

Online Renewals and Communication with Law Society Staff

The time to renew one's membership with the Law Society has now come and gone. I express my thanks to all members who have renewed through our new online platform. The process has been successful in allowing us to handle renewal applications in a manner that reduces the need for physical contact in these pandemic times.

Anything new, and in particular new platforms and IT systems, can undoubtedly be difficult and give rise to unforeseeable challenges. On rare occasions, some members have faced issues with the online platform. The Law Society has attempted to address these concerns as they arise. In the vast majority of instances, these issues have been successfully resolved.

Unfortunately, and on rare occasion, some members have made comments to Law Society staff that were not courteous or respectful.

Law Society staff are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment at all times. While the issues faced by a member and the Law Society staff can sometimes be difficult or aggravating (especially when technology is involved), members should not "take out" frustrations on staff. We take this opportunity to remind members to continue to treat Law Society staff in a professional and courteous manner and of their obligations under the Code of Professional Conduct adopted by the Law Society:

Rule 7.2-4 Communications

A lawyer must not, in the course of a professional practice, send correspondence or otherwise communicate to a client, another lawyer or any other person in a manner that is abusive, offensive, or otherwise inconsistent with the proper tone of a professional communication from a lawyer

Social Media and Professional Responsibility

From time to time, the Law Society receives informal concerns about social media comments made by members of the profession.

As you are all aware, ethical obligations on lawyers extend to both one's professional life and one's non-professional life. Sometimes this line can be quite blurry, so it is important at all times for the lawyers who make comments on social media to do so in a way that it is consistent with professional ethics.

The Code of Professional Conduct has a number of provisions that can generally assist lawyers in guiding their communications on social media platforms. For example, we refer you to:

Rule 2.1-1 (Integrity);

Rule 4.2-1 (Marketing of Professional Services);

Rule 5.6-1 (Encouraging Respect for the Administration of Justice); and

Rule 7.5-1 (Communication with the Public) as a starting point.

The Law Society has all the confidence that members do engage in social media in a way contemplated by the Code and will continue to do so. Consistent with the standards of professionalism, we know that members will communicate in a manner that is civil, courteous and in good faith.

We do note that on the Law Society website, there is a [document](#) entitled “Canadian Bar Association Information to Guidelines to Practicing Ethically with New Information Technologies” that provides further guidance. (See page 17 that speaks about online discussion, including social media).

Lawyers play an important role in public debate. Lawyers can speak to issues with the law from an informed basis, which can only benefit the public. Such public comments are routinely made in a courteous manner and consistent with professional ethics. We have no doubt that this will continue in the future.



Nalini Vaddapalli, CEO – Deputy Secretary