

For Immediate Release  
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**NEW ERA BEGINS WITH PATHBREAKING PARALEGAL REGULATION**  
*Appointments To Paralegal Standing Committee Leading To Increased Choice  
And Protection For Consumers Of Legal Services*

TORONTO — Ontario consumers looking for legal services are closer to having more choice and better protection, as the provincial government moves to solidify a new system for authorizing, empowering and regulating paralegals.

Attorney General Michael Bryant announced today the appointments of five paralegals to the Law Society of Upper Canada's newly created paralegal standing committee. The standing committee will be responsible for matters relating to the regulation of paralegals in the province.

“These qualified individuals will play a key role in the emergence of a new, regulated legal profession in Ontario,” said Bryant. “They are pioneers, actively taking a role in regulating paralegals in this province, and in ensuring that consumers have access to high-quality, affordable legal services.”

On October 19, 2006, the Access to Justice Act was passed by the Legislature and received Royal Assent providing for the regulation of paralegals. For the first time in Canada's history, paralegals will be required to receive training, carry liability insurance and report to a public body that can investigate complaints. Paralegal regulation comes into force on May 1, 2007.

Under the act, the Law Society of Upper Canada, which regulates lawyers, will now also regulate paralegals. If authorized by the Law Society, paralegals will continue to provide the services they are currently authorized to provide including representation in small claims court matters, traffic infractions and other provincial offences, and tribunals. The paralegal standing committee, with a non-lawyer majority, chaired by a paralegal, will take the lead in implementing paralegal regulation for the Law Society. The committee includes the five newly government appointed paralegals, and eight members of the Law Society's governing body (benchers) – three lay-benchers and five lawyer benchers appointed by the Society.

The paralegal appointments to the standing committee are:

Paralegal **Paul Dray** has been appointed as committee chair. He has been a practicing paralegal for the past 15 years. Currently he provides prosecutorial services through his independent paralegal corporation. He was a police officer for 13 years. Dray was past president and founder of the Prosecutors' Association of Ontario and past president of the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario.

"I am honoured to be appointed chair to the first-ever paralegal standing committee," said Dray. "I look forward to working with all committee members in the regulation of paralegals so the public can have renewed confidence in the services that paralegals provide."

As founder, president and CEO of POINTTS Advisory Limited, **Brian Lawrie** has been providing professional legal representation for people charged with Highway Traffic Act offences for 22 years. He has also been a member of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to the School of Legal and Public Administration Paralegal Program at Seneca College. He was a constable with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force.

**Michelle Haigh** has been an independent paralegal for the past 10 years, handling landlord and tenant matters, as well as matters before Provincial Offences court, and small claims court. Most recently, she has specialized in small claims court.

**Margaret Louter** has been providing legal services with various law firms for 27 years. She has been vice president and director of the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario and previous corporate secretary and director of the Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario.

**Stephen Parker** has been a traffic court agent since 1986. He was a constable for 10 years with the Peel Regional Police Service. Parker was the founding director and past president of the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario.

Paul Dray and Brian Lawrie have also been appointed paralegal benchers to the Law Society.

The other committee members, appointed by the Law Society, include lawyers James Caskey, Thomas Heintzman, William Simpson and Bonnie Warkentin, and lay-benchers Andrea Alexander and Anne Marie Doyle. The Law Society will appoint an additional lawyer and lay-bencher soon.

"These are exciting developments for the justice system in Ontario," said Gavin MacKenzie, Treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada. "Providing the public with additional, competent legal professionals will enhance the administration of and access to justice for thousands of clients in several areas."

Under the legislation that regulates paralegals, the public will be protected by:

- Mandatory licensing examinations and a Code of Conduct
- Required educational standards or equivalencies
- A transparent complaints and investigative process
- Mandatory professional liability insurance

“Paralegals are joining the ranks of doctors, lawyers and teachers as regulated professionals in Ontario,” said Bryant. “Ontario is becoming an international leader by creating a modern regulatory system and educational programs to train qualified paralegals.”

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