
Today's Paralegal



MARCH 2015

Welcome to the Ontario Paralegal Association's First Newsletter

By Stephen Parker



As President of the Ontario Paralegal Association (OPA), I would like to welcome you to this emerging professional association. The organization is in its inaugural year and our membership has grown

to nearly 700 members but with around 7,000 licensed paralegals in Ontario, this is only about a 10% membership. I encourage all licensees to join the association. We are the voice for Paralegals. We have a lot to offer. This is going to be a busy and challenging first year. There are many issues we want to cover to enhance our practices. We have achieved much these first few months. The Board of Directors and all of the other volunteers on the various committees have been hard at work on your behalf.

A full year's worth of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses has been developed and is offered free of charge to our members. Participation is either in person or via webcast. We have partnered with Carswell to provide generous discounts on copies of the most commonly used legal texts such as the Annotated Provincial Offences Act; the Ontario Small Claims Practice 2015; Residential Tenancies, 10th Edition and many more. Discounts are also offered on Westlaw Next. Membership also provides access to competitive rates for errors & omission insurance coverage and a variety of comprehensive health benefit packages. All these offers are on our website with the appropriate contact information. They are also shown at the end of this newsletter.

The Law Society now includes us as an integral part of the legal community. We participate in programs and meetings with the Law Society and the Ontario Bar Association, the Advocates' Society, the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, the Family Lawyers Association and other organizations. We have attended three such meetings so far this year. The Advocates Society

has now opened up their skills programs to include Paralegals. This is a true advancement in our professionalism. In addition, there are now three County Law Associations that accept Paralegals as members. One such Association now has a Paralegal on their Board of Directors.

There are challenges ahead but the Paralegal Profession is growing and maturing at a rapid rate. **Join us for the ride!**

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Welcome to ‘Faces of the Ontario Paralegal Association (OPA)’ Series ...

By Doug Taylor, Paralegal Studies BAA Program, Lakeshore

“If I want something to change, it has to start with me.” Fallon Burns serves as a living example of someone who lives by her words. Humber College Paralegal Degree Program student, Fallon Burns, reflects on her current role as the Student Director with the Ontario Paralegal Association (OPA). Serving as the first OPA Student Director, Fallon Burns recently shared some reflections from her role and talked about the future of the Paralegal profession.

Fallon’s journey to the role of Student Director for the Ontario Paralegal Association, started with a chance meeting at Humber College’s Career Centre. While completing paperwork for campus employment, Fallon met the outgoing Paralegal Society of Ontario’s (PSO) Student Director, Angelique Mouchel-Maas. The two paralegal students struck up a conversation and Angelique was so impressed, that she encouraged Fallon to run for the PSO Student Director role. Inspired by Angelique’s encouragement, Fallon successfully went on to be nominated at the PSO Annual General Meeting and was elected by the membership. When the Paralegal Society of Ontario (PSO) and the Licensed Paralegal Association (LPA) merged to form OPA, Fallon ran for the position of Student Director of OPA. She was acclaimed and she is the current OPA Student Director.



As a five-time undergraduate mooting competitor, Fallon Burns was the youngest student to compete from Humber College’s Paralegal Degree Program.

Fallon successfully organized the Paralegal Cup, a first-ever college based, Inter-Collegiate Mooting Competition for paralegal students.

Fallon has an interest in

and they are so good at it that they know exactly what they are doing. I would like to see a P2 that is licensed for different kinds of appeals at the Divisional court level and, if necessary, the Ontario Court of Appeal. A P2 designation would offer a specialty from within a specific field of practice. I believe the current licensing structure will change and the creation of a P2 designation will increase access to justice.

I also believe the direction of paralegal education is going to evolve. I would like to see standardized testing for entrance into the paralegal profession. Unlike the LSAT, the proposed paralegal testing would address reading, writing and grammar. This will better prepare students for the rigor of paralegal studies and elevate the quality of graduating candidates.” [HOME](#)

How would you describe OPA to a new student?

“OPA is the advocacy group for the profession. We host networking events and we are working on setting up a mentoring program to connect students and newly licensed paralegals with more experienced paralegals. We are also organizing the annual mooting competition. These activities are focused around benefiting students. OPA helps fill in some of the educational gaps left by colleges. CPD education is incredibly expensive, and OPA offers free CPDs to all members in good standing so students benefit by expanding their education. In addition, OPA offers hosted social events to expand your professional network and there are opportunities to meet potential employers.”

What would you say are some of your strongest beliefs about OPA?

“I believe OPA stands for raising the profession through increased education. I believe the greatest area for growth in the paralegal profession is through educational reform. Increasing the level of education increases our competency and as we increase the standards, we can confidently expand our scope of practice. I would like to see a common denominator for educational standards.”

What do you think will change about OPA over the next five years?

“OPA is going to grow. I believe we are going to see a change in the scope of practice. I would like to see the creation of a second designation for P1 licenses. We already have existing licensed paralegals that know civil procedure so well,

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JUNE 2015 (Issue #4)

Important Updates from the Editors!

- 1) We would like you to know that the next issue of Today's Paralegal will be in **September 2015**. There will be no issues published in July or August of 2015. Enjoy the summer weather. Be safe and have fun!
- 2) We plan on having a Writing Contest for Paralegal Students. There will be prizes for the two best entries. More information will be provided in the September issue. All entries are to be submitted by October 15, 2015 and the prizes will be awarded and published in the November issue.

In the News!

Prostate Cancer Canada Donation

The OPA Communication/Marketing Committee and Stephen Parker presented a cheque to Prostate Cancer Canada from the funds raised at the Aurora Chamber Street Festival Event.



Committee Members in photo from left to right:
Andrew Hyland, Roger Dinner, Sandy Azevedo, Shellyann Pereira and Delaram Mehdizadeh Jafari.

Committee Members who were unable to attend the cheque presentation include:
Brett Lockwood, Mitchell Kent, Patrick Eric Cheng and Qamar Yasmeen Tyyebi

The OPA Communications/Marketing Committee would like to thank the following sponsoring companies who made generous donations to our booth at the Aurora Chamber Street Festival Event:

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| McDonalds | RentOurCampers.ca |
| Domino's Pizza | Staples |
| Pizza Hut | Pharma Plus |
| Tim Hortons | Invisible Fencing |
| Starbucks | Global Pet Foods |
| President's Choice | Deja Vu Boutique |
| First Choice Haircutters | |

The Aurora Chamber Street Festival



Sandee, Sandy, Yasmeen, Patrick, Andrew



Brett, Roger, Sandy, Delaram

Celebrate Success

Several paralegals were recently acknowledged for their outstanding contributions to the community



By *Doug Taylor* www.dougtaylor.com

Over the past few weeks, three paralegals from our community were publicly recognized. While they carry out the bulk of their work outside the spotlight, the results of their tireless efforts have garnered public attention. All three recipients have earned accolades for their significant contributions to improving the community. It is appropriate that we take a moment to briefly highlight their achievements and celebrate their successes. All three recipients continue to serve as active role models, inspiring future leaders. On behalf of the entire OPA membership, we offer our congratulations on your outstanding achievements. We echo the sentiments of the broader legal community and all Ontarians, in offering our thanks for your compelling and selfless contributions to the community.

W. Paul Dray, 2015 William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award recipient

Paul Dray earned the 2015 William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award from the Law Society of Upper Canada.¹ The announcement came at the annual Awards night ceremony, held at Osgoode Hall on May 28, 2015.² He becomes only the fourth paralegal to receive the annual award. In 2003, the Attorney General appointed Paul as the first-ever paralegal bencher of the Law Society. From 2003 to 2014, Paul played a key critical role in creating the framework for paralegal governance and professional development in Ontario.³ Paul is a long-standing member of the paralegal community, having served as the president of the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario (PPAO). You can read Paul's acceptance speech [here](#).

Cathy Corsetti, 2015 Honorary Degree recipient

Cathy Corsetti earned an honorary Bachelor of Applied Arts (Paralegal Studies) degree from Humber College. Cathy will receive her degree following an address at this year's Spring Business School Convocation, located at the Toronto Congress Centre on June 16. Cathy is a pioneer of the paralegal profession and has served her clients and the community for over 38 years. She is a Humber College alumnus, graduating from the Law Clerk program. Elected to the Law Society's Paralegal Standing Committee in 2010, Cathy served as committee Chair for 5 years. More recently, she was elected as a Bencher at the Law Society for 2014-2018. Cathy joins prominent list of prior honorary degree recipients, including The Supreme Court of Canada's Honourable Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella.⁴ You can learn more about Cathy and Humber College's 2015 Spring Convocation [here](#).

Fallon Burns, 2015 CIGan Student Leadership Excellence Award recipient

Fallon Burns earned a bronze award at the 2015 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CIGan) Student Leadership Awards of Excellence.⁵ Fallon is a Paralegal Candidate of the Law Society of Upper Canada and she will graduate with an honours degree from Humber College's Bachelor of Applied Arts (Paralegal Studies) on June 16, 2015. Fallon is the current OPA Student Director and has served in this role with the Paralegal Society of Ontario (PSO) for the previous two years. In addition to founding the Paralegal Cup,⁶ Fallon sits on the Paralegal Studies Advisory Committee for Humber's Business School and is a member of Humber's Student Leadership Institute. Fallon also served as chair of Residence Orientation and was president of Humber's Lakeshore Residence Council.⁷ As a Dean's list academic, Fallon has received several awards including a 2014 Quarter Finalist at the Osgoode Cup National Undergraduate Mooting Competition, the 2013 Prosecutors' Association of Ontario Award and the Dan Andrae Degree Student Award. She is also active in the legal community as a member of the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. You can connect and learn more about Fallon [here](#).

¹ <http://www.lsuc.on.ca/distinguished-paralegal-award>

² <http://www.lawsocietygazette.ca/news/2015-law-society-awards-remarks>

³ <http://www.lawsocietygazette.ca/news/2015-simpson-award>

⁴ <http://www.scc-csc.gc.ca/court-cour/judges-juges/bio-eng.aspx?id=rosalie-silberman-abella>

⁵ <http://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/news-centre/news-release/cican-announces-awards-of-excellence-winners>

⁶ <http://www.paralegalcup.com>

⁷ <http://www.humber.ca/news/2015/5/we-cigan-do-it>

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OPA Gears up for the 2015 Paralegal Cup Moot

It will be all hands on deck for the 2015 Paralegal Cup Moot, on November 21 and 22, 2015



By **Doug Taylor** www.dougtaylor.com

The Paralegal Cup is the only mooting competition in Ontario that is exclusive to Paralegal students enrolled in a Certificate or Diploma program. The competition strengthens student advocacy and critical thinking skills by focusing on oral and written advocacy, professionalism, and resiliency. The third annual competition date is Saturday, November 21st and Sunday, November 22nd, 2015 at the Humber College Lakeshore Campus in Toronto.

Earlier this month, the student Steering Committee of the Paralegal Cup opened registration to all of Ontario's colleges for the competition.

"Building on the success of 2014, this year the Steering Committee is focussed on strengthening our community involvement. For example, we have initiated a program to reach out to local high schools in an effort to build awareness of the Paralegal profession. By getting involved as volunteers, we can offer a unique experience for high school students. This is an opportunity for them to connect with leaders in the legal community while gaining hands-on experience and gain valuable insight into the Paralegal profession. Moreover, Robert Lapper, the CEO of the Law Society of Upper Canada (LSUC) and Janet Minor, the LSUC's Treasurer have asked to join us at this year's competition and they will participate as judges."

- Madeline Williams, Paralegal Cup Coordinator, 3rd year Paralegal Degree student, and Steering Committee member.

Briefly, the mooting competition asks student teams to identify and address the legal issues for both the appellant and the respondent in a selected contemporary Canadian case. The competition requires students to draw on their advocacy, legal research, and legal writing skills as they present ten-minute oral submissions before a panel of judges. Furthermore, teams prepare and submit a written component using a prescribed format.

Since the beginning of the Paralegal Cup in 2013, the paralegal community has shown overwhelming support for the event's continued success. The Cup is truly an event that brings together the entire paralegal community, students, and professionals alike. This year's competition will highlight top-tiered students from colleges across the Greater Toronto Region, Southwestern, and Eastern Ontario. Also attending are many leading academics in the field of legal education, including, college Vice Presidents, Deans, administrators, and other tenured faculty members from colleges across Ontario. Over the last few years, the Paralegal Cup has engaged a unique and focused group of professionals. Licensees, members of the judiciary, educators, and administrators attend to mentor students as they practise and refine their research, analytical, and reasoning skills.

Thanks in part to OPA's support; last year's competition transcended the legal community. Once again, as the voice of Paralegals in Ontario, OPA will play a critical role. OPA's involvement in supporting the competition demonstrates their commitment to encouraging student extra-curricular academic skill development and support experiential paralegal education in Ontario...

"For the past two years I have volunteered at the Paralegal Cup which is an Intercollegiate Mooting Competition. I cannot possibly say enough about this event. We have seen the top students from around the province who have thoroughly impressed the paralegal and academic communities alike. This event has grown in popularity and this year there will be some esteemed volunteer judges. I am proud to have been part of this event in past years and am looking forward to volunteering again this year. One of my objectives and commitments to the Paralegal Cup Standing Committee is to try and recruit colleges and students to participate in this event. "

- Michelle Haigh, Chair of the LSUC Paralegal Standing Committee and OPA member

At its heart, the Paralegal Cup is about students. Students are the future of the paralegal profession. The students who participate in the competition become stronger and more confident advocates. As they graduate into the profession, they are better prepared to deliver Ontarians increased access to justice.

To learn more about the history of the Paralegal Cup, including reaction from previous students and volunteers, and past media attention, please visit our website at www.paralegalcup.ca