

Women Lawyers' Forum Report – 2010/2011

The Women Lawyers' Forum is the connecting point for women in the legal profession. Through the inter-lacing of the social and the professional, the Women Lawyers' Forum provides an opportunity for women in the law to meet, to talk and to get to know each other better, for personal and professional benefit. The Forum organizes several events each year where women can engage, relax and enjoy the company of other women who share the law as a common thread.

The Executive of the Women Lawyers' Forum met regularly to plan the year's calendar of events and discuss issues of importance to women in the practice of law. An ongoing theme in our discussions this past year was how women in particular relate and network within the profession and with clients, and another goal was to provide information and practical advice regarding career planning/choices for women in the law. Our scheduled events for the past year reflect our goals.

On October 27, 2010, we presented our third annual Wine, Women & Song event to an audience of some 54 lawyers and judges at The Academy. The event was once again ably hosted by The Hon. Madam Justice Brenda Keyser and featured performances by lawyers and judges: Not Quite the Supremes (a group made up of judges of the Provincial Court), Polygon Wild (featuring Nalini Reddy and Tracy Pniowsky), Joan Schmidt and Hayley Main. In addition to the entertainment, the evening included a brief presentation on the work of the Feminist Legal Forum. This event was chaired by Kristin Gibson, Member-at-Large of the Women Lawyers' Forum.

We had two Fall lunch sessions, one in October, and one in December, 2010 which were well attended and received. The October session was: So You Want to be a Judge moderated by The Hon. Madam Justice Freda Steel, Manitoba Court of Appeal. The speakers were: The Hon. Madam Justice Brenda Keyser, Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba; The Hon. Judge LeeAnn Martin, Provincial Court of Manitoba; and Master Joy Cooper, Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba.

The December session was: Appointments to Administrative Tribunals - How do they work? Is it an opportunity for you? The Panel was introduced by Shannon Breckman, and Speakers included: Karen Busby, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba, author of the report "Improving Administrative Justice in Manitoba: Starting with the Appointments Process" and Member of the Review Panel under the *Vulnerable Persons Act*; Jennifer Goldenberg, Deputy Chief Commissioner, Residential Tenancies Commission; and Kristine Barr, Lawyer and Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board

Our spring evening event, A Fine Balance was held on April 27, 2011 at the Reh-Fit Centre, and was a speed mentoring' event co-sponsored by the Women Lawyers' Forum and the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba. The evening started with wine and appetizers and general mingling of the over 75 attendees, and then over the course of one hour, we sat down in small groups for six ten-minute sessions with various 'experts' on a variety of topics including stress management, exercise regimes, 'getting organized', healthy mid-day snacks, etc. This event was chaired by Riva Richard, Member-at-Large of the Women Lawyers' Forum.

Our events this year concluded with the evening of June 16, 2011 as we held a Celebrating Success Wine and Cheese Reception for Women Lawyers and Judges at the Blackstone Lounge, Taylor McCaffrey. This event was co-hosted by the Women Lawyers' Forum and the MB component of the Canadian Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges, and we honoured newly appointed Women Judges and

retiring Women Judges including Madam Justice Sylvia Guertin-Riley, Madam Justice Lea Duval, Madam Justice Diana Cameron and Judge Linda Giesbrecht.

In addition to the scheduled events, the Executive continued to discuss and consider the work by Professor Karen Busby for the Manitoba Law Reform Commission on the process of appointments to administrative tribunals in Manitoba. A submission was made along with a resolution for review and consideration by the Council of the Manitoba Bar Association on June 16, 2010 and was approved. A copy of this report along with the resolution will be posted on the MBA Women Lawyers' Forum web page. We understand that the government is at present in the process of creating a website that lists all of the administrative tribunal appointments in Manitoba, with an anticipated timeline to be up and running by the Fall of 2011.

Planning for Fall 2011 is already underway by our Section. Current discussions for the Fall lunch programs are with respect to presenting two Panels which will outline options for lawyers outside private practice, and our fourth annual Wine, Women & Song evening at The Academy will take place in October 2011.

Special thanks must go to this year's Executive who have collaborated well and worked very hard in bringing the ideas for these events into reality: Jennifer Goldenberg, Vice-chair; Nicole Merrick, Secretary, Past-chairs, Karen Dyck and Madam Justice Freda Steel; and Members-at-Large: Pat Lane, Shannon Breckman, Calla Coughlan, Kristin Gibson, Nicole Merrick, Riva Richard and Kathryn Hordienko who we welcomed as an MAL this year.

Baerbel Langner and Judge Carena Roller, Co-Chairs