



TLA Statement on Diversity and Courthouse Library Funding

The Toronto Lawyers' Association (TLA) wishes to take the opportunity to affirm our support for equality, diversity and inclusion, and to recognize the efforts that have been made in this regard by the Law Society of Ontario. As a regulator with a public-interest mandate, the Law Society has a role to play in ensuring that the legal profession is reflective and representative of the community that it serves, so that it can best serve that community.

We also wish to express our concerns with the push for further budget cuts – specifically, to courthouse library funding, which budget has already been markedly reduced in late 2020.

While we fully appreciate the desire for greater efficiency, it is important to remember that the Law Society's budget supports many important services, including vital library services. Library services, which comprise not just access to legal resources but also research support, are essential for lawyers. This is especially true of lawyers practising on their own, in small firms or in other settings where such services are not available "in-house." To fill the gap, courthouse libraries provide access to expensive online legal research subscriptions and legal texts, and their law librarians provide invaluable assistance with legal research.

It is critical that adequate funding for courthouse libraries be maintained. Failure to do so could create barriers to access to justice and contribute to a less competent bar. The negative impact may disproportionately impact solo and small firm practitioners who often have limited finances to commit to their own access to legal resources. There may also be an impact on self-represented litigants and ultimately the administration of justice.

With this in mind, any additional cuts to the Law Society's budget should be made on an informed basis, after broad and meaningful consultation with stakeholders and with knowledge of the potential impact such cuts may have.