



Western
Association of
Legal
Assistants

L.A. Times

SPRING 1994 Edition

Editor: Pattee Clark

P.O. BOX 4127, MAIN POST OFFICE, VANCOUVER B.C. V6B 3Z6

IT'S OUR ANNIVERSARY

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS



On the occasion of the 15th anniversary since the incorporation of the Western Association of Legal Assistants (the "Association") it seemed appropriate to take a short look back to see where the Association began and the ways in which it has changed over the last 15 years.

The Association was incorporated on February 5, 1979 under the Society Act of British Columbia. The purposes for which the Association was incorporated are as follows:

- (a) promoting the profession of the Legal Assistant;
- (b) to support, develop and maintain high standards for the service and ethics of Legal Assistants;
- (c) to establish criteria standards and determine persons qualified to use the title "Legal Assistant";
- (d) to provide the opportunity for the exchange of information, experience, and opinion through discussion, study and Association publications;

- (e) to carry on a program for education of its members in the advancement and improvement of the profession; and
- (f) to establish and maintain a liaison with the British Columbia Bar Association and other groups in the legal community in order to advance and promote the profession of Legal Assistants.

...What's in a Name?

Contrary to the obvious assumption from the name, the Western Association of Legal Assistants is a British Columbia association which recruits members in only British Columbia, although there are instances where members have moved out of the Province and maintained their membership. Further there is no reason that the Association would not accept members who reside in other western provinces.

...a few words about the Association.

The Association maintains close ties with Capilano College and is working to fund a permanent scholarship for students taking the legal assistant program. The relationship is understandable since for many years, Capilano College offered the only legal assistant training program in the Province and consequently a majority of the Association's members are graduates of the program.

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SEMINARS/LECTURES

The February 17, 1994 seminar "Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act" given by Leonard Bell, Sr. Counsel, I.C.B.C. was very informative and well attended. We wish to extend special thanks to Mr. Bell for the time he took out of his busy work schedule to speak to us.

We have just received a Press Release from West Coast relating to the *First Annual B.C. Legal Support Staff Conference and Expo*. This will be a forum for professional development for legal support staff and an opportunity to meet the vendors of the products and services you use. Several concurrent workshops are being planned in areas such as "Total Quality in the Law Firm", "Legislative Updates in the Major Fields of Law" and "Computer Trends for the Future".

Please contact Janet Dean at (604) 682-7526 or by fax at (604) 682-5793 if you have any suggestions for workshops and speakers, or if you have a program you wish to present.

Be sure to check the Calendar at the end of the Newsletter for further upcoming events.

Patricia Hunt



CERTIFICATION UPDATE

Recently, I spoke with Maureen Fitzgerald, Legal Researcher for The Law Society of British Columbia, concerning the status of the Certification of the Legal Assistants' Committee (the "Committee"). Maureen reported that the Benchers are currently reviewing their governance of the Law Society, which review will include reviews of the various committees established by them. To that end, Maureen reports that she has been

asked to provide the Benchers with a report outlining the original objectives of the Committee, the history of the Committee and future work to be done by it. In the meantime, the work of the Committee has been suspended while the Benchers review the report to determine how the various committees can work together to reach the ultimate goals of the Law Society.

Jerena Laursen



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

We have three new members to welcome into our Association:

Maureen McColl
Constance Iverson
Elaine Darquin

Sarah Hanna



NETWORK NEWS

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Looks like a busy and promising spring for legal assistants and legal support staff in general. Law firms are experiencing growth in their commercial and securities areas, a reflection of the improving economy.

At present we are recruiting for several legal assistant positions. A brief description of each follows:

Insurance: mid-sized downtown firm; 3-5 years related experience required, large file management background (computerized litigation support software), would be an asset; certification preferred.

Corporate Securities: mid sized downtown firm; requiring a minimum of 3 years experience at a legal assistant level and familiarity with VSE and TSE regulatory filings.

Banking: mid-sized downtown firm; applicants must be experienced in commercial lending - security and collateral security documentation.

For more information on these positions or to register with us, please contact me or my partner, Mary McGillis.

Arlene Pelrine



REGISTRY UPDATE

P.T.T. Changes

The March 22nd, 1994 budget saw several changes which will impact on the registries. The most important is the elimination of the Property Transfer Tax for certain first time home buyers. This exemption is effective Wednesday, March 23rd, 1994. The current exemption for high ratio financing will be phased out on June 30th, 1994. Transfers claiming this exemption must be registered in the LTO before then. The high ratio financing relief is available for non-first-time buyers.

The following conditions apply to the first time purchaser exemption:

1. The property must have mortgage financing of 70% or more of the fair market value. The maximum purchase price is \$250,000 in the Lower Mainland and Victoria areas, or \$200,000 in the remainder of the province.
2. Individuals must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, have resided in British Columbia for 12 consecutive months prior to purchasing and never previously held a registered interest in a principle residence anywhere.
3. The amount borrowed must have a term of one year following the date of the registration of the purchase at the LTO. Where the mortgage is not for a term of one year or is a demand mortgage the transferee must pay the tax at the time of purchase and may apply at the end of the first year for a refund.
4. If the property is vacant land, construction of a residence must be completed within the year following the registration of the purchase and the purchaser must reside in the property for the remainder of the year. The fair market value of the land and the cost to build the residence must not exceed the maximum allowable values. During the year following the registration of the purchase the qualifying financing moneys must not be reduced by more than \$10,000 in the Victoria and Lower Mainland areas and \$8,000 elsewhere.
5. By signing the tax return the purchaser grants the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations the right to place a lien against the title in the amount of the tax exemption. Liens will be placed on all properties where the exemption is claimed. Liens will remain in place for one year, until all exemption requirements have been met or until the tax is paid.

A new PPT return has been designed for this program. The Ministry of Finance has mailed a small supply of forms to most law and notarial offices in B.C. Where a property purchase completes before you receive your new forms, the transfer may be registered on a regular tax return, the applicable tax paid and a refund requested from the Administrator's office at 387-0604. You have one year to apply and refunds will be processed as soon as possible. Special instructions relate to the completion of certain sections of the new form.

Home Owner Grants

The home owner grant phase out threshold has been increased to \$450,000.00. This is the assessed value of the property, not the actual sale price. The grant is phased out at the rate of \$10.00 of grant for each \$1,000.00 of assessed value in excess of \$450,000.00. As a result, the grant has been eliminated for home owners having a home assessed at more than \$497,000.00. Seniors, handicapped or recipients of veterans allowance have the grant eliminated for homes valued in excess of \$524,500.00.

Vital Statistics

Vital Statistics fees will increase to cover the actual cost to providing the service. Most items shown have increased \$5.00. The new fees will be effective April 1, 1994.

B.C. Online Errors

I have recently seen two examples of searches conducted in lawyer's offices using B.C. Online's dial-up service where several charges were missing from the title. The errors are often the result of improper equipment configuration, inappropriate use of lines, inexperienced equipment operators or inappropriate software. Legal assistants

relying on B.C. Online's dial-up service should be aware of these potential pitfalls. For examples of these problems, please call me at 525-9255.

Leona Pinsky, In-House Counsel,
West Coast Title Search Ltd.

THE ASSOCIATION'S R.R.S.P

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To start your Retirement savings plan please call Rod Bedard or Jim Doyate at Investors Group - 682-5431.

Ron Bedard



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS

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Graduation from the program at Capilano College is not part of the criteria for membership in the Association, however graduation from a program which maintains at least as challenging a curriculum containing as much substantive law content is within the criteria for membership.

Other programs in Canada which maintain this standard of academic training are: Red Deer College and Grant McEwan Community College. Members of the Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario have also achieved similar levels of academic training and are generally accepted for membership in the Association.

...Certification and the Association

Despite the purposes stated above, in its early years the Association fulfilled more of a social function. In the mid 80's, the question of persons practising law without a license became an issue with lawyers and The Law Society of British Columbia ("The Law Society"). Concurrently, the issue of persons calling themselves legal assistants without the benefit of training (or sometimes even experience led the Association to move towards protecting the title "Legal Assistant" under Section 9 of the Society Act. The Association amended its by-laws to incorporate an academic training component into its membership criteria as a first step in the process of qualifying for title protection.

Meanwhile in 1989, a Paralegalism Subcommittee formed by The Law Society produced a report on whether B.C. Legal Assistants should be certified. The report's conclusion was that British Columbia Legal Assistants should be certified in order to protect the public from persons practising law in an unauthorized manner. Certification would ensure that the certified Legal Assistant had an acceptable level of academic training in substantive law combined with a minimum amount of legal experience.

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The conclusion of the Paralegalism Subcommittee in favour of certification of Legal Assistants encouraged the Association to put its own move towards title protection on the back burner in favour of supporting The Law Society in its program.

The procedural aspects of determining the exact criteria for certification, the implementation of a certification program and the process of transition for Legal Assistants currently in practice was deferred to a second subcommittee which has been working on the process since 1989.

This subcommittee commissioned two phase survey to be conducted by Western Management Consultants. Phase I of the survey was designed to determine the number of legal assistants practising in B.C. This was done by surveying approximately 1000 law firms in the Province and having them identify the number of legal assistants they have in the firm, the type of work they do and the kind of training that the legal assistants have. This phase of the survey postulated that there are 1300 - 2000 legal assistants practising in British Columbia.

Phase II of the survey was designed to look more closely at a sample group of legal assistants and their supervising lawyers in order to obtain a more detailed description of what the legal assistants do. The sample group for Phase II of the survey was approximately 20 legal assistants (of which only one legal assistant was academically trained).

In late 1992, Maureen Fitzgerald of The Law Society was contracted to form a working committee whose purpose was to put together a list of "Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Tasks" which should be within the ability of any legal assistant (the "SKAT List"). The job description put together by this working committee was then tested during 1993 among groups of legal assistants and lawyers around the Province.

In the Spring or Fall of 1994, The Law Society Subcommittee is scheduled to present its recommendations for the implementation of a certification program for British Columbia Legal Assistants. Since The Law Society is currently re-assessing its structure and use of committees, the release of these recommendations may be delayed beyond the scheduled time frame.

...The Association Today

The Association currently has a board of eight directors who, together with volunteer members, put on a variety of social, educational and fund raising events each year. There are also student representatives from both the day and evening programs of the Legal Assistant program at Capilano College who join the board of directors meetings in order provide a line of communication between the Association and its student membership. The directors have been working to establish the Association as a presence in the legal community. As testimony to some of the success achieved in this area, the directors field calls from all over Canada regarding academic training programs, membership, job availability, salary surveys, etc. The Association also publishes a quarterly newsletter, is working to establish a permanent scholarship for legal assistant students at Capilano College, has job placement ties with Arlyn Personnel, and is attempting to set up a group RRSP which would be available to interested members.

There have been quite a few changes since the Association was first incorporated 15 years ago. Most have been positive, although in retrospect, one can also see areas where there is room for improvement.

Sarah Hanna



LEGAL TALES



Well, being back in the commuting-to work-on the bus = time to read routine I am pleased to offer some suggestions for those who like to take the office home - in a novel.

There are two new books on the shelves by William J. Coughlin. "Death Penalty" and "In the Presence of Enemies" are somewhat different in style than some of his earlier novels but both offer a pretty good read. "In the Presence of Enemies" is the story of an estate lawyer who finds that his attendance at the execution of a Will some years earlier, has now embroiled him in a huge contest over the validity of the same Will for the now deceased client. That, combined with a good measure of intriguing office politics make for a fairly lively tale (particularly if you can ignore the lurid and somewhat misleading description on the back cover).

"Death Penalty" follows the story of a lawyer who is a recovering alcoholic and somewhat down on his luck. Its a bit Mickey Spillane-ish for my taste, but I still had to finish it to figure out all the twists and mysteries in the plot. For those of you who are looking for another John Grisham novel to read, his latest book - "The Chamber" is due to be on the shelves in June. Just to show that there is life outside of law, Mr. Grisham reported earned 25 million in 1992/93 for his writings.

Sarah Hanna

Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women...

Fighting Violence with Vision

Violence against women is at a crisis level in Canada. The number of women beaten, raped, murdered and harassed is staggering:

- ♀ 2 out of 3 Canadian women have experienced what is legally considered sexual assault.
- ♀ 78,000 women were admitted to protective shelters in 1992.
- ♀ 51% of Canadian women have been a victim of rape or attempted rape.

However, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women has a potential solution. After two years of research and interviews with over 4,000 individuals, the Panel has completed the largest, most in-depth study ever conducted on this issue. Their discoveries and recommendations are presented in three publications.

Final Report examines the cause and effect of violence against women and presents chilling testimonies from survivors of abuse. In the final chapter, the Panel outlines its National Action Plan, which presents 494 preventive measures that government, associations and individuals can implement to achieve a Zero Tolerance policy, meaning no amount of violence is acceptable.



Executive Summary/National Action Plan highlights the main points of the Final Report and includes the national blueprint for a changed society.

The Community Kit is a compilation of effective strategies and programs that address violence against women. It encourages community leaders to coordinate their efforts and work together towards a Zero Tolerance policy.

A video is also available. *Without Fear* explores the experiences of six survivors of abuse.

In-depth, revealing and detailed, these three publications present Canadians with a vision and a challenge: a society free from inequality and violence and the tools to implement the change.

"The violence has to end. 120 women a year in Canada do not have to die."
Elaine Teplitsky
Director, Women's Centre of Montreal

For more information about these publications please contact Valérie Gaumont, Canada Communication Group—Publishing, Ottawa K1A 0S9. (Tel:819-956-1596 or Fax:819-956-5539)

Mrs. Von Rothschild is out of town...



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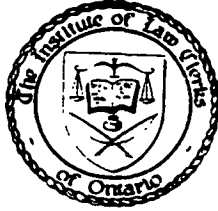
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HEALTHSERV
WORK CAPACITY EVALUATION

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
<p>May 13/14/94</p>	<p>Fourth Annual Conference - The Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario in Conjunction with The Law Society of Upper Canada</p> <p>Conference '94 is being held to continue the Institute's role in the promotion of Law Clerks and their professional development as an integral part of the legal profession.</p> <p>SEE NOTICE ATTACHED</p>	<p>Campus of Carleton University Ottawa, Ontario.</p>
<p>May 15/94 (Sunday) (10 am - 1 p.m.)</p>	<p>Spring Fashion Fundraiser.</p> <p>Flyers have gone out, additional copy is attached. Contact Patricia Hunt @ 661-9291 for more information.</p>	<p>#29 - 3871 North Fraser Way Burnaby, B.C. (Bottom of Boundary)</p> <p>Parking located at the rear</p>
<p>May 16, 1994 (5:30 - 7pm)</p>	<p>Directors' Meeting (Closed Meeting - contact Jerena Laursen at 240-0333)</p>	<p>Offices of Russell & DuMoulin 1500-1075 West Georgia Street Vancouver, B.C.</p>
<p>May 19, 1994 (noon hour)</p>	<p>The Legal Assistant & The Investigator</p> <p>Flyers have gone out, additional copy is attached. Contact Patricia Hunt @ 661-9291 for more information.</p>	<p>Offices of Richards Buell Sutton 300 - 1111 Melville Street Vancouver, B.C.</p>
<p>June 16/17</p>	<p>Computers & Law Expo - presented by Continuing Legal Education Society of B.C.</p>	<p>Robson Square Conference Square Vancouver, B.C.</p>
<p>October 20/94</p>	<p>First Annual B.C. Legal Support Staff Conference and Expo presented by Continuing Legal Education Society of B.C. and West Coast Title Search Ltd.</p> <p>(For specific program details, please fax your name and address to (604) 682-5793 - Attention: Janet Dean)</p>	<p>TBA</p>

NOTE: We have included times and dates of Directors' meetings (where available) for your reference. The Directors and committees (Education, Membership, Programming, Public Relations, Newsletter) welcome your input and comments. Should you wish to raise a matter with the Directors at a Board meeting, please contact Jerena Laursen at 240-0333 wish to volunteer for any of the committees, contact the committee chairmen: Programs - Patricia Hunt @ 661-9291; Education: Gemma McDonald @ 689-7971; Membership - Sarah Hanna @ 682-3664 Public Relations - Jashir Bains @ 684-9151; Newsletter - Pattee Clark @ 631-4750.



THE INSTITUTE OF LAW CLERKS OF ONTARIO
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE LAW SOCIETY OF UPPER CANADA
IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE ITS FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TIME: May 13th and 14th, 1994

PLACE: Campus of Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

**PRE-CONFERENCE
RECEPTION:** Thursday, May 12th, 1994
"On the Hill"

**CONFIRMED
SPEAKERS:** The Honourable Mr. Justice John Sopinka
Supreme Court of Canada

Jo'Ann Alderson, President
Progressive Communications

For further information, please contact:

The Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario
P.O. Box 135, 97 Front Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5J 1E6

Telephone: (416) 366-2731

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1993/94**

OFFICERS:

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Vice-President	Sarah Hanna	Bus: 682-3664
Secretary	Debbie Jamison	Bus: 689-7971
Treasurer	Jill Matthews	Bus: 631-4894

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

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Program	Patricia Hunt	Bus: 661-9291
Education	Gemma McDonald	Bus: 689-7971
Public Relations	Jasbir Bains	Bus: 684-9151
Newsletter	Pattee Clark	Bus: 631-4750

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Capilano College (1st year)	Lynda Harrison	Res: 983-8014
	Elizabeth Neufeld	Res: 623-0312(pager)
Capilano College (2nd year)	Lisa Armstrong	Res: 439-2029
Capilano College (evening)	No Rep	
Douglas Campus (evening)	Donna Shingera	
	Swedahl McPherson	Res: 589-5170

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EDITORIAL TEAM: Jerena Laursen, Sarah Hanna, Jill Matthews, Patricia Hunt,
and Pattee Clark

ADVERTISING:

If you are interested in advertising in our Newsletter please contact Pattee Clark @ 631-4750.

Our Rates are:	Full Page	\$80.00
	Half Page	\$45.00
	Quarter Page or less	\$25.00

PLEASE TAKE A FEW MOMENTS NOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY AND RETURN IT TO THE ADDRESS STATED BELOW. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO COMPLETE ANY OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED, ONLY COMPLETE THE ONES THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO.

SALARY SURVEY

RETURN TO: P.O. Box 4127, Main Post Office,
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3Z6

1. Please indicate the size of the firm you are employed by:

- SMALL (1- 20 Lawyers)
- MEDIUM (20 - 40 Lawyers)
- LARGE (50 + Lawyers)

2. Your area of specialty: _____

3. Years of Experience:

- < 2 years
- < 5 years
- < 10 years
- < 15 years
- < 20 years
- > 20 years

4. Date (approx) practicum commenced:

Alternatively, date started as a legal assistant: _____

5. Practicum salary or initial starting salary: _____

6. Subsequent increments and dates:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Current Salary: _____

8. Benefits: _____
