

You need a law firm
that's ready for what's next.

OSLER

LSUC to consider name change

September 25, 2017 | Written By Alex Robinson



Julian Falconer says a proposal to change the law society's name is one part of a larger strategy.

The Law Society of Upper Canada could soon become known as the Law Society of Ontario.

The provincial regulator's governing body, Convocation, will consider a motion Thursday proposing to change its name, which dates back to 1797. Proponents of such a shift have said "Upper Canada" is an archaic term that points back to a period in history when unfair treaties were struck between indigenous communities and the government of the time.

The law society's Strategic Communications Steering Group, which will submit the motion to Convocation, was tasked with determining whether the name was a barrier to connecting with the general public.

We've updated our [Privacy Statement](#). Before you continue, please read our new Privacy Statement and familiarize yourself with the terms.



"The question that benchers have to contend with and will be called upon to decide is 'Does the name represent the way we wish to go forward?'" says Bencher Julian Falconer, who is chairman of the steering group.

"Does the name open doors or is it a name that tends to keep doors closed?"

If approved, the name change will take effect on Jan. 1, 2018 and will be phased in over a year. The regulator's legal name will remain the Law Society of Upper Canada until the provincial legislature amends the Law Society Act.

The steering group has estimated that it will cost \$150,000 to implement the change in 2018, as it will mean updating signs, business cards, and other stationary for the law society's hundreds of employees, as well as anything else that has the regulator's name on it. Falconer says the name change proposal is just one piece of a larger initiative by the steering group, which was convened in February to look at how the law society interacts with the public.

He says that the motion is an important but initial step in the recognition of the law society's ultimate priority of connecting with the public it seeks to protect.

"One would be naïve if one ascribed the view that a name change will in and of itself be a game changer," he says. "It is part of a broader communication strategy designed to address those systemic barriers. It is a start."

Opponents of the change say the name has historical value and that changing it could actually confuse the public. They also say the law society had no role in negotiating the unfair treaties between government and indigenous peoples.

Proponents, however, say "Upper Canada" no longer accurately describes the geographic area that it regulates and that making the name change could bring the province in line with other law societies. They also say such a change would be consistent with the law society's commitments to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

"We're well past the time for speeches," says Falconer. "Real concrete steps are expected out of all of us as institutions and Canadians when we speak of reconciliation and it is no secret that the term 'Upper Canada' carries a negative connotation for many indigenous people."

The final say on the name change will ultimately be up to Convocation, which will debate the issue and vote on the motion Thursday.

Editor's Note: Updated on Sept. 25, 2017 at 4:58 p.m. with further information on cost to implement name change.

LSUC

COMMENTS We've updated our [Privacy Statement](#). Before you continue, please read our new Privacy Statement and familiarize yourself with the terms.