

PARALEGAL JASON DAVIE HELPS RESTORE A DRIVER'S RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL



In a decision highlighting both the vulnerability of litigants and the critical role of competent licensed paralegals in Ontario's justice system, the Provincial Offences Appeal Court ordered a new trial after a motorist's convictions were entered in his absence due to ineffective and misleading representation. The appeal ultimately turned on the late-stage intervention of paralegal Jason Davie, who reframed what seemed like a closed matter into a clear case of procedural injustice.

PARALEGAL PROGRAMS ACROSS ONTARIO ARE SHOWING A CONCERNING TREND

There's a worrying trend beginning to emerge as broader postsecondary enrolment pressures and program cuts begin to affect college offerings and student pathways into the profession. With shifting labour market dynamics, licensing barriers, and increased competition from alternative legal careers, these programs are facing declining interest and uncertainty about long-term sustainability.

CORRIN SWINTOSKY TALKS PARALEGALS SOUTH OF THE BORDER



CATHY CORSETTI IS THE 2026 RECIPIENT OF THE WILLIAM J. SIMPSON DISTINGUISHED PARALEGAL AWARD!



Laurie Marshal Talks Everything FLSP



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



John Paul Rodrigues



Justin D. Rochester

Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Paralegal TownHall Times!

This publication was born out of a simple but powerful recognition: the paralegal profession in Ontario is evolving, expanding, and contributing to access to justice in ways that deserve to be seen, heard, and documented. For too long, many of the meaningful contributions made by paralegals across the province have gone unrecognized outside of courtrooms, classrooms, and client files. This newspaper exists to change that.

The Paralegal TownHall Times is more than a publication. It is a platform. A platform to highlight the work being done by paralegals who are advocating, educating, building practices, mentoring students, and strengthening the profession every day. It is a space where achievements are acknowledged, ideas are exchanged, and the voices that shape the profession's future are amplified.

Equally important, this publication is intended to facilitate thoughtful discussion.

The legal landscape is constantly shifting. Tribunals evolve, legislation changes, and professional expectations grow. In that environment, dialogue is not optional; it is essential. Through articles, commentary, and shared perspectives, we aim to foster constructive dialogue that challenges, informs, and advances the profession.

We also recognize that a strong profession is built on connection. By bringing together practitioners, students, educators, and stakeholders, this publication reflects the very ethos that has guided The Paralegal TownHall from the beginning: that we are stronger together.

As you read this first edition, we invite you to engage with it, contribute to it, and see yourself reflected in it. This is your publication as much as it is ours.

Welcome to the beginning!

The Editors
The Paralegal TownHall Times

ANNOUNCEMENT



THE FUTURE OF THE PARALEGAL PROFESSION JUST STEPPED UP!

We're proud to officially launch the Paralegal TownHall Student Advisory Committee, an exceptional powerhouse of student leaders representing colleges across Ontario.

This isn't just a committee, but rather, the next generation stepping into leadership, and the future becomes the present.

The Paralegal TownHall's support system will live inside the colleges themselves.
Join us in celebrating our inaugural group:

Algonquin Careers Academy: Amber-Lynn L'Heureux

Anderson College: Abigail Watson, Adrienne Robertson, and Barry Fletcher

Durham College: Laura Celsie

George Brown Polytechnic: Matthew Abarca

Georgian College: Supriya Latchman

Humber Polytechnic: Fatouma Rashid and Serena James

Loyalist College: Melinda Johnson

Seneca Polytechnic: Angela Castillo and Sam Mortazavi

triOS College: Ardita Aliu

The future is already here and we're in fantastic hands!

If you are a paralegal student and you do not see your school listed, please reach out to The Paralegal TownHall to see how you can join us!

COVER STORY

PARALEGAL ADVOCACY RESTORES A DRIVER'S RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL



Pictured above: Jason Davie

In a decision that underscores both the vulnerability of litigants and the indispensable role of competent licensed paralegals in Ontario's justice system, the Provincial Offences Appeal Court has ordered a new trial for a motorist whose convictions were entered in his absence after he relied on ineffective and misleading representation.

At the centre of the successful appeal was paralegal **Jason Davie**, whose late-stage intervention transformed what had appeared to be a closed file into a clear case of procedural injustice.

The ruling, released January 30, 2026, by Justice Lori Anne Thomas, found that the appellant had been convicted "through no fault of his own" and that allowing those convictions to stand would have amounted to a miscarriage of justice

An advertisement for 'SPENCER RESUME REVIEW SERVICE'. The top part of the ad shows a close-up of hands typing on a laptop keyboard. Below the image, the text reads: 'SPENCER RESUME REVIEW SERVICE' in large, bold letters. To the right, it says 'TRYING TO BREAK INTO THE LEGAL FIELD? SRRS HAS YOUR BACK!' followed by a short paragraph: 'Armed with personal and professional experience, SRRS provides resume and cover letter review services for those trying to break into the legal field. Curious as to how SRRS can help you? Reach out today!' At the bottom, there is a small line of text: 'spencerresumereview.ca@gmail.com 613-852-8855 Stephanie Spencer on LinkedIn'.

Ad

A client who did everything right

The case began with two Part I charges under the Highway Traffic Act: careless driving and operating a motor vehicle while using a handheld device. Within the statutory 15-day window, the defendant retained a ticket-defence service, signed a retainer, and paid \$2,500 to dispute the charges.

What followed was a prolonged pattern of inaction and misinformation. No trial request was filed. No resolution meeting was scheduled. The client was convicted on a fail-to-respond docket and later misled into believing that reopenings had been filed and that his licence remained valid when, in fact, it had been suspended.

Justice Thomas accepted the appellant's evidence as "internally consistent and supported by exhibits," noting that repeated assurances from those he had retained prevented him from taking independent steps to protect his rights.

By the time the truth emerged—through an insurance abstract showing the convictions—the procedural damage had long been done.

Story Continued on Next Page...

The turning point: competent intervention

The file might have ended there but for the work of Jason Davie. On October 30, 2025, Davie prepared and filed the motion to extend time to appeal, supported by a detailed affidavit and the text-message record that ultimately formed the evidentiary backbone of the case.

This was not a routine filing. The motion required reconstructing the chronology of events, demonstrating that the appellant intended from the outset to dispute the charges, establishing that the default convictions flowed directly from misleading legal advice and inaction, and satisfying the stringent “ends of justice” test. In Provincial Offences appeals, the extension of time is a discretionary and fact-driven remedy. Without clear, persuasive evidence explaining the delay, such motions routinely fail. Davie’s materials provided that evidentiary clarity.

A record that told the real story

The decision repeatedly references the documentary trail—text messages, timelines, and procedural gaps—that showed the appellant’s reliance on incorrect legal advice and ongoing assurances that matters were being handled.

That evidentiary record did more than explain the delay; it demonstrated causation. Justice Thomas concluded that the misrepresentations “directly foreclosed” the appellant’s ability to request a trial or pursue a resolution meeting, and that but for those misrepresentations, he would not have been convicted in absentia.

Misconduct, regulation, and public record

The court also addressed the conduct of the former representative, including continued involvement with the client after a Law Society suspension and the provision of legally incorrect advice, and directed that the unredacted reasons be provided to the regulator to assist in its public-interest mandate.

The stakes behind the procedure

The case was not merely about fines. The original convictions carried escalating financial penalties, demerit points, licence suspensions, and the potential for imprisonment on the careless driving charge. More broadly, they affected the appellant’s insurance, his driving status, and his legal record.

By the time Davie became involved, the procedural posture was deeply entrenched. The fines had even been paid by an unknown party without the client’s knowledge, lifting the suspension but leaving the convictions in place and further obscuring the true status of the case. Untangling that sequence required not only legal knowledge but strategic file reconstruction.

Editorial Note on Identification:

This publication has chosen not to identify the former representative whose conduct precipitated the procedural breakdown described in these reasons. The judgment is publicly available and sets out the relevant facts in full. Those seeking additional context will find it readily within the decision and the associated regulatory record.

STORY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE..

Confidence in the administration of justice

In ordering a new trial, the court was explicit about the systemic importance of the remedy. “To do otherwise,” Justice Thomas wrote, “would undermine confidence in the administration of justice. That language signals that the case had moved beyond individual error to a question of public trust. Davie’s work ensured that the court had the factual and procedural foundation to reach that conclusion.

A model of paralegal advocacy

The decision also illustrates the increasingly visible role of licensed paralegals in Ontario’s appellate landscape.

Provincial Offences appeals demand:

- mastery of limitation periods and reopening jurisprudence,
- affidavit drafting and evidentiary organization,
- procedural strategy, and
- the ability to frame the client’s experience within the legal test for relief.

By presenting a coherent narrative supported by contemporaneous documentation, Davie converted what might have been viewed as a late and weak appeal into a compelling case for judicial intervention.

Restoring a right, not deciding a case

Importantly, the ruling does not determine whether the appellant is guilty or innocent of the underlying charges. It restores what the court found had been lost: the right to a fair hearing. That distinction is fundamental to the rule of law.

The quiet work that changes outcomes

Provincial Offences appeals rarely attract public attention. They are technical, document-driven, and often fought on tight timelines. Yet they carry real consequences for the individuals involved. By stepping into a case defined by delay and misinformation and turning it into a successful appeal, Jason Davie did more than secure a new trial for one client. He demonstrated the essential role that skilled paralegals play in safeguarding access to justice and maintaining public confidence in Ontario’s courts. In a system where procedural missteps can close the courthouse doors, competent advocacy can reopen them.

Congratulations to Jason for his hard work on this file and for showing just how capable, important and vital paralegals are to the administration of justice.

IN THE NEWS

SHRINKING PATHWAYS: WHAT PROGRAM CUTS MEAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PARALEGAL PROFESSION IN ONTARIO



Pictured above: Algonquin College

Across Ontario, a quiet but consequential shift is underway. Colleges are scaling back, suspending, or in some cases eliminating programs at a pace not seen in decades. While much of the public attention has focused broadly on post-secondary restructuring, the implications for the paralegal profession deserve specific and urgent attention. At the centre of this issue is a fundamental question: what happens when the pipeline into a regulated access-to-justice profession begins to narrow?

A Province-Wide Trend with Real Consequences

Recent developments confirm that program reductions are not isolated decisions, but part of a systemic trend. Ontario colleges have been grappling with financial pressures tied to tuition freezes, shifting enrolment patterns, and broader policy changes affecting post-secondary education.

The result has been sweeping program suspensions. Algonquin College, for example, has confirmed the suspension of its paralegal program as part of broader cost-containment measures. Other institutions across the province have also undertaken significant program reviews, leading to reductions in program offerings based on enrolment and financial sustainability.

This is not a marginal adjustment. It reflects a structural recalibration of the college system that is already reshaping how, and where, professional education is delivered in Ontario.

Why Paralegal Programs Matter More Than Ever

Unlike many other diploma programs, paralegal education is not simply vocational training. It is the entry point into a regulated profession governed by the Law Society of Ontario, requiring graduation from an accredited program as a prerequisite to licensure. When a paralegal program disappears, the impact is not confined to a single campus. It directly reduces the number of future licensees entering the system.

This matters because paralegals occupy a unique and indispensable role in Ontario's legal framework. They provide representation in Provincial Offences matters, Small Claims Court, and administrative tribunals, often at price points that make legal services accessible to individuals who would otherwise go unrepresented. In practical terms, fewer programs mean fewer paralegals. And fewer paralegals mean fewer access points to justice.

Story Continued on Next Page...

IN THE NEWS

Access to Justice: A Structural Risk

Access to justice is frequently discussed in abstract terms. Program cuts make it tangible. Ontario's justice system already faces well-documented pressures: backlogs, self-represented litigants, and increasing procedural complexity. Paralegals mitigate these pressures by offering affordable, competent representation.

When educational pathways contract, the long-term effect is a reduction in service capacity. This creates a feedback loop:

- Fewer graduates entering the profession
- Reduced availability of affordable legal services
- Increased strain on courts and tribunals
- Greater reliance on self-representation

In this context, the scaling back of paralegal programs is not merely an academic issue. It is a systemic access-to-justice concern.

Regional Representation: The Overlooked Impact

Perhaps the most underappreciated consequence of program reductions is their impact on regional representation.

Paralegal programs offered at colleges outside major urban centres have historically served as critical access points for students who intend to practice in their own communities. When programs are cut in regions such as Peterborough, Northern Ontario, or smaller municipalities, the pathway into the profession becomes geographically concentrated.

The effect is predictable:

- Students are forced to relocate or abandon the pathway altogether
- Fewer locally trained practitioners remain in smaller communities
- Legal deserts begin to emerge in areas already underserved

This is particularly concerning given that many rural and northern communities already face limited access to legal services. Removing local educational infrastructure compounds that disparity.

A Profession at a Crossroads

It is important to acknowledge that not all institutions are retreating. Several colleges continue to offer accredited paralegal programs and are adapting delivery models to respond to changing conditions. However, continued availability in large urban centres does not fully offset losses elsewhere. The issue is not only whether programs exist, but where they exist.

Story Continued on Next Page...

IN THE NEWS

Moving Forward: A Call for Strategic Attention

The current trajectory raises important questions for regulators, educators, and the profession as a whole:

- Should paralegal education be treated as essential professional infrastructure?
- Is there a need for targeted support to sustain programs in underserved regions?
- How can the profession ensure a stable pipeline of competent new licensees?

These are not theoretical considerations. They go directly to the profession's sustainability and its ability to fulfill its core mandate: delivering accessible, affordable legal services to the public.

Conclusion

The contraction of paralegal programs across Ontario is more than an educational trend. It is an early indicator of a broader structural challenge.

If left unaddressed, it risks reshaping the profession in ways that limit entry, concentrate services in urban centres, and ultimately weaken access to justice for those who need it most. For a profession built on accessibility, that is a conversation that cannot be ignored.

JOIN US!!!

The 2nd Annual Virtual Paralegal TownHall on

April 25, 2026

10 AM to 4:30 PM on Zoom.

This event is \$40 (Send E-Transfer to TheParalegalTownHall@gmail.com)

This is more than a conference. It is a conversation about who we are, where we are going, and how we elevate the profession together!

- Multiple interactive breakout sessions (12+ sessions planned!)
- Real discussions about competence, scope, and professional growth
- Forward-looking conversations on the future of paralegals
- A space built by the profession, for the profession!

IN THE NEWS

ENHANCED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: WHAT THEY MEAN FOR PARALEGALS IN ONTARIO



Pictured above: The Law Society of Ontario

The regulatory landscape for paralegals in Ontario continues to evolve, and with it comes a heightened emphasis on accountability, transparency, and professional oversight.

One of the most notable developments is the Law Society of Ontario's move toward enhanced reporting requirements for licensees. While reporting obligations are not new, the shift toward more structured, detailed, and digitally integrated reporting signals something more significant: a regulator increasingly focused on proactive governance rather than reactive enforcement.

From Formality to Function: A Shift in Purpose

Historically, many reporting obligations were viewed by licensees as administrative formalities, necessary for compliance but largely disconnected from day-to-day practice. That perception is changing. Enhanced reporting is designed to serve a functional purpose. It allows the Law Society to better monitor compliance, identify emerging risks, and ensure that licensees are meeting their professional obligations in real time, not after issues arise. For paralegals, this represents a shift from periodic disclosure to ongoing accountability.

What "Enhanced Reporting" Actually Means

At its core, enhanced reporting expands both the scope and precision of information that licensees are expected to provide.

This includes more detailed disclosures relating to:

- Professional liability insurance coverage
- Trust account management and financial compliance
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) reporting
- Business structure and practice status
- Material changes that may affect a licensee's ability to practise

In addition, there is an increased expectation that information be accurate, current, and updated promptly, rather than simply reported annually.

The integration of digital platforms such as LSO Connects further reinforces this expectation by making reporting more immediate, trackable, and reviewable.

Story Continued on Next Page...

IN THE NEWS

Why This Matters for the Profession

From a regulatory standpoint, enhanced reporting strengthens the Law Society's ability to fulfill its statutory mandate: protecting the public interest. However, for the profession, the implications run deeper.

First, it reinforces paralegals' position as fully accountable legal professionals operating within a regulated framework. The expectation is not minimal compliance, but active and ongoing adherence to professional standards.

Second, it elevates the importance of practice management systems. Licensees must now be more deliberate in how they track deadlines, maintain records, and monitor compliance obligations. Disorganization is no longer a benign inefficiency; it is a regulatory risk.

Third, it creates a more data-informed regulatory environment. Patterns of non-compliance, financial irregularities, or gaps in professional development can be identified earlier, potentially leading to increased scrutiny where concerns arise.

Operational Impact on Daily Practice

For many paralegals, the most immediate impact will be felt in the operational aspects of running a practice.

Enhanced reporting requires:

- More disciplined record-keeping practices
- Regular internal reviews of trust and financial accounts
- Timely updating of licensing and insurance information
- Proactive tracking and reporting of CPD hours

In effect, compliance becomes an integrated part of practice management rather than a periodic administrative task.

For sole practitioners and small firms in particular, this may require adjustments, whether through adopting new software, refining internal processes, or allocating additional time to compliance-related tasks.

Story Continued on Next Page...

IN THE NEWS

Risk and Responsibility

With increased reporting comes increased exposure. Incomplete, inaccurate, or delayed reporting is no longer likely to be viewed as a minor oversight. Instead, it may raise broader concerns about competence, diligence, or integrity.

This places a premium on:

- Attention to detail
- Timeliness
- Understanding the full scope of reporting obligations

In this environment, “I didn’t know” is not a defensible position.

A Maturing Profession

Viewed in a broader context, enhanced reporting is indicative of a maturing profession.

As the role of paralegals continues to expand within Ontario’s legal system, so too does the expectation that practitioners operate with the same level of professionalism, accountability, and regulatory compliance as any other legal service provider.

This evolution is not without its challenges. Increased administrative burdens are real, particularly for those balancing busy practices with limited resources.

However, it also presents an opportunity.

Greater transparency and accountability strengthen public confidence. Stronger public confidence enhances the credibility of the profession.

A more credible profession is better positioned to advocate for expanded roles, broader scope, and increased recognition within the justice system.

Enhanced reporting is not simply a regulatory update. It is a signal.

A signal that the expectations placed on paralegals are rising. A signal that compliance must be embedded into the fabric of daily practice. And ultimately, a signal that the profession is continuing to evolve in both responsibility and importance.

For paralegals across Ontario, the path forward is clear: understand the requirements, build systems that support compliance, and approach reporting not as an obligation to be managed, but as a professional standard to be upheld.

Sponsor Spotlight



Accounting for Law

Financial Peace of Mind for Lawyers



Jacques and his team at Accounting for Law specialize in providing dedicated accounting services tailored specifically for legal professionals. Their commitment to supporting the legal community goes beyond numbers, but also reflects a genuine investment in the success and stability of licensees across our field.

“On a personal note, not only did Accounting for Law get me through my first audit from the LSO many years ago and have been filing my tax returns for almost the entirety of the last decade, they have constantly stepped up to offer free webinars for my paralegal students to navigate various legal software, every time I ask for their help!” - J.P Rodrigues

For over 20 years, Accounting for Law has delivered clear, concise financial reporting, developed effective tax minimization strategies, and ensured full compliance with Provincial Law Society requirements.

“Our team is built on a network of professionals with diverse expertise. At the core of our services is our dedicated legal bookkeeping staff, supported by experienced IT, staffing, and management professionals who are available as needed and within your budget. We understand that managing a law practice is demanding, which is why we take pride in streamlining your operations and providing accurate, reliable financial reporting.

Navigating bank financing, tax obligations, and Law Society compliance can be complex and time-consuming. Our goal is to simplify that process.

We provide comprehensive legal bookkeeping services tailored to sole practitioners, partnerships, and small to mid-sized firms—giving you the confidence and financial clarity needed to focus on your practice.

Let us help you achieve financial peace of mind.”

– Accounting for Law

IN THE NEWS

MANDATORY INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMPETENCY COURSE: A NEW REQUIREMENT FOR LSO LICENSEES



The Law Society of Ontario has approved the implementation of a mandatory Indigenous cultural competency course for all licensees, marking a notable development in the professional obligations of both lawyers and paralegals in the province.

The decision was made following a vote of benchers and introduces a standardized training requirement that applies across the profession.

According to the Law Society of Ontario's communication announcing the initiative, the course is "focused on enhancing the overall competence of licensees who are increasingly representing Indigenous clients and dealing with Indigenous legal issues in their practice – across all areas of law practice." This framing situates the requirement within the broader context of evolving legal practice, where interactions with Indigenous clients and issues are not confined to any single area of law.

The requirement reflects the Law Society's mandate to ensure that licensees meet established standards of competence. As noted in the same communication, "part of our mandate is to ensure licensees have a baseline level of knowledge and competence," and the introduction of this course is intended to support that objective through a uniform educational component.

The Law Society has also indicated that this initiative aligns Ontario with other jurisdictions across Canada. The same communication notes that the LSO is aligning its competency requirements with those of law societies in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Québec, and the Northwest Territories, with Yukon currently developing a similar course. This positions the requirement as part of a broader national trend toward incorporating Indigenous cultural competency into professional standards.

In developing the course, the Law Society has drawn on existing models and external expertise. The communication confirms that the LSO "has taken the opportunity to learn from other Canadian jurisdictions in developing this course and collaborated with Indigenous scholars and legal experts," indicating that the content is informed by both comparative approaches and subject-matter expertise.

The requirement applies to all licensees, including paralegals, and is structured within the existing Continuing Professional Development framework rather than as a separate licensing prerequisite. The course is mandatory, but it will be a one-time obligation. It will be delivered online and at no cost to licensees. Importantly, completion of the course will fully satisfy a licensee's annual CPD requirement for the year in which it is completed, as outlined in the Law Society of Ontario's communication announcing the initiative.

The introduction of this course represents a formal addition to the professional obligations of paralegals and lawyers in Ontario. It establishes a standardized expectation that all licensees will complete training on Indigenous cultural competency, delivered in a consistent format and integrated into the regulatory framework governing ongoing professional development.

IN THE NEWS

CATHY CORSETTI IS THE 2026 RECIPIENT OF THE WILLIAM J. SIMPSON DISTINGUISHED PARALEGAL AWARD!



Pictured above: Cathy Corsetti

“Being this year’s recipient is quite an honour. Back in 2010, after the first Bencher election for paralegals, I was elected chair of the Paralegal Standing Committee, and Bill Simpson, who this award was renamed after in 2014, was my Vice Chair. At that time there wasn’t any Law Society Awards given to paralegals. During my time as chair of the committee in 2011, we created this award to recognize paralegals who had demonstrated several outstanding contributions to the profession and community. I am the 15th recipient and very proud of the former award winners and looking forward to celebrating with future Paralegals who will be granted this distinguished award.”

– Cathy Corsetti

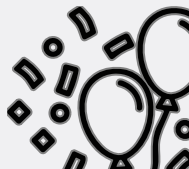
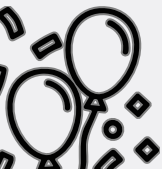
Congratulations to Cathy Corsetti on being named the recipient of the William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award.

This is a truly meaningful and well-earned recognition. The William J. Simpson Award represents the highest ideals of the paralegal profession: integrity, dedication to service, and a sustained commitment to advancing both professional standards and access to justice. Your selection as this year’s recipient speaks volumes about the impact you have had on clients, colleagues, and the broader legal community.

Throughout your career, you have exemplified what it means to practice with purpose. Your work reflects not only technical skill and professionalism but also a deep understanding of the responsibility that comes with serving the public. Contributions like yours continue to shape and elevate the role of paralegals in Ontario.

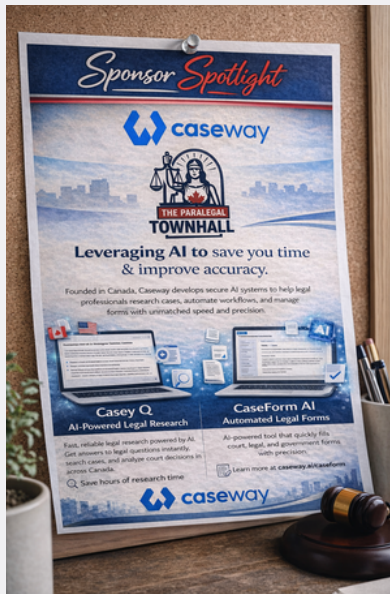
On behalf of The Paralegal TownHall, we are proud to recognize and celebrate this achievement with you. Moments like this matter. They highlight what is possible within our profession and reinforce the importance of leadership, mentorship, and continued excellence.

Thank you for the example you set and for the legacy you are building within the paralegal community. Stronger Together.



Sponsor Spotlight

Caseway



Caseway is a Canadian technology and automation company that develops AI systems designed to help professionals work with complex legal information. The company partners with enterprises, universities, and institutions to build secure software that analyzes large legal datasets, automates document workflows, and improves access to legal knowledge while maintaining strict privacy and security standards.

Software Description and Benefits

Caseway's legal research system, Casey, helps lawyers and paralegals quickly find, analyze, and understand Canadian court decisions. The platform indexes millions of court decisions and allows legal professionals to search cases, review summaries, and compare relevant rulings in seconds.

For busy legal teams, Casey reduces the time required to conduct legal research and helps surface relevant authorities faster. By combining large-scale legal data with AI analysis, the system helps lawyers and paralegals prepare memos, understand precedents, and identify key decisions more efficiently.

Casey

AI-Powered Legal Research

Casey's core strength is fast, reliable legal research. Users can ask plain-language legal questions and receive immediate answers supported by real case law. Casey draws from a database of millions of court decisions across the United States and Canada, covering federal and state jurisdictions. Intentionally grounded only in primary legal sources. No random internet content or secondary commentary. If it was not written by a judge, Casey does not use it. Narrow results to specific regions such as provinces or states, reducing noise and increasing relevance for your specific legal context. Whether you are a small-firm lawyer or a solo practitioner trying to work faster and smarter, Casey delivers reliable answers and real legal grounding.

<https://caseway.ai/casey>

CaseFrom AI

Skip the manual work while keeping the accuracy. CaseForm AI reads your documents, understands jurisdiction-specific rules, and completes court, legal, and government forms with precision. Upload supporting files like notices or affidavits and let the system auto-fill thousands of forms instantly. File-ready output without the busywork.

<https://caseway.ai/caseform>

THE OPEN RECORD



The Open Record is a dedicated space for paralegals to contribute their voices, perspectives, and lived experiences from within the profession. This section invites thoughtful commentary, practical insight, and principled opinion on the issues shaping legal practice, access to justice, and the evolving role of paralegals in Ontario and beyond.

Contributions may reflect on real-world practice, emerging legal developments, professional challenges, or broader systemic considerations. Whether grounded in advocacy, education, or experience, each piece forms part of a growing professional record, one built by those doing the work every day.

The Open Record is not about speaking the loudest. It is about speaking with purpose, clarity, and integrity.

All submissions are reviewed for relevance, professionalism, and contribution to the ongoing dialogue within the paralegal community.

This is your record. Add to it.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in The Open Record are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Paralegal TownHall, its affiliates, partners, or editorial team.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Corrin Swintosky

Corrin Swintosky is a freelance criminal paralegal and owner of Lucid Legal Support, which provides freelance paralegal services to solo and small criminal defense firms nationwide in the United States. With over 5 years of versatile criminal legal experience in probation, court operations, and public defense, she consults law firms on the best defense theories, trial strategies, and training for criminal defense teams.

CLOSING THE ACCESS-TO-JUSTICE GAP: HOW PARALEGAL LICENSING IS EVOLVING IN THE UNITED STATES

A Changing Landscape for Legal Support Professionals

The United States, traditionally an attorney-centric system for legal services, is now piloting limited licensing for non-lawyer legal professionals. Since the implementation of initial programs, more and more states are noticing and investing in non-attorney legal professionals to close the gap in access and affordability of legal services. Proficient paralegals are eager to take initiative and increase access to justice by utilizing their current skill set to further assist clients.

The Problem: A System Too Complex and Too Expensive

It's no secret that legal services across America are unaffordable and/or unattainable for most. Alternatives, such as legal aid organizations, may be limited or nonexistent for those who cannot afford representation. Even for individuals who can afford legal representation, there may be few to no legal services options available in rural areas.

Over 90% of defendants in federal criminal cases have a court-appointed attorney because they cannot afford their own lawyer. For civil matters, about 46% of low-income Americans do not even seek legal help due concern around cost. Furthermore, about 53% do not believe they could find an attorney even if they could afford one. With the increased justice and income gap, something's got to give.

The Solution: Limited Licensing Programs, Where Paralegals Fit in the Bigger Picture

It's no secret that paralegals are known to handle the bulk of substantive and administrative tasks of a case for the attorney. While attorneys focus on court appearances and case strategies, paralegals handle everything else in between. The rise of limited licensing programs is an exciting endeavor for paralegals that can provide services directly to the public at a more affordable and attainable rate.

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

The United States currently has five states that have implemented limited licensing programs for non-attorneys to represent clients with or without the requirement of an attorney. Additionally, numerous states are currently planning, developing, or expanding their limited licensing programs.

Programs range from limited case matters and case responsibilities, such as in Washington or Oregon, to Arizona, where Legal Paraprofessionals (LPs) can practice without the supervision of an attorney. Additionally, several states across the nation are currently in the process of developing limited licensing programs for non-attorneys.

What's Next for Paralegals and the Public in the United States?

Given the positive response, recommendations, and results of the limited licensing programs, paralegals will continue to have more opportunities to expand and grow from their current capacity. The hope is that the implementation of these programs becomes more common and more authority is given to paralegals to operate independently rather than under an attorney in limited capacities.

In turn, the public will only benefit from the increased access to legal services and affordability of common legal services that have continued to be unmet by low-income populations. These programs will meet the ultimate goals of decreasing the justice gap and providing more equitable legal support across the United States, not only for people who can afford and attain it.

Corrin Swintosky
Freelance Criminal Paralegal
Lucid Legal Support

Citations

<https://www.uscourts.gov/data-news/judiciary-news/2025/07/15/funding-crisis-leaves-defense-lawyers-working-without-pay#:~:text=Over%2090%20percent%20of%20defendants,cannot%20afford%20their%20own%20lawyer.>

<https://justicegap.lsc.gov/#:~:text=Concerns%20about%20the%20cost%20of,legal%20aid%20organizations%20it%20funds.>

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/blog/how-states-are-using-non-lawyers-to-address-the-access-to-justice-gap/>

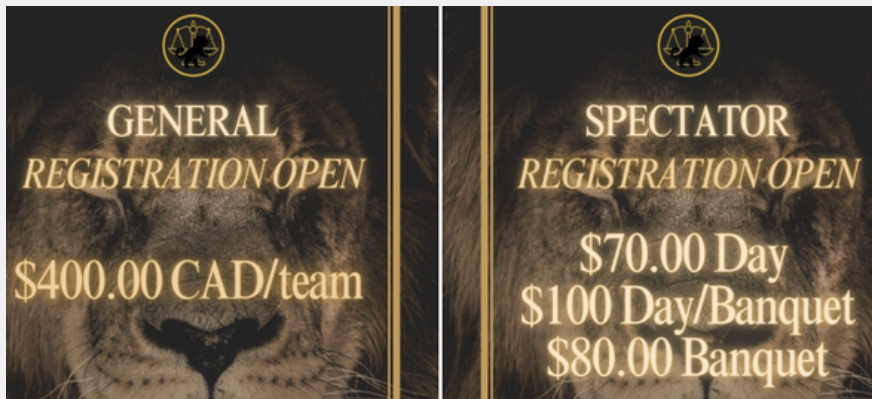
<https://www.wsba.org/for-legal-professionals/join-the-legal-profession-in-wa/limited-license-legal-technicians>

<https://www.osbar.org/lp/about.html>

<https://www.azcourts.gov/cld/Legal-Paraprofessional>

Lions Cup Moot

The 9th Annual Lions Cup
Moot is back!



June 13–14, 2026,
Being held at the Federal Court of Canada

Registration Dates

Early Bird – Feb 16 at 7 AM
Only 5 tickets available | \$350/team

General Admission – Mar 16 at 7 AM
\$400/team

Spectator tickets: \$70–\$100

**Only 55 teams will be accepted
Once they're gone, they're gone!**

To Register: [Click Here](#)

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: John Creelman

John Creelman is currently Mayor of the Town of Mono, population 9,000, north of Toronto in Dufferin County. John is also a Paralegal and former Justice of the Peace for 15 years. He was a Regional Senior Justice of the Peace for 6 of those years. He can be contacted at cps@johncreelman.com

For nearly 35 years, I have had the privilege of serving in three distinct careers: as a municipal councillor and Mayor, as a Justice of the Peace, and now as a Paralegal. While each role differs in its day-to-day responsibilities, they are remarkably similar in terms of the skills required.

The experience and knowledge gained in each of these capacities have proven both invaluable and highly transferable. For example, the patience and diplomacy required in public office are indispensable qualities for a member of the judiciary. Paralegals, as I have come to appreciate, must also demonstrate patience and diplomacy, whether dealing with demanding clients or navigating a court system that can, at times, feel confusing and disorganized.

My journey began in 1991 when I sought election to Mono Council. I spent just over a decade in elected office before being appointed as a Justice of the Peace. In that role, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the dedication and professionalism of paralegals.

One of my favourite court assignments was what is now known as Criminal Case Management Court. Over the years, this court has evolved from what was once a largely administrative, “rubber stamp” process into a more substantive forum where requests must be justified, and both Crown and defence are held accountable for their decisions and delays.

Throughout my time on the bench, I consistently found that paralegals acting as agents for counsel in Case Management Court were among the most organized and efficient in addressing matters. They remain so today, although I acknowledge a degree of bias now that I practice in that very space.

In 2018, I retired as a Justice of the Peace. While I remained interested in returning to elected office, I was equally motivated to become a paralegal. These pursuits are not mutually exclusive, provided one does not take on Provincial Offences Act matters.

I now find great satisfaction in appearing before the same Case Management Courts over which I once presided. At the same time, I have come to recognize how much work remains to be done to reform and improve this part of the system. Despite the repeal of the order of precedence that existed for over a century under the Barristers Act, paralegals are still not consistently treated as equals to lawyers in many courtrooms.

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

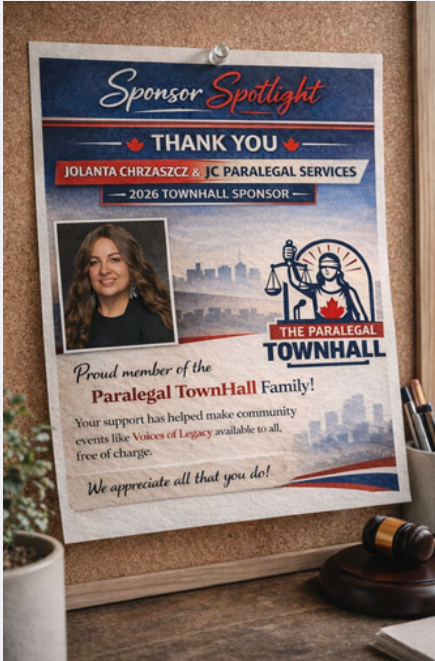
As a paralegal with experience on both sides of the bench, I have two principal observations. First, the scope of practice for paralegals should be expanded. The profession is capable of taking on far more than is currently permitted. This is fundamentally an access to justice issue. The persistence of what can only be described as legal feudalism must be reconsidered.

Second, there is a pressing need to break down the silos that exist between government, the legal profession, and the judiciary. It has become too easy for the Ministry of the Attorney General to defer to the judiciary, and for the judiciary, when it speaks at all, to shift responsibility back to the Ministry. Legal Aid Ontario, for its part, appears largely absent when it comes to meaningful advocacy on behalf of its members in these areas.

I recognize that these views may be seen as controversial. However, they are grounded in lived experience across multiple roles within the system. I am encouraged by initiatives such as The Paralegal TownHall and am confident that they will lead to meaningful progress for the profession.

Sponsor Spotlight

JC Paralegal Services



Jolanta Chrzaszcz is the Founder of JC Paralegal Services, representing landlords and businesses across the Greater Toronto Area at the Landlord and Tenant Board and in Small Claims Court.

Jolanta defends landlords and businesses at the Landlord and Tenant Board and in Small Claims Court, building each case on structured legal analysis and organized evidence.

Jolanta serves Ontario, Mississauga, Oakville, Burlington, Hamilton, Halton Region, Toronto (GTA), Vaughan, Markham, Oshawa, Guelph Kitchener, Niagara Region, Durham Region and more...

The JC Paralegal Services team specializes in:

- Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) representation for landlords and property managers
- Eviction applications (L1, L2) and rent arrears recovery proceedings
- Defence of tenant applications (T2, T6, bad faith allegations)
- Small Claims Court to the monetary jurisdiction limit of \$50k
- Contract disputes, debt recovery, and enforcement of judgments
- Motion materials, settlement conferences, and trial preparation
- Structured evidence briefs and written legal submissions

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Laurie Marshall

Laurie Marshall is a Licensed Paralegal (LSO) - FLSP authorized, a Qualified Mediator (ADRIO/ADRIC) and a retired Professor in the Paralegal programs at Durham College. Currently, Laurie offers legal services in joint and simple divorces, IRB representation and Small Claims Court at Marshall Legal and Immigration Services, together with being the lead facilitator at Marshall CPD Inc. Over 35 years her practice areas have included civil litigation and consumer law in Small Claims Court, Provincial Offences, Immigration at the IRB, Criminal Law, Human Rights and Family Law and being a staunch advocate for raising the bar to the Paralegal profession she has supervised over 400 Paralegal students practicing over the years. An active volunteer Board member of Community Justice Alternatives, Durham Region (CJA), Laurie is a Community Mediator and Trainer in the Restorative Justice Practices and Community Mediation programs. In her spare time, Laurie enjoys spending time at her cottage in Omemee with her family and travelling.

MY EXPERIENCE ACHIEVING LSO FLSP AUTHORIZATION

Prior to LSUC (now “LSO”) licensing of Paralegals, I was one of many unlicensed Paralegal professionals offered services to the public, consisting of Joint and Uncontested (Simple) Divorces, guidance navigating the family court system, assistance completing documents such as

Supporting Affidavits, and, with leave of the court via a motion, representation in hearings. In 2008, that changed with licensing and the new scope of Paralegals under LSO By-law No. 4. Paralegals were not granted scope in family law matters. It took considerable time considering the stakeholders involved, but in 2024, the scope of the Family Law Service Provider (“FLSP”) was determined, and in January 2025, the inaugural class of the FLSP program commenced

The FLSP program offered online at Fanshawe College is a 15-week program with full-time classes running 3 full weekdays or 3 evenings per week and 6 class hours each Saturday.

The part-time option is flexible over a 10 – 12-month period. Field Placement is 40 hours after classes finish, and the licensing exam takes place approximately 2 months after the last class is held.

Classes consist of legal principles and rules in family law, ethics in family law, dispute resolution options in family law, and practice management. It is thorough and prepares FLSP students for eventual practice.

I found the time commitment of the program challenging, with 15 in class hours and an additional 10 hours of reading, studying and assignments each week as I was also teaching full-time. Having 12 previous years' experience in family law prior to licensing,

I was fortunate to have the foundation of the law, jurisprudence, jurisdiction of the courts, and familiarity with the documents and rules.

Together with my years of practice as a Paralegal with rules of other courts, document portals, advocacy skills and preparation of submissions, I found the program enhanced my knowledge and skills for future practice in family law in Ontario. The examination is based on scenarios that require background knowledge to be clearly comprehended and put to memory.

Although there are selected parts of Statutes and Rules provided, with a 2-hour time limit, a thorough understanding of scope, ethics, basic limitation periods, forms and rules within scope need to be put to memory. I was FLSP authorized by the LSO in August 2025, and currently my business is now running smoothly, and I am thrilled to have my previous business model back, helping people who have simple matters, including joint and simple divorces.

In my opinion, it is important that those considering enrollment in the FLSP program have experience in practice as a paralegal and intend to offer the services. We need practicing FLSP's to assist in the family court. There is a need for those who can't afford a lawyer to have options that FLSP's offer, be it LSR's, coaching, or process navigation. We are a valuable service and very essential in the provision access to the family law legal system in Ontario.

2026 Paralegal TownHall Pass
— One Pass. One Year. Everything Included. —

 5+ CPDs FREE	 Recordings Included	 LTB 101 Access
 Virtual TownHall	 Networking Events	 Oath & Commissioning
 50% Off Gala	 50% Off In-Person TownHall	 PI Prep Discount

\$400+ Value | Pay \$199 + HST
Limited 2026 Passes Available
[Register Now](#)

THE PARALEGAL TOWNHALL

Ad

You asked. We listened!!!

In response to requests to have an annual subscription for all our events and activities, we are very pleased to roll out The 2026 Paralegal TownHall Pass.

The 2026 Paralegal TownHall Pass gives you access to many of our events and activities for 2026 at no additional cost for the year, as well as discounted rates of up to 50% on our two biggest events of the year.

We are also partnering with third-party sponsors and partners to offer even more value for holders of our 2026 Paralegal TownHall Pass!

Please register at ParalegalTownHall.ca

\$199 + HST

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Harry Fine

Harry has 20 years experience as a paralegal after sitting as an adjudicator at the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board. In 2018 Harry was honoured with the Law Society's prestigious William J. Simpson Distinguished Paralegal Award. He is one of only 10 paralegals to receive that honour. Harry also served as the volunteer President of the Landlord's Self-Help Centre, the only landlord-side legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. While there, Harry dealt with issues such as law reform, community outreach and governance. Harry is also a former director of the Ontario Paralegal Association.

THE BUMPY ROAD TO THE RTA: MY REFLECTIONS ON 25 YEARS OF TENANT AND LANDLORD LAW

The legal landscape for residential tenancy law in Ontario has changed dramatically since June 17, 1998. That's the date the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, the predecessor to the Landlord Tenant Board "(the LTB)", began operating under the provisions of the Tenant Protection Act, 1997.

Prior to that date, the Ontario Court (General Division), now the Superior Court of Justice, was the forum that resolved residential tenancy disputes. Disputes, along with issues related to rent, were decided under Part IV of the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Residential Rent Regulation Act, 1975, which was later replaced by the Rent Control Act, 1992.

But on June 17, 1998, the old laws became history, the old venue became obsolete, and the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (the ORHT) was born. I was not a Member of the ORHT in their initial recruitment. I was part of the second group of recruits, onboarded in 2001 by way of an Order In Council by the provincial cabinet.

From 2001 to 2005, I had the privilege of performing public service. Almost all rights-based statutes are political documents. And boy, this one is no exception. As a political junkie, I have had a rather unique perspective and opportunity watching the changes to the law over the last 28 years. I've seen dozens of amendments and a partial rewrite in 2007 under the Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty.

The coming into force of the Residential Tenancies Act in 2007 and re-naming the Tribunal to the Landlord Tenant Board were significant enough that adjudicators and paralegals all required additional training. There were changes in process, as well as changes to the statute. The most significant change in 2007 was the elimination of default orders, similar to default judgments in Small Claims Court. In all landlord applications, if the tenant did not file a written dispute to the Board within 5 days of being served with an application...an L1, for instance, for arrears of rent, then the hearing that was scheduled by the Board was cancelled. At that point, an order was issued for eviction and money on the basis of the landlord's notice of termination and application. This was the birth of the LTB backlog!

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

I don't have room here to describe the changes fully, but here are some of the ones I remember since the Tribunal's inception back in 1998:

- The creation of the 4th opportunity by a tenant to void a rent eviction
- The creation of a right by tenants to raise issues under s.82 at a rent hearing without notice or application having been filed
- The rules for when a landlord can raise rent above the guideline due to capital expenditures were limited, and sunset provisions were introduced on those increases
- Landlords were required to provide tenants with compensation for the landlord's own use applications and all other types of no-fault applications
- Extraordinary increases in utility costs could no longer be considered for an Above Guideline rent increase application
- Corporate landlords could no longer serve an N12 to move back into their own homes
- The annual rent increase guideline was capped at 2.5% regardless of the actual %
- Fines against landlords were increased dramatically for bad-faith evictions and all Provincial
- Offences found in Part XVI of the RTA
- Increased compensation to the tenant could be awarded for bad-faith evictions
- Certain landlord behaviour was "deemed" to be bad faith, creating a reverse onus on landlords
- A standard lease was introduced to be used for most types of residential tenancies
- A Regulation was amended, permitting a non-tenant spouse to stay on if the tenant moved out, regardless of creditworthiness
- The Board could not evict, regardless of the evidence, if the required no-fault compensation was not paid to the tenant by the termination date in the notice
- Finally, we now have a \$50,000 maximum monetary jurisdiction, up from \$10,000

Throughout it all, we have had vacancy decontrol, a type of rent stabilization that allows landlords to raise the rent to any negotiated amount when a tenancy ends and a new tenancy begins. A vague promise by then-leader Dalton McGuinty during the summer 2003 campaign was that Vacancy Decontrol would end within one year of an election victory. Of course, it never happened.

But regardless of the newly negotiated rent, the rent could only be increased by a provincial guideline percentage set annually by the province. Well, sort of. Many units were exempt from the guideline, but in 2017, Premier Kathleen Wynne removed the guideline percent exemption for new-builds...new meaning those built after 1991, twenty-six years earlier.

THE OPEN RECORD

However, Premier Ford reversed course a year later after his election as Premier, creating a new guideline exemption. However, it was not as broad...only exempting properties that were first occupied for residential purposes after November 15th, 2018. And then of course, there are the new 2025 Bill 60 changes, not yet in force, that will take a step back from the mostly tenant-centred changes over the past 28 years. And in a strange legal quirk, there was the passage of Bill 97, the Helping Homebuyers,

Protecting Tenants Act, 2023. The RTA changes in Bill 97 were mostly in response to bad- faith eviction applications by landlords, called Renovations. When Bill 97 passed in 2023, it extensively amended the Residential Tenancies Act. On paper. However, all of those amendments were written so as to come into force "on a day to be named by proclamation." That proclamation has not been issued for the RTA sections of Bill 97, nor will it be.

Check it out at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/06r17>, and search for '2023'. Lots of twists and turns, very aligned with the ideology of the government in power. Politics and law are forever intertwined.

In the next edition of the Paralegal TownHall Times, I will be reminiscing over how the Board and process at the Board have changed over the years.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Helen Lightstone

Helen Lightstone is a licensed paralegal, Chartered Mediator, and educator specializing in negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution. She is the founder of the Lightstone Academy for Conflict Resolution, where she develops and delivers practical ADR training for legal professionals and the general public. Helen teaches dispute resolution at the college level and also provides private training programs focused on negotiation, facilitative mediation, and effective communication in conflict. Her work emphasizes practical skills that help professionals and individuals manage difficult conversations, resolve disputes constructively, and achieve durable, cost-effective outcomes.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR PARALEGALS: STRENGTHENING YOUR CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Paralegals work at the front lines of conflict every day. Whether managing client expectations, navigating difficult conversations with opposing parties, or helping people move through stressful legal situations, the ability to handle conflict constructively is an essential professional skill.

The Law Society of Ontario encourages licensees to consider dispute resolution processes where appropriate, recognizing that many legal matters can benefit from early, collaborative problem-solving. This is where strong skills in negotiation, communication, and mediation can make a real difference — both for clients and for the legal system as a whole.

Many paralegals already use these skills instinctively. With the right training, those instincts can be refined into powerful professional tools that support clearer communication, better issue-spotting, and more practical outcomes for clients. One paralegal recently reflected on how developing these skills strengthened her own practice:

“The ADR courses I completed under Helen Lightstone significantly strengthened my skills in negotiation, issue-spotting, and conflict resolution while advocating for my clients. They have enhanced my Paralegal skills in managing my clients’ expectations, aligning with positive resolutions, facilitating discussions between parties, and working toward practical, cost-effective outcomes.” — Jennifer Priestley, Paralegal/Notary Jennifer@sjpparalegal.net

Comments like this reinforce something I often say to my students: many professionals have been mediating informally their entire lives — they simply haven’t had the opportunity to formalize those skills.

Learning structured approaches to negotiation and mediation allows paralegals to:

- recognize underlying interests earlier in a dispute
- guide conversations more productively
- help clients understand realistic expectations and options
- support discussions that lead toward resolution rather than escalation
- work toward outcomes that are both practical and cost-effective

These skills do not replace advocacy — they strengthen it. A paralegal who understands conflict dynamics and can facilitate productive dialogue becomes an even more effective advocate for their clients. If you have ever helped two people find common ground, managed a difficult conversation, or helped a client move toward a practical solution, you have already experienced the foundations of dispute resolution.

Training simply helps turn those experiences into intentional, professional skills. Conflict will always be part of legal work. The difference lies in how we respond to it. For paralegals looking to strengthen their practice and better serve their clients, developing conflict resolution skills is not just helpful — it is increasingly essential.

And for many professionals, it is simply the next natural step in the work they are already doing every day.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Sawyer Kemp

Sawyer Kemp is a Paralegal and Notary Public, operating out of the Durham Region. With a focus on Provincial Offences, and Civil Litigation, Sawyer has a strong focus on traffic tickets, by law matters, landlord-tenant issues, while also being a compliance/regulatory professional. Sawyer is also currently pursuing his law degree, in the hopes to turn his legal services practice into a full service law firm one day

I've been following the evolution of paralegal licensure across other Canadian provinces and in select U.S. states for some time now. As an Ontario paralegal, it remains a privilege to be part of a licensed legal profession, particularly in a jurisdiction that was not only the first law society in Canada, but the first in the world to regulate and license paralegals.

Watching provinces like Saskatchewan, and soon British Columbia, along with U.S. jurisdictions such as Utah, move toward structured, regulated non-lawyer legal representation is both encouraging and affirming. It serves as a reminder that Ontario's decision to transform unregulated agent work into a competent, accountable, and ethical profession was the right one. What is less encouraging is seeing the same debates resurface. The familiar argument that expanding scope somehow "lowers the bar", framed as being inconsistent with access to justice, mirrors the regulatory turf tensions Ontario has navigated for years and, in many ways, still does. On one side are those who, after years of formal education, articling, examinations, and licensure, quite rightly take pride in a rigorous and well-protected profession. On the other hand, there are licensed professionals whose training, education, and intensive hands-on experience position them to competently serve the public within a defined and limited scope, not as a replacement, but as a complement.

But there is a perspective that can get lost in this debate: the client's. Most people seeking legal help are not focused on where their representative studied, how many moots they completed, or the length of their articling term. They are looking for someone competent, ethical, and accessible to stand beside them and advocate for their interests. The growing reality of self-representation in areas like family law, provincial offences, and landlord-tenant matters tells us that the issue is not professional hierarchy; it is access. We should never lose sight of the "access" in access to justice. The suggestion that paralegals lower the bar assumes the legal profession is linear and uniform, when in practice, legal needs are diverse and highly contextual. I have yet to meet a reasonable Ontario paralegal who believes their training is equivalent to that of a lawyer, or who seeks to practise in areas reserved for lawyers such as corporate law, estates, or appellate advocacy.

What I have seen, however, are lawyers who acknowledge that in certain tribunal or summary conviction contexts, a career paralegal may possess deeper day-to-day procedural and practical experience. Some of the most productive professional relationships I've had have been with lawyers who approached this not as a hierarchy, but as a shared regulatory framework, different roles, different scopes, mutual respect. That model is far more useful to the public than the territorial debate. As regulation continues to expand in other jurisdictions, I would encourage those who are hesitant to view it not as an erosion of standards or a threat to the legal profession, but as what it is intended to be: a structured, accountable response to real legal need. "Paralegal" comes from the Greek *para*, meaning "beside." It has never meant replacement. It has never meant dilution. It means operating alongside. The title "lawyer" will always carry its historic and professional weight. Recognizing and defining the role of licensed paralegals does not diminish that; it strengthens the overall system by making it more responsive to the public it serves. And ultimately, that is whom the profession exists for.

THE OPEN RECORD

LESS BENEFITS, MORE LITIGATION: NAVIGATING THE 2026 SHIFT IN ONTARIO AUTO INSURANCE

Resources.
Reputation. Experience.
Refer With Confidence

WWW.HSHLAWYERS.COM

Howie,
Sacks &
Henry

Personal Injury Law

Ad

What is presented as a greater choice for drivers will end up exposing individuals to far more uncertainty as the cost of medical coverage may increasingly fall on the victims, the health care system and our social welfare system.

This is especially concerning for those who don't have wage continuation/sick time to cover their time off work following an accident. Such individuals are among the most vulnerable to a sudden inability to work, and these people are the ones who will be most hurt by the new legislation. If unable to work, such individuals might have no choice but to apply for government help through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Plan. Neither can provide as much as an income replacement benefit, and might not provide enough for even the most basic of daily needs.

A new framework that will quietly reshape how we think about auto insurance in Ontario will come into effect on July 1st, 2026. What is being positioned to consumers as providing “more flexibility” and lower premiums will be, for practical purposes, a reduction in benefits for many as the province moves away from a comprehensive safety net and towards a customizable, opt-in model that requires individuals to appreciate (in advance) the types of coverage they are likely to need in the event that they are involved in an accident.

The new structure involves the option to pay less when you select less coverage. Some protections that were standard in every policy, including certain health care benefits, and, notably, income replacement benefits, will now be optional. This will mean that drivers can lower their premiums by declining certain coverages. But beneath the tease of lower premiums lies a major transfer of risk.

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

For those who are the innocent victims of auto accidents, recovery is still available through tort claims advanced in our Courts. But there are significant drawbacks: lawsuits usually take years to complete, and so these funds are not available when they are most needed (i.e., right after an accident), and they are subject to other statutory restrictions, including the mandated threshold and deductibles, that can make such claims economically unviable. And of course, those who are deemed at fault will have no recourse at all.

This shift will also have a concrete impact that will spill over into our courtrooms. Despite the restrictions mentioned above, more accident victims will pursue Court Claims for medical expenses and lost wages. This comes at a time when our judicial resources are already stretched to the limit, a problem the government has shown no willingness to resolve. As it stands now, it takes several years to get a case through the Court system. A new influx of cases will only delay things further.

As always, one of the challenges is education. It is quite likely that most will not even be aware of these changes when the time comes to renew their insurance policy. Human nature has historically led most people to choose the cheapest option under the hopeful (if highly flawed) notion that accidents are something that happen to others.

If people took the time to understand the protections they are giving up by declining coverage (compared to relatively minimal extra cost), they might make better choices. But these sorts of legislative changes rarely attract attention beyond those who work in this area.

In short, from a legal perspective, the move to this new opt-in coverage structure shifts risk from accident benefits insurers everyone else, increasing uncertainty and complexity and at a time when the only focus should be on recovery.

Lawyers, insurers and policyholders alike must prepare for a future landscape in which the lack of coverage for necessary benefits only adds to the trauma of being in an accident.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Ashifa Alibhai

Ashifa Alibhai is a Paralegal, Chartered Mediator (C.Med), and Accredited Family Mediator (AccFM), with a Family Legal Services Provider (FLSP) designation anticipated in Q2 of next year. With a background in project and property management, she developed strong skills in strategy, negotiation, and problem-solving that now underpin her legal and dispute resolution practice. Her experience as an Adjudicator and Tribunal Member informs her approach to procedural fairness and legislative application in matters before tribunals, Small Claims Court, and the Landlord and Tenant Board. Committed to reducing barriers to justice,

FROM ADVOCACY TO ADJUDICATION: STRENGTHENING MY PARALEGAL PRACTICE

As paralegals, we are often viewed primarily as advocates—representing clients and advancing their positions. My experience as an Adjudicator and Hearings Officer has expanded that role and, in doing so, significantly strengthened my practice. Adjudication has required me to develop key skills in active decision-making, investigation, and legislative interpretation—skills that directly enhance my work as a licensed paralegal and mediator.

Active Adjudication: Listening with Purpose

Presiding over hearings has strengthened my ability to listen critically, identify the key issues, and manage proceedings efficiently. This has translated into my practice by allowing me to focus on what truly matters in a case and guide clients toward practical outcomes.

Investigation and Evidence Assessment

As an adjudicator, I assess the reliability and weight of evidence while remaining neutral. This has sharpened my ability to approach files with a more analytical lens, ensuring that evidence is not only gathered but thoughtfully evaluated and strategically presented.

Interpreting and Applying Legislation

Adjudication requires applying legislation, by-laws, and policies in a consistent and fair manner. This has strengthened my ability to interpret legal frameworks and apply them confidently, which has enhanced my effectiveness across all areas of my practice.

A More Balanced Practice

Balancing adjudication with advocacy has made me a more well-rounded professional. While advocacy focuses on advancing a client's position, adjudication reinforces neutrality, fairness, and structured decision-making. This dual perspective allows me to better manage expectations and support efficient resolution.

Opportunities Across Government

There are significant opportunities for paralegals in adjudication across municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Municipal tribunals address matters such as property standards, licensing, zoning, and by-law enforcement, while provincial and federal bodies oversee areas including housing, employment, and regulatory issues.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Melissa M. Mason

Melissa M. Mason is a Licensed Paralegal and Notary Public, with a solo practice in Uxbridge, Ontario. Originally from Windsor, she moved to the GTA in 2004 for a promotion while working in corporate contracts, and loves navigating both the city and country life with her family. Melissa obtained her Paralegal license in 2023. She serves the GTA and Durham Region in the following areas of law: Landlord-Tenant, Small Business Support, Collections, and Small Claims Matters.

RECENT CHANGES WITH THE LTB, BILL 60, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR MY CLIENTS & PRACTICE

As a (fairly) newly licensed paralegal with my own practice, and with many of my matters being Landlord-Tenant Applications, my landlord clients are happy to see changes being brought about with the introduction of Bill 60.

A common question I've heard from landlord clients is, "I understand tenants need to be protected, but what about the landlord?"

When a tenant hasn't paid rent for several months by the time Sheriff enforcement can be done, a landlord can be out-of-pocket in the tens of thousands of dollars and left chasing LTB Order enforcement, sometimes with a tenant who is not recoverable in Small Claims Court. There have been major improvements in the timely scheduling of hearings for N4 Notices and subsequent L1 Applications before the Landlord & Tenant Board. At one point, landlord applicants could be waiting up to seven months just to be heard, then have to wait for the tenant to vacate or schedule Sheriff enforcement, usually taking up to a year or more to successfully vacate a non-paying tenant. With the improvements on scheduling to be heard before the Board, we now have further improvements in "fighting delays" via the introduction of Bill 60.

The key highlights from a landlord perspective include the following:

Landlord's Own Use – Compensation Changes

Under Bill 60, a landlord may now provide a tenant with 120 days' notice to vacate without compensation, replacing the previous requirement of a minimum 60 days' notice with one month's compensation. Compensation remains payable where the full 120 days' notice is not provided. This amendment offers increased flexibility, allowing landlords to select a timeline that better aligns with their circumstances or facilitates agreement between the parties.

Reduction in Time to Request a Review

Bill 60 reduces the timeframe for requesting a review of an order from 30 days to 15 days following issuance. This change is intended to streamline proceedings and enable matters to be revisited and resolved more efficiently.

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

Tenant Ability to Raise Issues in L1 and L9 Applications

The legislation removes the Landlord and Tenant Board's discretion to grant relief from notice requirements for tenants. In addition, tenants are now required to have paid at least 50% of the arrears in order to raise their own issues during a landlord's L1 or L9 application hearing. This narrows the scope of issues and imposes a threshold requirement for participation in the proceeding.

Access to Justice Considerations

Access to justice includes not only the right to be heard, but the right to be heard in a timely and efficient manner. These amendments are aimed at moving matters before decision-makers more quickly, refining the issues in dispute, and supporting the enforcement of landlord and tenant agreements with reduced delay.

Bill 60 has removed the LTB's discretion to grant a tenant notice requirement relief. Bill 60 also made it a requirement that the tenant must have paid at least 50% of the arrears in order to be able to raise their own issues at a landlord L1 or L9 application hearing.

When we speak about access to justice, this includes the right to be heard expeditiously and deliver fairness to both parties in a matter. These changes help a file get before a decision maker faster, focus the scope of the issues, and assist in enforcing the agreement between a landlord and tenant, getting the matter resolved with fewer delays.

Practice Management for Paralegals

A practical overview of ethical, administrative, and strategic issues in managing a paralegal practice.

[Enroll now](#) Included with our Passes - [Learn more](#)

Instructors Justin Rochester and John Paul Rodrigues	Date April 1, 2026	Price \$150	Duration 5 hours	Format Attend Live Online and On-Demand Recording
--	------------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	---

Ad

What You'll Learn

- **How to open, manage, and close client files efficiently while maintaining confidentiality and compliance.**
- **Best practices for client communication, expectation management, and professional boundaries.**
- **Practical strategies for handling difficult or problematic clients ethically and effectively.**
- **How to organize files, manage time, and use practice management tools to stay on track.**
- **Key ethical, regulatory, and professional obligations for Ontario paralegals, including CPD and insurance considerations.**

[Go to : https://open.ca/practice-management-paralegals-26/](https://open.ca/practice-management-paralegals-26/)

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Maegan O'Connor

Maegan O'Connor is a Licensed Paralegal and Notary Public practicing in the Ottawa and Rockland areas. She pursued her passion for law, earning her Paralegal diploma from La Cité in 2020 and becoming licensed in 2021. Maegan focuses primarily on Landlord and Tenant Board matters, Notary services, and commissioning. With over 6,000 hours of LTB hearing exposure, she brings extensive practical experience to her work. She also assists lawyers with estate planning, estate disputes, and Superior Court matters. Fully bilingual in French and English, Maegan combines a compassionate, client-centered approach with practical, results-oriented strategies to help clients navigate legal challenges with confidence.

TRIBUNALS IN ONTARIO: WHAT WORKS — AND WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED FROM A PARALEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Ontario's administrative justice system is built upon a network of specialized tribunals designed to resolve disputes efficiently, affordably, and accessibly. Bodies such as the Landlord and Tenant Board, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the Social Benefits Tribunal, and the Licence Appeal Tribunal operate under the broader umbrella of Tribunals Ontario. Collectively, they play a critical role in delivering administrative justice across housing, human rights, social assistance, and licensing matters.

For paralegals in Ontario, tribunals are not peripheral forums — they are central to daily practice. Under the regulatory framework of the Law Society of Ontario, paralegals are authorized to represent clients before most provincial tribunals and in Small Claims Court. As a result, tribunals function not only as access-to-justice mechanisms for the public, but also as primary venues for paralegal advocacy.

What Works Well

One of the tribunal system's strongest features is accessibility. Compared to traditional courts, tribunal procedures are designed to be less formal, with simplified rules of evidence and process. Forms are generally written in plain language, and adjudicators often take a more active role in clarifying issues during hearings. This framework allows individuals without legal training to participate meaningfully in proceedings.

The increased use of virtual hearings is another notable success. Since the pandemic, many tribunals have adopted videoconference and telephone hearings as standard practice. For clients in rural communities, individuals with mobility challenges, or those unable to take extended time off work, remote access has significantly lowered participation barriers.

Paralegals have largely adapted well to this digital environment, maintaining advocacy standards while increasing convenience and efficiency. Timeliness, while not uniform across all tribunals, is another relative strength.

Administrative tribunals were designed to provide faster resolution than traditional courts, particularly in time-sensitive matters such as eviction proceedings or benefit suspensions. Where timelines are respected, this efficiency reduces financial and emotional strain on vulnerable parties.

Article Continued on Next Page...

THE OPEN RECORD

Where Improvements Are Needed

Despite these strengths, practical challenges remain — many of which are felt acutely within paralegal practice.

First, procedural inconsistency can create uncertainty. Rules may shift with limited notice, practice directions are sometimes difficult to locate, and document filing requirements vary between tribunals. Greater standardization across tribunals, along with clearer communication of procedural updates, would enhance fairness and efficiency for both representatives and self-represented parties.

Second, support for self-represented litigants requires continued development. Although tribunals are intended to be accessible, many parties still struggle with evidentiary preparation, legal tests, and procedural compliance. Expanding instructional resources— including step-by-step guides and educational webinars — would strengthen public confidence in the system and reduce preventable delays.

Third, improvements in digital infrastructure would be welcome. Enhanced case management portals with real-time status updates, confirmation of filed materials, and automated scheduling notifications would significantly reduce administrative burdens. Paralegals frequently dedicate considerable time to confirming receipt of documents or clarifying hearing logistics — time that could otherwise be spent advancing client interests.

Finally, thoughtful expansion of the paralegal scope in select administrative areas warrants discussion. In certain licensing or regulatory appeals, limited representation rights may restrict access to affordable advocacy. Carefully calibrated expansion — accompanied by appropriate training and oversight — could further promote access to justice without compromising public protection.

Conclusion

Ontario's tribunal system remains a vital pillar of accessible justice. Its emphasis on efficiency, specialization, and procedural flexibility aligns well with the strengths of paralegal advocacy. With continued refinement — particularly in procedural clarity, digital modernization, and representative access — tribunals can further strengthen their mandate of delivering fair, timely, and affordable justice to Ontarians.

THE OPEN RECORD



Pictured above: Shane Rousseau

Shane Rousseau is a triOS College graduate and current candidate in the Law Society of Ontario licensing process. An active Paralegal TownHall volunteer, he is committed to advocacy and strengthening the paralegal profession. Outside of his professional work, he is an enthusiastic admirer of 1990s-era S T A R T R E K.

FINDING MY PROFESSIONAL HOME AT PARALEGAL TOWNHALL

The Paralegal TownHall has been one of the most meaningful professional communities I have joined during my licensing journey. What began as simple attendance quickly evolved into active participation. Volunteering with TownHall gave me the opportunity to contribute in a tangible way while building relationships with fellow paralegal program students, newly licensed colleagues, and experienced practitioners. It also created organic opportunities to connect with members of the judiciary in an environment that was collegial, respectful, and inspiring.

The Continuing Professional Development sessions have been equally impactful. The programming is practical, relevant, and intellectually rigorous. Just as important, the CPDs are economical, making high-quality professional development accessible to students and new licensees who are still building their practices. Each session strengthened not only my substantive knowledge, but also my professional confidence and ethical awareness.

The annual holiday gala was a highlight of the year. The dinner was exceptional, the awards ceremony thoughtfully organized, and the atmosphere reflected the pride and professionalism of our growing community.

I am deeply grateful to JP Rodrigues and Justin Rochester for their indomitable efforts in making this herculean vision a reality.

Paralegal TownHall is more than an organization. It is a professional space for those who share a higher calling.

THE TOWNHALL BULLETIN



We're excited to announce the launch of the Phenomenal Paralegals Podcast, now streaming on Spotify!

This new series is an extension of J.P.'s Justice in Pieces YouTube Series and shines a spotlight on the voices, experiences, and achievements of phenomenal paralegals across Ontario.

Designed to demystify the legal profession, this series will focus on paralegals sharing career insights and real-life practice tips, to meaningful conversations about the paralegal profession, showing that we are #StrongerTogether.

Whether you're a paralegal student, new licensee, seasoned professional, or a member of the public, the Phenomenal Paralegals Podcast will keep you informed and inspired, in raising public awareness of phenomenal paralegals in Ontario and what they can do for you!

Tune in now on Spotify and join the conversation.

THE TOWNHALL BULLETIN



Congratulations to our 2026 Golden Gavel Winners!

January 2026:
Serena James
and **Supriya Latchman**

February 2026:
Paul Los
and **Adrienne Robertson**

March 2026:
Angela Castillo
and **Matthew Stalker**

One of the greatest privileges that we have is witnessing the joy when we present our “Golden Gavel” Award to outstanding paralegal students across Ontario.

Whether we are visiting triOS College in Kitchener and London, Georgian College in Barrie, Seneca Polytechnic and Humber Polytechnic in Toronto, or Anderson College in London, we are consistently inspired by the pride, dedication, and achievements of both the students and their professors!

The Golden Gavel Award is presented monthly to paralegal students in recognition of Outstanding Academic Achievement, Excellence, Commitment, and Enthusiasm in an Accredited Paralegal Program. We are proud to celebrate the next generation of successful paralegals and hope that you visit our website to learn how you can nominate a deserving student from your paralegal program.

The Paralegal TownHall Partners with Rights and Responsibilities Awareness Initiative (RRAI)

by theparalegaltownhall / January 21, 2026

**RRAI is honored to express our great thanks and
appreciation to all supporters**



We are proud to share that The Paralegal TownHall will be partnering with the Rights and Responsibilities Awareness Initiative (RRAI) to deliver a series of public-facing legal discussions and education sessions.

RRAI is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to justice through early legal awareness, multilingual public legal education, and community-based outreach.

THE TOWNHALL BULLETIN

HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY TO YRPN!!!



York Region Paralegal Network

10

Congratulations to the York Region Paralegal Network on an incredible milestone!

10 years of impact, leadership, and service to the profession.

Over the past decade, YRPN has established itself as far more than a regional network. It has become a province-wide and even global community of legal professionals, united by a shared commitment to excellence in paralegal services and meaningful public legal education.

Your work in fostering professional connections, delivering high-quality CPD programming, and engaging directly with communities through clinics, seminars, and outreach reflects exactly what this profession needs to continue evolving and strengthening access to justice.

What stands out most is your consistency, creating spaces where both new and experienced paralegals can grow, collaborate, and elevate the standard of service across Ontario. That kind of sustained contribution over 10 years is not just commendable, it is foundational to the profession's future.

On behalf of The Paralegal TownHall and colleagues across the legal community, congratulations on a decade of leadership!

Here's to the next 10 years of continued growth, innovation, and impact.

Link to their website:

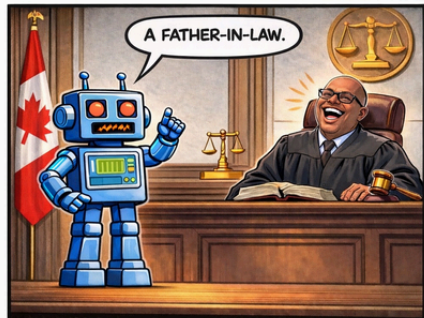
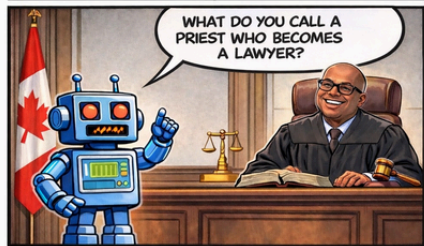
<https://yorkregionparalegal.network/>



OBJECTION! FUN SUSTAINED

All comics are created by Max Rodrigues

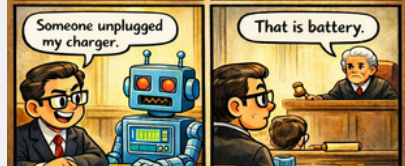
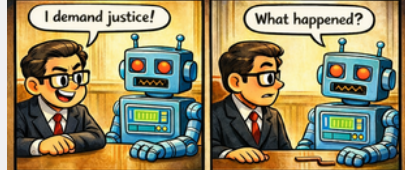
RoboMax COURTROOM COMEDY



ROBOMAX'S BRUSHES WITH THE LAW



ROBOMAX'S BRUSHES WITH THE LAW



ROBOMAX'S ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LAW



OBJECTION! FUN SUSTAINED



THE LEGAL JUMPLE



IABL

AGDMASE

LOFEYN

TAERNRW

ESCA

NOCPMETT

DECENIVE

EFCONFE

OHSW CUAES

DLAEP

ATNORCCT



OBJECTION! FUN SUSTAINED

word search

Legal Words For You To Find!!

D	P	A	R	A	L	E	G	A	L
L	I	H	Q	E	Z	I	F	G	P
P	A	S	A	W	T	E	A	P	L
G	F	A	C	T	U	M	C	V	E
R	O	P	A	L	Y	R	C	D	A
W	U	K	S	V	O	C	U	X	D
C	L	I	E	N	T	S	S	O	I
G	U	I	L	T	Y	E	E	P	N
F	A	C	T	S	T	S	D	D	G

Disclosed

Accused

Clients

Facts

Paralegal

Guilty

Pleading

Case

Factum

OBJECTION! FUN SUSTAINED

SUDOKU

6				8			5	
5	8		6	7		4		
		2			1	8		3
1		9			4			2
				6	7		3	4
	4	6		9		5		
8			9					6
4		5		3	6	1		
		1		2			9	5

Word Jumble Answers

Bail
Damages
Felony
Warrent
case
Contempt
Evidence
Offence
Show Cause
Plead
Contract

ANSWER KEY

3	e	J	†	5	8	1	a	2
†	a	2	1	3	e	J	5	8
8	5	1	a	J	2	3	†	e
1	†	e	5	a	3	2	8	J
5	2	8	J	e	1	a	3	†
J	3	a	8	2	†	e	1	5
a	1	5	2	†	J	8	e	3
2	8	3	e	1	5	†	J	a
e	J	†	3	8	a	5	2	1