Directors into a working engine for regional initiatives. A provincial perspective will be crucial to positioning the OBA to advocate for lawyers in the mainstream of public discussion. The public must learn that lawyers do not only work in Toronto and for economic elites. Lawyers' work is integral to the building of communities in which the people of Ontario will raise their children, build our places of work, and protect the vulnerable.

Mandatory Professional Development

It is a core mandate of our association to preserve our profession's culture of lifelong learning and its rich heritage. Legal education in Ontario will undergo a year like no other, with the advent of Compulsory Professional Development (CPD). The OBA was a leader in advocating the change, very soon upon us. Now it is time for us to deliver. The first part of the job has been to remodel the way we produce professional adult education. In 2010-11, the OBA's practice sections will have more say in the type of programming their members will attend. But that is only the first step toward a more comprehensive review of program delivery.

Our new Chair of Professional Development, Martha MacKinnon, will be leading a working group, studying the future of the OBA's CLE, including the wisdom and shape of



a proposed joint venture with the Law Society. While the idea of merger of the province's two main non-profit CLE providers has ignited some excitement among members, it cannot be contemplated without mechanisms wedding the opposing business models of each organization, the OBA's being chiefly volunteer-based and the Law Society's being staff-centered.

The working group will report its preliminary study of the options at the October meeting of OBA Council, to be further debated in meetings throughout the term. Despite the allure of mutual benefits, no such venture will succeed unless we all accept the distinct organizational cultures of the OBA and the Law Society. Members choose to join the OBA for all kinds of reasons. They are required to belong to the Law Society, and reasons for joining do not come into it.

Mentorship and Governance

The words, *You Can't Say You Can't Play* aren't just the title of a book for kindergarten teachers. Adults, too, thrive in a place where they can join in. The OBA is not a club. Nor is it a union shop. As a volunteer member-service organization, it cannot exist without members. It is that simple. We have instituted a number of key reforms this past year, which will start to bear fruit in the coming term. With the passage of the OBA *Code of Conduct*, Ontario has led the country in broadcasting a renewed spirit of openness and transparency in everything we do. The CBA has adopted it, almost verbatim, in its *Principles of Conduct*. The OBA has to be a welcoming place where the energy of new members can be harnessed to create the fearless and independent bar of the future. This cannot be accomplished without following practices and procedures written down and published for everyone to read.

In the law, those who can, do *and* teach. This year, our Past-Chair of Membership, Kathryn Gamble-Lerchner, has agreed to

serve as the OBA's first chair of Mentorship. The OBA lobbied hard to get mentorship recognized as a credit-acquiring activity for the new CPD regime, both for mentors and for protégés. After a highly successful launch of the OBA's mentorship program in all eight regions, we are ready to build mentorship into a core member-service area. Mentorship, if done properly, will do for the regions what Sections have done to deliver member-networking opportunities in the Toronto region. As lawyers at all levels of experience pursue career paths beyond the "nuclear" law firm model of the last century, the OBA's ability to foster mentors could be crucial to the future of our association and of the bar of Ontario itself.

Our Carole – this bears repeating

Past-President Carole Brown has been recognized by the Women's Law Association of Ontario (WLAO) Ottawa Chapter for her outstanding service within the profession and her leadership in advancing the position of women lawyers in Ontario. The WLAO President's Award was presented to "Our Carole" on October 20, 2010 at Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. We have had a remarkable year at the OBA with Carole at the helm, but it is only one year within a lifetime of Carole's dedication to the OBA and the CBA family.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate, not only to our elected members of the Board of Directors, Council, Sections executives and committees, but also to every candidate and every outgoing office-holder. Also all our speakers, program chairs and other volunteers. You make it happen. Lawyers across Ontario reap the rewards.

**Finlayson, George D., John J. Robinette, Peerless Mentor: An Appreciation (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003), p. 118*

OBA Professional Development | Section Programs - OBA Exclusive



FEATURES

- Practice specific
- Timely
- Quick – breakfast, lunch or dinner
- Great speakers
- Current topics

Just a sample of some of the upcoming Section programs

Welcome Reception for Articling Students
– *Public Sector Lawyers*

The Independence of the Expert - "Who Let the Dogs Out?"
– *Construction Law*

Karen Spector Award to Jennifer Stoddart Privacy Commissioner for Canada – *Privacy Law*

www.oba.org/pd
for a complete listing of programs

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