



President's Report

Kanata Cowan

This is my third report as President of The Hamilton Law Association, and the practice of law has continued to change even since my last report. Limitation periods and procedural time periods have been re-instituted after being suspended for a period of 26 weeks. Speaking more broadly, I am hopeful that we, as a profession, will not let this crisis go to waste. We have had to adapt to an increasingly virtual process of law. This is a unique opportunity that has allowed us to explore methods to be more proficient in the equitable administration of justice.

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From my perspective, one of the HLA's greatest assets lay in our gatherings at brick and mortar locations across the City; these have been put on hold for the time being. Our staff and our volunteers have pivoted to become experts in Zoom technology to continue to allow us to come together in meaningful and impactful ways. This has been helpful and necessary, although meeting as a group, face to face, remains the most effective interaction and has other benefits that we all miss. We will certainly resume our meetings, in propria persona, when it is safe to do so.

Meanwhile, on Zoom, a number of seminars are scheduled in the fall and I urge you to join in if a topic piques your interest.

On August 10 I attended the virtual AGM of the Law Society of Ontario that had been postponed from May 2020. Teresa Donnelly, the new Treasurer, chaired the meeting in both of our nations' official languages. The financial statements were reported by Bencher Joseph Groia. Commentary about actions that the Law Society is taking to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 and the issue of systemic anti-

black racism formed a large part of the meeting along with upcoming budgetary concerns due to the pandemic.

At the end of the summer that never was, I attended the National Conference of Bar President's virtual meeting entitled "Better Together". The aptly named program allowed me to ponder how indeed our profession is better when we do work together.

My favourite speaker was Jarrett Adams, a criminal defense and civil rights lawyer who was wrongfully convicted of a criminal offence when he was a 17 year old high school graduate.

As a quick summary, when he was 17 years old he was falsely accused and wrongfully convicted of sexual assault. He came from a family with little in terms of economic resources and took the public defender, trusting that it would be ok. He was sent to prison at the age of 19 and not freed until his late twenties with the help of the Wisconsin Innocence project. He went on to law school and clerked in the very same court that absolved him of the crime that he did not commit.

Mr. Adams made a number of comments that struck me, and allowed me to think deeply about the legal and justice system. One such comment was, "We aren't correcting anything in the department of corrections" which struck a chord with me partly because of my guilty pleasure for 'Orange

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HLA Journal

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is the New Black' with its autobiographical story lines inspired by real life experience. I don't practice Criminal Defense law, but Mr. Adams made me wonder if justice could be better served both for the betterment of society, victims and offenders. It seems that this has been a topic where more progress could be made.

Mr. Adams' story speaks to both the failures and successes of the American Legal system which has many similarities to the system here in Canada. As a family lawyer, I recognize many positive aspects to our legal system but I can also see situations where it has failed people, in different ways than criminal law, yet still, for family law litigants and others that it affects, in life altering ways.

Mr. Adams suggested starting a 'pipeline' to assist others to achieve great things. A scholarship and the mentorship of lawyers in his community made a huge difference to him. I hope that The HLA will make a difference for many new lawyers in our community through our initiatives with the New Lawyers' Subcommittee and our community of inclusion.

Coincidentally or not (perhaps it's the new catchphrase), thrice this summer I have heard, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak". *Listen more, speak less* has been conveyed through both this program and other CPD that I completed this summer. Both as HLA President and within my practice, I am endeavouring to keep this in mind at meetings and during other interactions with people. I have tried to take this to heart in my practice to hear and understand what people are saying and respond in a way that reflects how they feel they need to be treated.

Mr. Adams ended his presentation with a little story that I would like to add here for you also to ponder.

This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

If you have ideas or suggestions to make our association better, I am always just a phone call away.

If this article was too openly expressive (touchy feely) for your tastes, I would like to offer you the drink recipes that were provided at the start of the National Conference of Bar President's meeting.

Cocktail – Moscow Mule

2 ounces vodka
6 ounces ginger beer/ginger ale
½ to 1 ounce fresh squeezed lime juice
Squeeze lime juice in to a Moscow Mule mug and drop in the spent shell. Add 2 or 3 ice cubes, then pour in the vodka and fill with cold ginger beer/ginger ale. Serve with a stirring rod.

Mocktail- Ginger Lime Fizz

12 ounces ginger beer/ginger ale
4 ounces seltzer water
½ to 1 ounce fresh squeezed lime juice
Limes for garnish
Combine ingredients in a pitcher. Taste and adjust lime juice as needed. Serve cold. ■

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