

The Law Society

of British Columbia



2015 – 2017 Strategic Plan

Our Mandate

Our mandate is to uphold and protect the public interest in the administration of justice by

- (a) preserving and protecting the rights and freedoms of all persons,
- (b) ensuring the independence, integrity, honour and competence of lawyers,
- (c) establishing standards and programs for the education, professional responsibility and competence of lawyers and of applicants for call and admission,
- (d) regulating the practice of law, and
- (e) supporting and assisting lawyers, articulated students and lawyers of other jurisdictions who are permitted to practise law in British Columbia in fulfilling their duties in the practice of law.

Our Goals

To fulfil our mandate in the next three years, we have identified three specific goals:

1. The public will have better access to legal services.

We know that one of the most significant challenges in Canadian civil society today is ensuring that the public has adequate access to legal advice and services.

2. The public will be well served by an innovative and effective Law Society.

We recognize that the public expects and deserves effective regulation of the legal profession. To meet that expectation, we will seek out and encourage innovation in all of our practices and processes in order to continue to be an effective professional regulatory body.

3. The public will have greater confidence in the rule of law and the administration of justice.

We believe that the rule of law, supported by an effective justice system, is essential to Canadian civil society. The legal profession plays an important role in maintaining public confidence in both the rule of law and the administration of justice. We recognize the importance of working with others to educate the public about the rule of law, the role of the Law Society and the legal profession in the justice system and the fundamental importance of the administration of justice.

1. The public will have better access to justice.

Strategy 1–1

Increase the availability of legal service providers

Initiative 1–1(a)

Follow-up on recommendations from the December 2014 report of the Legal Services Regulatory Framework Task Force toward developing a framework for regulating non-lawyer legal service providers to enhance the availability of legal service providers while ensuring the public continues to receive legal services and advice from qualified providers.

Initiative 1–1(b)

Continue work on initiatives for advancement of women and minorities, including through the Justicia Program and the Aboriginal Mentoring Program.

Strategy 1–2

Increase assistance to the public seeking legal services

Initiative 1–2(a)

Evaluate the Manitoba Family Justice Program and determine if it is a viable model for improving access to family law legal services in British Columbia.

Initiative 1–2(b)

Examine the Law Society's role in connection with the advancement and support of Justice Access Centres.

Initiative 1–2(c)

Examine the Law Society's position on legal aid, including what constitutes appropriate funding and whether other sources of funding, aside from government, can be identified.

2. The Law Society will continue to be an innovative and effective professional regulatory body.

Strategy 2–1

Improve the admission, education and continuing competence of students and lawyers

Initiative 2–1(a)

Evaluate the current admission program (PLTC and articles), including the role of lawyers and law firms, and develop principles for what an admission program is meant to achieve.

Initiative 2–1(b)

Monitor the Federation’s development of national standards and the need for a consistent approach to admission requirements in light of interprovincial mobility.

Initiative 2–1(c)

Conduct a review of the Continuing Professional Development program.

Initiative 2–1(d)

Examine Practice Standards initiatives to improve the competence of lawyers by maximizing the use of existing and new data sources to identify at-risk lawyers and by creating Practice Standards protocols for remediating high risk lawyers.

Initiative 2–1(e)

Examine alternatives to articling, including Ontario’s new legal practice program and Lakehead University’s integrated co-op law degree program, and assess their potential effects in British Columbia.

Strategy 2–2

Expand the options for the regulation of legal services

Initiative 2–2(a)

Consider whether to permit Alternate Business Structures and, if so, to propose a framework for their regulation.

Initiative 2–2(b)

Continue the Law Firm Regulation Task Force and the work currently underway to develop a framework for the regulation of law firms.

Initiative 2–2(c)

Continue discussions regarding the possibility of merging regulatory operations with the Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia.

3. The public will have greater confidence in the administration of justice and the rule of law.

Strategy 3–1

Increase public awareness of the importance of the rule of law and the proper administration of justice

Initiative 3–1(a)

Develop communications strategies for engaging the profession, legal service users, and the public in general justice issues.

Initiative 3–1(b)

Examine the Law Society’s role in public education initiatives.

Initiative 3–1(c)

Identify ways to engage the Ministry of Education on high school core curriculum to include substantive education on the justice system.

Strategy 3–2

Enhance the Law Society voice on issues affecting the justice system

Initiative 3–2(a)

Examine and settle on the scope and meaning of s. 3(a) of the Legal Profession Act.

Initiative 3–2(b)

Identify strategies to express a public voice on the justice system, including public forums.