



OBA • ABO

## Press Release

Ontario Bar Association  
Association du Barreau de l'Ontario  
300-20 rue Toronto Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5C 2B8  
416-869-1047 • 1-800-668-8900  
Fax/Télécopieur: 416-869-1390  
[www.oba.org](http://www.oba.org)

For Immediate Release  
September 13, 2006

### OBA calls on Province to Improve Paralegal Bill

QUEEN'S PARK – At today's Justice Committee hearings on Bill 14, the Access to Justice Act, the Ontario Bar Association (OBA) commended the government for taking steps to regulate the provision of paralegal services, and proposed a number of improvements.

One of OBA's key recommendations is that the legislation use the widely understood and used term "paralegal" or "paralegal agent" to describe non-lawyers, instead of what the OBA describes as the broad and potentially confusing term "person licensed to provide legal services".

"Why use a confusing term that people don't understand, rather than a term that everyone, including the government, has used for decades -- "paralegal"? The point should be to make the public less confused about the justice system, not more confused," said Steven Rosenhek, Chair of the OBA's Paralegals Task Force. "Otherwise, you increase the risk that the consumer won't be clear on whether he or she is hiring a lawyer or a non-lawyer, something which the public and our members tell us happens all the time."

Another recommendation by the OBA was to not refer to lawyers as "licensees". The bill proposes two classes of licensees - one licensed to "provide legal services" (non-lawyers) and one licensed to "practice law" (lawyers).

"The average member of the public should be able to clearly differentiate between the two, and calling them both "licensees" will create confusion," said Rosenhek.

The OBA also recommended that rather than having a definition of the "provision of legal services" to describe what lawyers and paralegals can do, the legislation should define the "practice of law".

"Defining the 'practice of law' would further help the public understand the differences between the services each group can provide, and reduce confusion in the marketplace," said Rosenhek. "As a matter of consumer protection, the public needs to know this in order to make informed choices."

Recommendations were also made on the Justices of the Peace Act, the Public Authorities Protection Act, the Limitations Act and the Provincial Offences Act.

OBA President James Morton added, "The Attorney General has been very open for dialogue on this Bill since its introduction. So we are hopeful that our recommendations will be viewed favourably."

The OBA is the voice of the legal profession in Ontario. As a branch of the Canadian Bar Association, the OBA represents 16,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and law students across the province.

– 30 –

*For more information:*

Jonathan Clancy

Office: 1-800-668-8900 ext. 348

Cell: 416-454-8932