

THE
MIDDLESEX LAW
ASSOCIATION

Snail



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April 2026 Issue

Thank you to all the contributors and advertisers for supporting this month's edition of the *Snail*.

Want to contribute to the next issue?

The deadline is noon on **June 25, 2026**

Send submissions to:
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President's Message

2026 is off to a great start! Paula Puddy, our new CPD Director, has already successfully completed several programs, including the Advocacy Skills &

Accounting in Litigation program sponsored by PwC, the Wellness Summit and most recently the Highway Traffic Act & Provincial Offences Act Seminar.

The MLA held its 146th Annual General Meeting on Thursday February 26, 2026. We were happy to announce the re-appointment of two members to the MLA Board of Trustees, Nicole Rogers and Anita Osmani, and the appointment of a new trustee, Waseem Shahatto. MNP presented the audited financial statements for 2025 which were approved without questions or comments. MNP was approved as the MLA Auditor for the 2026 fiscal year. Updates were provided by Past President Jacqueline Fortner and myself, which outlined the significant work undertaken by the MLA in the 2025 fiscal year, including new CPD programming such as the AI Conference, the reinstatement of the MLA Golf Tournament and Court House Rocks events, as well as great attendance at the staple events including the

Straight from the Bench Conference and the Opening of the Courts. The AGM concluded with a social for those attending in person, which was well attended.

Please keep an eye out for our events upcoming in the spring, including the Small Claims Court Seminar, the Corporate Law Conference, the Women's Networking Event, and the Straight from the Bench Conference. Now that the spring is finally here there are plans for more social and networking events also in the works. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Greg Willson, MLA

President

Greg is a personal injury lawyer at Lerner's. His training in education helps him to communicate effectively with his clients. Greg is down-to-earth, yet up-front and straightforward. He takes pride in speaking with plain language so his clients are left without any questions. Greg's goal is to make his clients feel comfortable and confident in their road to recovery. Outside of his work, Greg is active in the community. He enjoys coaching football and he is the chair of the London Helmets on Kids Committee.

Practice Resource Centre News



Contributed by:
Cynthia Simpson and Shabira Tamachi
library@midlaw.on.ca

AI Hallucinations – The Cases Continue

We discussed AI hallucinations in our last newsletter article, but it's an area that keeps developing, and a recent case provides a new twist. In *Kapahi Real Estate Inc. v. Elite Real Estate Club of Toronto Inc.*, [2026 ONSC 1438](#) (CanLII), counsel referenced actual cases with proper citations in his factum, but included quotes from the decisions that simply do not exist in the cases themselves. Furthermore, the lawyer expressly denied using any sort of AI assistance while drafting the factum. There are seven fake case quotations in the factum, which does seem to make counsel's declaration incredulous. In Justice Myers' own words at para 39:

[39] But Mr. Parvaiz says that he "did not use or rely artificial intelligence or other such tools in preparing the reply factum." Rather, he attributes the false quotations to "a lack of due care" and "human errors" for which he takes full responsibility. He says the errors arose from his "misreading the cases cited", "carelessness" and "inadvertence." He says he sincerely and deeply regrets his errors and notes that he is a sole practitioner who is relatively new to the bar.

Justice Myers has previously ruled on the misuse of AI in court documents submitted by counsel in the oft-referenced decision *Ko v. Li*, [2025 ONSC 2766 \(CanLII\)](#). It is convenient to use AI assistance through programs like ChatGPT or Copilot to make drafting easier, but lawyers must ensure both the cases and the extracted quotations from them are accurate.

Before AI, if you needed to search for something in a lengthy document, you had two options:

1. Read the entire document to locate the information, or
2. Use the program's search function or the universal Ctrl-F feature to locate all instances of a word or phrase in the document.

Neither of these options should be ignored when including references to cases or excerpts from secondary materials in court documents. You can also try CanLII's recently launched [CanLII Search+](#) directly from your office. We often have requests to locate the source of an excerpt needed for review, and we are happy to provide that service to our members. In most cases, we can even locate the quotation as it appears in a subsequent edition of the book. We have a wealth of texts available now through Westlaw, Lexis+, vLex, and HeinOnline to make this task faster and more efficient. Please [email us](#) and see what we can locate for you, before you end up in front of Justice Myers!

Rangefindr

Many of the criminal law lawyers who visit the MLA library have tried out [rangefindr](#) for criminal sentencing ranges. The Legal Information and Resource Network (LiRN) recently concluded a one-year pilot project to provide it to all Ontario lawyers and has now added it permanently to the e-LiRN collection of online resources at your fingertips both on our user computers and remotely.

The program was developed by Toronto-based research lawyer Matthew Oleynik, and users simply choose as few or as many tags that describe the facts of a case to retrieve sentencing ranges in similar decisions. Last year, rangefindr introduced its *Guide to Pre-Sentence Custody Credit*, which collects the leading cases, summarizes the rules, and flags the unsettled issues relating to pre-sentence custody across multiple Canadian jurisdictions. You can find it, along with other helpful resources, on [rangefindr's Documents site](#).

As mentioned before, all lawyers have free access to it through the [LSO's dedicated rangefindr access page](#). Please contact the LSO's Great Library at greatlibrary@lso.ca to arrange for your permanent credentials.

HeinOnline

The announcement about rangefindr is also an excellent time to remind our members that they also have free remote access to [HeinOnline](#) as part of their LSO dues. HeinOnline gives you access to a wide variety of US, Canadian, and international law journals, the English Reports, and Canada's Supreme Court Reports. In addition, it has access to the annual and consolidated Federal and Provincial statutes which, for Ontario, goes right back to 1867 in coverage. Although regulations are not yet available on HeinOnline, we did recently discover we can access historic rules of practice with notes from Holmsted in HeinOnline's Legal Classics collection. As with rangefindr above, you simply need to contact the LSO's Great Library at greatlibrary@lso.ca to arrange for your permanent credentials.

New Books

Alam, Samia. **Legal research and writing for paralegals**, Emond, 2026.

Beynon, Andrew et al. **Modern first nations legislation annotated, 2026 ed.**, LexisNexis, 2025.

Blatt, Arlene and JoAnn Kurtz. **Legal research: step by step, 6th ed.**, Emond, 2026.

Bocska, Rosemary. **Social media and privacy law for employers: hiring, firing and managing reputation, 2nd ed.**, LexisNexis, 2026.

Bourgeois, Donald and Craig Slater. **Liquor laws of Canada, 2nd ed.**, LexisNexis, 2026.

Boychuk, Clair K. **Intervening in Canadian courts**, LexisNexis, 2025.

Gobin, Marty. **Evidence and litigation for paralegals**. Emond, 2026.

Goslett and Caruso. **2026 annotated Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of Canada**. Thomson Reuters, 2026.

Jones, David Phillip and Anne de Villars. **Principles of administrative law, 8th ed.**, Thomson Reuters, 2026.

Kahler, Katrina et al. **Law of contempt in Canada**, LexisNexis, 2026.

Kurtz, JoAnn. **Family law: practice and procedure, 7th ed.**, Emond, 2026.

Linden, Allen. **Canadian tort law, 13th ed.**, LexisNexis, 2026.

MacDonald, James. **2026 annotated Ontario Family Law Act, v 1-2**, Thomson Reuters, 2026.

MacDonald, James. **2026 annotated Divorce Act**, Thomson Reuters, 2026.

McCarthy Tetrault. **Defending class actions in Canada: a guide for defendants, 6th ed.**, LexisNexis, 2025.

McLeod, Fryer, Kilpatrick, Nakonechny. **McLeod's Ontario family law rules annotated 2025-2026**, Thomson Reuters, 2026.

Olivo, Laurence et al. **Civil litigation, 5th ed.**, Emond, 2026.

Preyra, Alan and Emily Unrau. **Law of occupiers' liability**, Emond, 2025.

Régimbald, Guy. **Canadian administrative law, 4th ed.**, LexisNexis, 2026.

Romano, Netta. **Employment law for paralegals, 3rd ed.**, Emond, 2026.

Segal, Murray. **Annotated Ontario rules of criminal practice 2026**, Thomson Reuters, 2026.

Zubick, Jennifer. **Provincial offences for paralegals, 4th ed.**, Emond, 2026.

Missing Books

Bathgate, Benjamin. **Essential guide to settlement in Canada**, LexisNexis, 2013 - **NEW**

Bourgeois, Donald J. **Charities and not-for-profit administration and governance handbook, 2nd ed.**, LexisNexis, 2009.

Bowles, Brendan. **Conduct of lien, trust and adjudication proceedings 2024**, Thomson Reuters Bullen, Edward et al. **Bullen & Leake & Jacob's precedents of pleadings, 14th ed., Volume 1**, Sweet & Maxwell, 2001.

Fridman, G.H.L. **Law of contract in Canada, 5th ed.**, Thomson Reuters, 2006.

Harris, David. **Law on disability issues in the workplace**, Emond Publications, 2017.

Hull, Ian M. **Macdonell, Sheard and Hull on probate practice, 5th ed.**, Thomson Reuters, 2016.

Knight, Patricia. **Small Claims Court: procedure and practice, 5th ed.**, Emond Law, 2021.

LSO. **Accommodating age in the workplace**, 2015.

LSO. **Duty to accommodate in the workplace**, 2016.

LSO. **Six-minute administrative lawyer 2018**.

MacFarlane, Bruce A. **Cannabis law**, Thomson Reuters, 2018.

Marseille, Claude, ed. **The law of objections in Canada: a handbook**, LexisNexis, 2019.

Oosterhoff, Albert H. **Oosterhoff on wills, 8th ed.**, Thomson Reuters, 2016

Osborne, Philip H. **Law of torts, 5th ed.**, Irwin Law, 2015.

Samfiru, Lior. **Termination of employment**, Emond, 2018.

Sells, Berkley D. **Motions Court practice and procedure, 2nd ed.**, LexisNexis, 2017.

Welcome Back: Director of Continuing Professional Development

Contributed by:
Paula Puddy

I am delighted to return as the MLA's Director of Continuing Professional Development. I have always brought energy, positivity and a genuine passion for education to every opportunity, and I am thrilled to be leading CPD once again. For the last four years, I worked primarily in post-secondary and continuing education including:

- Teaching Commercial Law (online) at Nipissing University and Business Law at Ivey Business School, inspiring students from undergraduates to MBAs;

- Guiding health care management students at Fanshawe College through law and ethics, and helping masters of science students at Western University learn business essentials;
- Working with CPDonline.ca to expand their on-demand CPD for lawyers;
- Continuing my long-standing efforts at Vantage Professional Development Inc., by empowering associate lawyers to learn and apply vital business and entrepreneurial skills to their practice.

Of special significance was my appointment as the Secretary for Ontario's Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2022. The Commission's purpose was to review and adjust the electoral boundaries within the province to ensure fair and effective representation. In my role, I was privileged to work closely with Justice Lynne Leitch, Commission Chair, to facilitate the Commission's public consultation via numerous public hearings held throughout Ontario. I greatly appreciated being a part of this important feature in Canada's democratic process.

My journey reflects my deep commitment to education, professional growth, and community service. I return with fresh insights, new experiences, and the same welcoming, and positive spirit and exemplary project management skills.

As the Director of Continuing Professional Development, my goal is to re-establish the Middlesex Law Association as a premiere provider of professional development, and re-energize the MLA community spirit by re-connecting with each other at in-person events.

Thanks to the MLA board of trustees for their warm welcome and support. I look forward to seeing you at one of the MLA's upcoming CPD programs!

Warm regards,
Paula Puddy HBA LLB MBA

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Contributed by:
Middlesex Law Association

Do you need a few more hours of EDI or professionalism CPD? Do you want to simply learn more about a topic? Consider [CPDOnline.ca](https://www.cpdonline.ca) for your CPD needs. As a calendar year subscriber, MLA members can access a large library of accredited on-demand CPD programs they can watch anytime, anywhere. And, there is more!

When an MLA member subscribes to [CPDOnline.ca](https://www.cpdonline.ca) and chooses Middlesex Law Association from the "Associations to which you belong" drop-down menu during checkout, CPDOnline sends \$100 per subscriber per year directly to the MLA. There is no extra cost to members and no administrative work for the association.

Most of our CPD programs are recorded by [CPDOnline.ca](https://www.cpdonline.ca) and this content is made available to lawyers across Canada through [CPDOnline.ca](https://www.cpdonline.ca)'s website. CPDOnline promotes the recordings on its platform and shares the resulting net revenue with the MLA on a 50/50 basis. [CPDOnline.ca](https://www.cpdonline.ca) already contributes between thousands of dollars to the MLA's bottom line. In 2025, the MLA received over **\$7,000** in royalties for its CPD programs.

Together, member subscriptions and shared content provide ongoing revenue that helps support our MLA member services.



CPDOnline.ca proudly welcomes Sam Puchala as a new Video Presenter and Contributor

Winner of the MLA's Rising Star Award and Regional Women's Director of the Criminal Lawyers' Association, Sam Puchala has been quoted by CBC and featured across national coverage of the Hockey Canada sexual assault trial. She was the go-to legal voice inside the courtroom and now brings first-hand analysis through CPDOnline.ca.

Her videos on CPDOnline.ca will deliver topical, timely commentaries on closely watched criminal cases drawing on her expertise in defending high-stakes offences against the person, including assaults, homicides, sexual offences, and domestic violence. She will provide practical insights into trial strategy and courtroom advocacy.



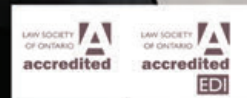
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Rethinking “Do Nothing”: Aphria and the Future of Mitigation in Commercial Leasing

Contributed by:

Adewale Ajayi, Associate Lawyer, Spero Law

For decades, Ontario commercial landlords have operated with a clear and powerful option. When a tenant repudiates a lease, the landlord may refuse the repudiation, keep the lease alive, and sue for rent without taking steps to re-let the premises. That principle, grounded in *Highway Properties Ltd. v. Kelly, Douglas & Co.*,¹ was recently reaffirmed by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Canada Life Assurance Company v. Aphria Inc.*²

That certainty, however, may not last.

In February 2026, the Supreme Court of Canada heard the appeal in *Aphria Inc. v. Canada Life Assurance Company*.³ The issue is simple but significant: should a commercial landlord who keeps a lease alive remain exempt from the duty to mitigate? The current rule still applies, but the Supreme Court’s decision to take up the case suggests the doctrine is now under serious scrutiny.

Interestingly, the lower courts seemed aware that something about the rule no longer quite fits. In *Aphria*, the lower court noted that contract law has moved toward requiring parties to mitigate their losses and that the landlord’s exemption does not sit comfortably with that direction.

Even so, the court made it clear that its hands were tied. It was bound to follow

Highway Properties and apply the rule as it stands, regardless of whether it still reflects modern thinking. The Court of Appeal took the same view, emphasizing that any meaningful change would have to come from the Supreme Court or the Legislature.⁴

“The issue is simple but significant: should a commercial landlord who keeps a lease alive remain exempt from the duty to mitigate?”

This sets the stage for what could be a meaningful shift. The Supreme Court may choose to preserve the status quo in the interest of certainty. It may also narrow or adjust the rule to better align commercial leasing with broader contractual principles. Even a modest change could significantly affect how landlords respond to tenant default.

For lawyers acting for landlords, this is not just an academic issue. It is a prompt to rethink practical advice.

The traditional approach of leaving a property vacant while pursuing rent has long been defensible. If the law changes,

that strategy may become harder to justify. Courts may begin to expect evidence of reasonable efforts to re-let or otherwise reduce loss, even where the lease remains in force. A passive approach could expose landlords to reduced recovery or increased litigation risk.

Lawyers acting for landlords would be wise to advise their clients that the law on mitigation may change. That may include encouraging them to keep records of any efforts to market the space, work with brokers, and document leasing decisions as they are made. It may also involve guiding clients on when and how to elect remedies, and reviewing lease terms to ensure they still provide sufficient flexibility. Most importantly, clients should be made aware that the current approach may not be as reliable as it once seemed.

Even if the Supreme Court ultimately keeps the current rule in place, taking these steps will still benefit landlords. If the law changes, they may become essential. And even if the Court leaves the rule untouched, the Legislature could still step in. The reality is that this area of law is being questioned, and it may not remain the same for long. *Aphria* is more than just another case—it signals that long-standing assumptions in commercial leasing may be shifting.

¹ *Highway Properties Ltd. v. Kelly, Douglas and Co. Ltd.*, 1971 CanLII 123 (SCC), [1971] SCR 562, <<https://canlii.ca/t/1xd47>>.

² *Canada Life Assurance Company v. Aphria Inc.*, 2024 ONCA 882 (CanLII), <<https://canlii.ca/t/k8937>>.

³ *Aphria Inc. v. Canada Life Assurance Co.*, SCC No. 41665

⁴ Samuel Beswick, “*Aphria Inc. v. Canada Life Assurance Co.*: Can the common law be changed with prospective-only effect?” (12 March 2026), online.



EU Data Sovereignty and Technology Trust

Governments Shift From U.S. Tech



Contributed by:
David Canton

You may have seen news reports lately that the [government of France is replacing Zoom and Teams](#) with a made-in-France video conference system.

This isn't the first time a European government has replaced tech from U.S.-based companies with either European-based or open-source software. And it won't be the last.

This preference for EU based tech by EU governments is not new but seems to be growing.

Data Sovereignty vs Data Residency

It basically comes down to trust issues, including [data sovereignty](#) issues. There are a few things at play here.

Privacy and other digital laws are more stringent in the EU than in the U.S. Many will argue that those EU laws are over the top and overly restrictive. But the law is the law, and it must be complied with where it applies. Some large U.S. companies have gotten in legal trouble in the EU over practices that are allowed in the U.S. The U.S.-based companies often thumb their noses at EU laws. That creates a lack of trust that tech companies will abide by EU laws. On top of that the U.S. government often whines when other countries enforce their laws on U.S. companies.

“This preference for EU based tech by EU governments is not new but seems to be growing.”

Privacy in particular is an issue. As we have mentioned before, the concept of data sovereignty entails more than data residency. Data residency is about the physical location of the servers where data is stored and processed. Data sovereignty adds on top of that notion the control of that data. If the company owning or controlling the data center or the software running there is from another country, the concern is that if authorities in the other country

demand the company to provide information, that company will do so despite the location of the data, local laws, or promises that the company has made to users.

Some large tech providers say they would not do that, but many users don't trust that to be the case.

Fears of Foreign Government Access to Technology

At the most extreme level, there can be anxiety that tech from certain other countries could be designed at the behest of government authorities to spy on and send user information back. Or even use a kill switch to render the infrastructure useless.

That last concern has been raised in the United States over tech originating from China, resulting in bans on the sale or use of certain Chinese tech in the U.S. That can be despite protests from the Chinese companies that this sort of “feature” is not in their tech, or that they don't send data back.

It is somewhat ironic that other parts of the world may view U.S. tech in the same light that the U.S. views Chinese tech.

Add on top of all this the current political climate in the U.S. and its animosity towards the rest of the world.

Technology Trust and Shift to Local Solutions

So are these concerns valid? Or do they lean towards conspiracy theories or paranoia? That's hard to say in any given instance. It can be hard to assess these risks in a fact-based and objective manner.

The bottom line is that the security of digital infrastructure and the privacy and confidentiality of data are important concepts that can cause huge problems if they go wrong. Given the lack of trust on these issues and growing sentiments in many countries that favour local solutions, it is inevitable that the trend towards local solutions will continue.

David Canton is a business lawyer and trademark agent at Harrison Pensa with a practice focusing on technology, privacy law, technology companies and intellectual property. Connect with David on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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A Bencher's Report

Contributed by:

Karen Hulan

Several initiatives are underway at the Law Society. Below are some recent Convocation updates that may interest MLA members.

Access to Justice in Rural and Other Underserved Communities

Convocation has endorsed a series of strategies to support access to justice in underserved communities.

This work follows a 2023 motion from the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, which called on the Law Society to explore ways to encourage lawyers to practise in rural and remote areas. The initiative responds, in part, to an aging bar in many of these communities and aims to strengthen recruitment and retention in high need regions.

Six strategies will guide this work: student outreach, strengthened mentorship and continuing professional development supports, enhanced succession planning tools, targeted recruitment efforts, and ongoing advocacy through the Alliance for Sustainable Legal Aid. A joint working group with Legal Aid Ontario has been established, and law school outreach efforts are being renewed in collaboration with the Federation of Ontario Law Associations. Progress updates will be provided to Convocation twice each year.

Revocation of Licences

Effective April, lawyers and paralegals whose licences have been administratively suspended for more than three years will have their licences revoked. Licensees who are currently administratively suspended

and wish to maintain their licence should contact the Law Society at LawSociety@LSO.ca.

Trust Account Authorization Requirement

Convocation has amended By Law 9 to introduce a new trust account authorization requirement aimed at addressing fraud, misappropriation, and other forms of trust account misuse.

The amendment requires licensees who maintain a trust account, along with those who have signing authority and are designated to provide authorization, to provide an irrevocable direction to their financial institution to release trust account records to the Law Society when required. Safeguards will be in place to ensure that this authority is exercised only where necessary. The amendments come into force on May 1, 2026, and additional guidance and resources will be made available this spring.

New CPD Requirement

Convocation has also approved a new Indigenous cultural competency training course, reflecting the profession's ongoing commitment to improving service and understanding in matters involving Indigenous clients and communities.

The course will be mandatory for all lawyers and paralegals, offered online at no cost, and will count toward existing continuing professional development requirements. Completion of the course will satisfy your annual CPD requirement for that year.

Licensees will have two years to complete the program, with additional time available for those completing the Foundations of Sole Practice program. More details are expected following Convocation in April.

Awards

The annual Law Society awards ceremony will be held on May 27. I am pleased to share that MLA member Doug Ferguson will receive the Law Society Medal this year.

The Medal is awarded to individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the legal profession. Doug has had a distinguished career as a lawyer, educator, adjudicator, Small Claims Court judge, and community leader. He has contributed extensively to the Ontario Bar Association, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Action Committee on Access to Justice, where he is currently organizing Canada's first national research conference focused on access to justice and data in the justice system. Congratulations, Doug. You make the southwest region proud.

Staying Connected with the Law Society

If you are interested in following these and other developments more closely, materials are posted in advance of Convocation on the Law Society's website. You are always welcome to reach out to a bencher with questions or feedback. After each meeting, the Law Society also provides a summary of key updates by email, with additional information shared through its website, Ontario Reports, and social media channels.



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We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



Peter D. Eberlie

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PETER D. EBERLIE is one of London's most experienced and successful Family Law Trial lawyers. Most of his cases have resolved through successful negotiation – out of court.

A message from Peter:

After 50 years of Litigation, I am devoting all my energies to Mediation and/or Mediation-Arbitration.

I have been mediating Family Law cases now for 10 years. Mediation is - by far - more cost-effective and successful than Litigation.

As retired Justice Mary Jo Nolan frequently says – *"It never gets any cheaper than it does today"* – being the day the Mediation is held.

Lawyers need to share with their clients the true "cost" of Mediation as against the true "cost" of Litigation.

Clients generally do not understand that Litigation does not resolve everything until an actual Trial is held and the decision rendered.

Few clients consider the emotional and psychological toll Litigation takes on them. Ask your client what the "value" is to them of resolving/settling their case TODAY – versus 2 years from now - when they might be called for Trial.

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Report on Past CPD Programs

Contributed by:
Paula Puddy

Advocacy Skills & Accounting in Litigation sponsored by PwC

The MLA was delighted to resurrect this outstanding advocacy program with PwC, with eight lawyers completing all three sessions. Thank you to our generous sponsor for their support.



During the first session, participants were introduced to the commercial litigation case problem by PwC and heard key tips and pointers on cross examinations from Simon Davies. In the second session, Lucy Lee shared her thoughts on the role of an expert witness and how to prepare an expert. The participants also picked the brains of their "expert" to better understand the expert reports. Finally, the lawyers conducted a direct examination and cross-examination of an expert on two different issues at the London Court house in front of lawyer "judges".

Thank you to Kait Jaikaran of PwC for spearheading this program for our local lawyers in a judicial system where there are limited opportunities to gain advocacy experience. I would also like to thank our "judges": John Brennan of JBrennan Law, Lisa Gunn - criminal defence lawyer, Bob Ledgley of Lerner's LLP, and Alex Neaves of Shillington McCall LLP for their insightful and constructive feedback.

Thank you to Simon Davies for his helpful insights on cross-examinations and Lucy Lee of Cohen Highley LLP for her advice on prepping expert witnesses. We appreciated the PwC experts too including Gbenga Bankole, Caitlin Chowen and Jessica Ghandour.

The Middlesex Law Association was pleased to make a donation on behalf of the volunteers to London Lawyers Feed the Hungry.

This program was accredited by the Law Society of Ontario for 1.5 hours of professionalism content and 4.5 hours of substantive content.

The Wellness Summit 2.0

The MLA held its second annual Wellness Summit on February 27, 2026 with 40 practitioners in attendance. Thank you to committee chairs, Jacob Damstra of Lerner's LLP and Erin Rankin Nash of Ferguson Patterson PC Lawyers for an excellent program!

We appreciated the learning from our excellent speakers: Lisa Spriet, Jennifer Ferreira, Kent Utman, Kristen Grant, Karen Hulan, Michel Castillo and Danielle Ramsay. The Middlesex Law Association is pleased to make a donation to London Lawyers Feed the Hungry on behalf of the co-chairs and presenters.

This program was accredited by the Law Society of Ontario for 3.5 hours of Professionalism content and 0.5 hours of Substantive content.

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The logo for Spencer Rehabilitation Experts features a red circular icon with a white dot inside, followed by the text 'SPENCER REHABILITATION EXPERTS' in a bold, sans-serif font.

The logo for Closer features a green circular icon with three concentric lines, followed by the text 'Closer' in a bold, sans-serif font.

Here is a Summary of the Presentations:

The Why of Wellness: Understanding the Pressures and Mental Health Risks in the Legal Profession

Jacob Damstra, Partner, Lerner's LLP, discussed the importance of wellness in the legal profession and reflected on how awareness of lawyer wellbeing had evolved over time. Referencing findings from the national study on wellness in legal professionals conducted by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada and the Canadian Bar Association, he highlighted data showing elevated rates of psychological distress, burnout, depression, and substance use among lawyers, particularly in the early stages of practice and among equity-seeking groups. The discussion considered how traditional markers of professional success, including workload, client expectations, and external validation, could intensify pressure rather than alleviate it.

Practical reflections encouraged a shift toward service-focused professional values, stronger mental health awareness, and intentional habits that supported long-term wellbeing so legal professionals remained effective in their work and personal lives.

Nutrition Was the Foundation: Supporting Cognitive Performance, Energy, and Long-Term Health

Lisa Spriet MSc, Registered Dietician and Co-Owner of NutriProCan, examined the role of nutrition in supporting cognitive performance, resilience, and long-term health for professionals working in cognitively demanding environments. The discussion connected diet with concentration, emotional regulation, decision-making, and sustained mental energy, emphasizing the importance of balanced meals, consistent energy intake, and limiting excessive caffeine, refined carbohydrates, and alcohol. Attention was also given to broader health considerations such as cardiovascular health, blood sugar control, inflammation, sleep, and gut health, all of which influenced brain function and long-term cognitive outcomes. Practical guidance included structuring regular meals and snacks, planning ahead for demanding workdays, and adopting dietary patterns such as the Mediterranean or MIND diet to support sustained focus, productivity, and professional longevity.

Incorporating Physical Wellness into Your Professional & Personal Life: Practical Tips & Demonstrations

This presentation by Kent Utman, Wellness Director at Medpoint Health Care Centre, examined wellness challenges within the legal profession and highlighted the relationship between sedentary work patterns, burnout, and long-term health risks. Drawing on research regarding physical inactivity among lawyers and the broader population, it explained how limited daily movement and prolonged sitting contributed to elevated

risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, certain cancers, and overall mortality. The presentation discussed how preventive healthcare models focused on early screening, health system navigation, and lifestyle modification, while emphasizing the role of exercise, nutrition, sleep, and stress management in maintaining professional performance and long-term wellbeing. Practical guidance centered on integrating short "micro-workouts" and stretching routines into daily routines, demonstrating how brief bursts of activity throughout the workday could support physical health, improve energy and cognitive clarity, and reduce stress without requiring lengthy gym sessions. The presentation encouraged legal professionals to adopt sustainable movement habits within work and personal routines as a practical strategy for improving health outcomes and resilience in demanding professional environments.

Optimize Your Environment, Optimize Your Wellness

This presentation by Jennifer Ferreira, Occupational Therapist at Spencer Rehabilitation Experts, delivered practical guidance on improving workplace ergonomics to reduce strain and support long-term health. Using a participant to assist with demonstrations and audience participation, the presentation walked through step-by-step adjustments to chair height, lumbar support, armrests, monitor distance, keyboard position, and standing desk setup. Attendees were guided through simple checks at their own seats, including posture alignment, wrist positioning while typing, and proper monitor height, showing how small adjustments could reduce strain on the neck, back, shoulders, and wrists. The presentation also highlighted simple habits such as regular movement breaks, visual breaks, and workspace adjustments that could be applied

immediately. Through these practical demonstrations and applied examples, it provided actionable strategies professionals could implement right away to create a healthier and more productive work environment.

Mental Wellness Strategies: Evidence-Based Approaches to Stress and Performance

Drawing on neuroscience and research on occupational stress, this presentation examined the impact of chronic stress on cognitive performance and mental wellbeing in the legal profession. Dr. Arlene MacDougall, a psychiatrist, researcher, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Western University, Director of Research and Innovation for Mental Health Care at St. Joseph's Health Care London, and co-founder of the Global MINDS Collective, brought both clinical and research perspectives to the discussion of mental health, wellbeing, and evidence-based mindfulness practices. The presentation explained how sustained stress and elevated cortisol levels affected the brain's executive functions, attention, judgment, and emotional regulation, increasing risks of burnout, depression, anxiety, and substance misuse among professionals working in high-pressure environments. It introduced mindfulness as an evidence-based approach to strengthening attention control, improving responses to stress, and reducing unproductive patterns such as rumination and catastrophizing. Cognitive-behavioural strategies were also explored to help individuals evaluate automatic thoughts, identify cognitive distortions, and adopt more realistic thinking patterns. Practical takeaways emphasized brief mindfulness practices, recovery cycles that included sleep, exercise, and social connection, and regular reflection on professional values and purpose as tools for sustaining performance, resilience, and long-term career wellbeing.

Being Well: Lawyers Shared Their Wellness Strategies

Panelists: Michel Castillo (Castillo Law Chambers), Jacob Damstra (Lerners LLP), Karen Hulan (Beckett Personal Injury Lawyers), and Danielle Ramsay (Legate Injury Lawyers)

Moderated by: Jacob Damstra, Lerners LLP

This presentation featured a panel discussion in which legal professionals at different stages of their careers shared personal reflections on how they incorporated wellness into legal practice. Discussion focused on recognizing the pressures and uncertainty inherent in the profession, acknowledging early signs of burnout, and addressing the stigma around discussing mental health challenges within the legal community. Panelists described practical strategies that helped create balance, including setting boundaries between work and personal time, protecting periods of rest or exercise, pursuing meaningful hobbies, and building routines that supported recovery from demanding work. The conversation also highlighted the value of reassessing career environments, maintaining supportive professional

and social connections, and making deliberate choices that supported long-term sustainability in practice. The presentation encouraged legal professionals to approach wellness as an individualized process, emphasizing that different strategies worked for different people and that maintaining wellbeing required ongoing reflection and adjustment throughout a legal career.

Member Assistance Program

This presentation by Kristen Grant, Director of Customer Experience, Homewood Health Inc. outlined guidance on accessing and using a member assistance program designed to support mental health and wellbeing for legal professionals and their family members. It explained that support could be sought for a wide range of concerns, including stress, anxiety, depression, major life changes, workplace challenges, grief, financial pressures, and family issues. Emphasis was placed on seeking assistance early, recognizing that support could be helpful both for preventative purposes and during more acute difficulties. The presentation also discussed different forms of support available, including short-term counseling, coaching related to health, life balance, and career matters, and peer support from

trained volunteers within the legal profession. Practical information highlighted flexible ways to access help through telephone, video, online platforms, or in-person sessions, along with digital resources such as cognitive-behavioural therapy programs and tools for locating childcare and elder-care services. Attention was also given to privacy and confidentiality, noting that participation was voluntary and personal information remained protected.

Upcoming CPD Programs:

The 26th Annual Straight from the Bench conference – Thursday, June 25, 2026, 9:00am to 5:00pm

The 198th Fall Opening of the Courts – Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 4:45pm to 7:00pm

Bench & Bar Dinner (following the Fall Opening of the Courts) – Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Questions & Comments

If you have any issues or concerns regarding the Middlesex court facilities, operations, judiciary, etc., let them be known! Send all concerns to the current MLA Bench & Bar representatives:

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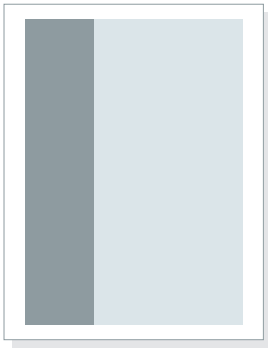
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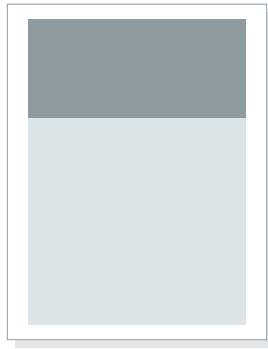
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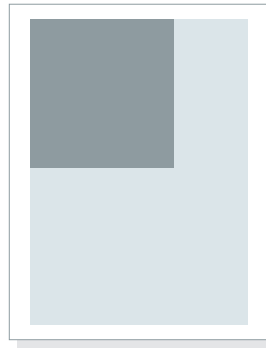
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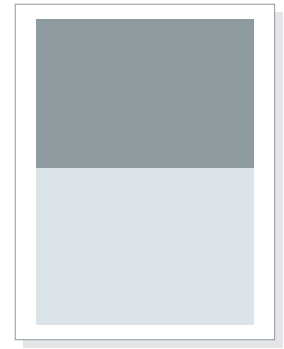
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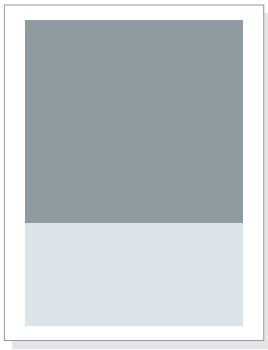
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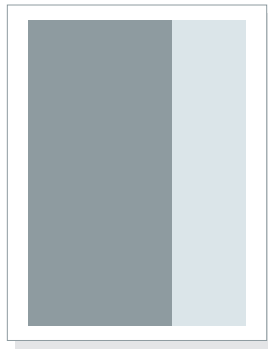
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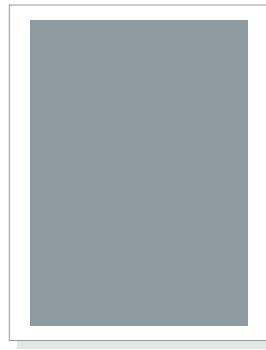
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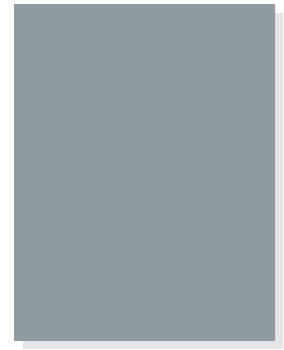
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