

THE COUNTY & DISTRICT LAW PRESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION DES BÂTONNIERS DE COMTÉS ET DISTRICTS

Paul J.S. Kowalyszyn, Chair

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Sole Practitioner and Small Legal Firms – Profile

According to the Law Society of Upper Canada Task Force report of Sole Practitioner and Small Firms, 2005

- Sole practitioners and small firms have traditionally been the backbone of the legal profession.
- 52% of Ontario lawyers are either sole practitioners or belong to small firms. 94% of all firms in Ontario are considered small firms (less than five lawyers.)
- The average age of a sole practitioner or small firm lawyer is 49; only 12% are under the age of 35 and 80% live in non-urban areas of Ontario.
- A 2003 survey found that 93% of articling students were hired in Toronto or other large urban areas. This is a concern as there are not enough young lawyers choosing to become sole practitioners or work in small firms to replace the current group as it reaches retirement age.
- 77% of clients who utilize sole practitioners or lawyers from small firms are individuals rather than businesses or other organizations.

Shortage of Sole Practitioner and Small Legal Firms

- 64% of lawyers who work as sole practitioners or in small firms are reporting a shortage of legal services. Most are from smaller towns in non-urban areas of Ontario.
- Shortages are being reported mostly in family and matrimonial law. Other areas of shortages include: Criminal, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; mental health; landlord/tenant.

- The causes of the shortages vary from community to community. For example, some communities that are growing are not attracting new lawyers quickly enough to keep up with the growth

CDLPA Working to Address The Problem

- The County and District Law Presidents' Association (CDLPA) is a part of a working group established with other legal organizations to come up with ways to support those who want to pursue work as sole practitioners or in small legal firms.
 - Recommendations, which have yet to be implemented, include mentoring, assistance for small business and marketing plans; start-up workshops and greater outreach at law schools

“CDLPA wants to address the lawyer’s shortage in smaller communities to increase access to justice for all Ontarians.”

“We are working with our industry partners to address the concerns expressed by sole practitioners and small firms to ensure that this remains a viable practice alternative for new and younger lawyers.”

“CDLPA is taking a pro active approach to dealing with the issue. We are working on new ideas to ensure that sole practitioners and small firms remain a vital part of an open and accessible justice system.”

- *Paul Kowalyshyn, Chair, County and District Law Presidents' Association*

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