

February 15, 2022

Joseph Groia, Chair
Audit & Finance Committee
Law Society of Ontario
130 Queen St. West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N5

Via email: jgroia@groiaco.com

Dear Mr. Groia,

Re: Closure of the Osgoode Hall Restaurant

I am writing to you on behalf of the Toronto Lawyers Association (“TLA”). The TLA is the voice of its 4,000 members who practice law in all disciplines.

It has come to our attention that the Law Society of Ontario (“LSO”) has no plans to re-open the Osgoode Hall restaurant, which closed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, even after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and it is safe for us to meet in person. We respectfully ask that the LSO reconsider its decision to permanently close this historic dining hall that brings together the legal profession of Ontario and all who come to the Court of Appeal and Divisional Court.

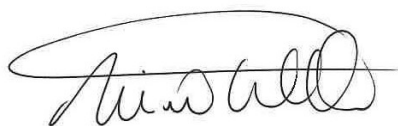
Before the pandemic arose, lawyers, judges, clients, and everyday people would frequent the Osgoode Hall restaurant for a two-hour window at lunchtime. It was always a truly unique experience to enjoy a lunch in the same hall as many of our legal predecessors had experienced. There was a buzz in the air when a young lawyer could dine in the presence of many distinguished lawyers and judges from our profession. The Osgoode Hall restaurant was an ideal venue for many lawyers to plan an afternoon strategy or debrief about the morning session with respect to whatever business they had before the Court that day. For litigators who have hearings resuming after the lunch break, dining at the Osgoode Hall restaurant was the most practical option. Mentees would sometimes meet their mentors there for a discussion over a meal.

It seems imminent that the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted in our province, which will allow Ontarians and those of us in the profession a chance to reconnect in person.

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We understand that the Osgoode Hall restaurant has historically operated on a break-even basis or at a modest loss. The TLA believes that a decision of the LSO to close the Osgoode Hall restaurant permanently is a mistake. The loss to the legal profession as a whole of this historic and cherished venue will be greater than any modest operating loss incurred. There is a sense of pride and camaraderie in this room, ripe with tradition and excellence, which has developed over generations. Once all or almost all restrictions lift, the LSO should be leading the charge to bring members of the Bar and our legal profession back to the table which will help forge those strong bonds and customs that had been enjoyed for years.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. White", with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Michael J. White
President
Toronto Lawyers Association