

General Practitioners' Section Report 2010-2011

The year went by too fast!! Nevertheless we were able to get some things accomplished. We initiated and welcomed our new Vice Chair, Joe Gallagher of D.R. Knight Law office. We were happy that Sid Laviolette of Habing Law Office stayed on as past chair to give us continuity and guidance. Sid was also appointed member-at-large to the national Small Solo & General Practitioners Forum (SSGPF) which increases our influence and knowledge in the national dimension. Also, as a result, both Joe Gallagher (in my stead) and Sid Laviolette (as member-at-large) attended the national SSGPF meeting in Ottawa on October 16, 2010.

As an Executive we had two lunch meetings, on September 29, 2010 and on March 21, 2011. These meetings consisted of updating each other and brain storming for future events.

Your Chair and Sid in his capacity of member-at-large attended at least two teleconference meetings of the national SSGPF. These meetings proved to be very interesting, especially learning about the differing approaches by the provinces to similar problems. An issue that kept surfacing was the question of the use of paralegals to increase access to legal services by making them more affordable. When I advised that the Manitoba Law Society had studied this and decided to expand the use of paralegals with increased education, but only to work under the supervision of a lawyer (which we had advocated to the Committee previously), I was asked to do an article on this. The article will appear in the CBA Newsletter just prior to the CBA Legal Conference in mid-August, 2011. We are continuing to monitor this particular issue in the interests of the profession. There will likely be further articles on its progress from the profession's perspective.

Your Chair with the support of the Executive made a submission for the meeting with the Minister of Justice/AG requesting improved training for paralegals to work under the supervision of a lawyer, supporting the new Family Law Access Centre, encouraging an expansion of Legal Aide, the use of electronic filing and a separate line for lawyers to file documents. CBA staff offered to assist in bringing the last 3 ideas to the attention of the proper authorities.

Finally, commencing in March, 2011, your Chair was busy initiating, planning and implementing a panel discussion on "End of Life Decisions". This mushroomed into a jointly sponsored event with the Elder Law Section and the Health Section. It included a DVD showing of the recent debate on the Golubchuk case between Neil Kravetsky (counsel to the family) and Prof. Arthur Schafer (Director of the Centre for Applied Ethics, University of Manitoba). This event took place on June 6, 2011 at the Law Society Classroom at 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gloria Mendelson, Chair