

## Letter from the President, Bud Melnyk, KC

It has only been a couple of weeks since I've stepped into the role as President of the Law Society of Alberta. I'm both humbled and pleased to be entrusted with this important responsibility, and I will do my best to keep the public and profession updated, including letters like this on issues of importance.

The Law Society of Alberta is a regulator. Our job is to protect and advance the public interest within our statutory jurisdiction — the legal profession. In this capacity, we are not an advocacy body; however, like other legal stakeholders, we share the same commitment to the Rule of Law and independence of the judiciary.

I'd like to briefly touch upon these timely topics before getting to the focal point of today's letter. Alongside law societies across Canada, we have launched [Ours to Protect](#), a national campaign to raise awareness about the importance of the Rule of Law and to unite Canadians around the shared values of democracy and justice. Earlier this year we also expressed our strong support for the [Statement from the Chief Justices of Alberta Courts](#) and the importance of an independent judiciary that, alongside Alberta's lawyers, works daily to safeguard the rights and freedoms of everyone in Alberta while ensuring the sanctity of the Rule of Law.

What I really want to focus on today is responding to the questions I've received in the early days of my presidency related to the current and future state of the Alberta Law Foundation (ALF) and the Law Society's involvement.

One of the most important public interests the Law Society must steward is supporting work that gives everyone in Alberta access to justice, and not just those who can afford it.

To that end, we support the work of ALF.

The Law Society and ALF operate independently of one another. But we are committed to supporting ALF in any way we can given the essential role they play in advancing access and equity in systems of law and justice for all in Alberta.

The Alberta Law Foundation was created in 1973 under the *Legal Profession Act*, which sets out ALF's primary source of revenue as the interest from Alberta lawyers' pooled trust accounts. The Law Society has oversight over lawyers' trust accounts and our authority as regulator is also derived from the Act. Another connection is that ALF's Board of Directors is comprised of members appointed by the Minister of Justice, the Law Society of Alberta and ALF's board itself.

As you may be aware, there have been publicized controversies in relation to ALF in the last year, leading to statutory reform that gave the Government of Alberta a much stronger oversight role. Then in early January, the Executive Director and all ALF staff simultaneously resigned with two weeks notice. ALF is currently being managed by a new board, comprised of five directors appointed between early October and mid-January, and a professional administration team.

As I said, the Law Society's obligation in this matter is to protect the public interest — that requires the Law Society to do what it can to support ALF as its staff and operations are rebuilt. It is critical that the interest generated from lawyers' trust accounts is responsibly managed and allocated and that funds are being used in accordance with ALF's statutory mandate.

To that end, in January 2026, the Law Society's Benchers appointed current Bencher Ron Sorokin, KC, and past Law Society President Ken Warren, KC, to the board of ALF. Ron and Ken are both well respected senior lawyers with vast experience in the legal and broader community and they are well positioned, along with the rest of the ALF's board, to steward an early return to internally staffed operations. The board is already making progress by staying focused on the critically important work of funding programs and projects within ALF's mandate.

While vital operations are continuing without interruption under the external administrator, we recognize that this is only a short-term solution and that grantees and other stakeholders are eager for a more sustainable long-term resolution. We are exploring avenues to see where the Law Society might be able to help ALF with stabilizing their current operations and services.

We understand that during this transition period, grantees are eager for reassurance that much-relied-upon funding will continue to come through. I take comfort in a [recent statement](#) from the ALF, when board chair Shamsheer Kothari, KC shared that:

“...the Foundation continues to operate as close to normal capacity as possible, and we are focused on continuing to deliver for our vital grantees and stakeholders. All approved grant payments have been disbursed, and we are actively adjudicating a new collection of applications that will expand access to legal services, legal education, and justice for all Albertans. Also, we are on schedule to continue the normal grant intake processes and the Foundation's financial situation remains strong and healthy. As a Board, our goal has been, and continues to be, to ensure little-to-no impact to the flow of funds to grantees, as we go through this transition period over the next few months.”

Once we are through this transition period, I am confident that ALF will be a strong and resilient organization operationally, fiscally and from a governance perspective. My hope is that the Government of Alberta will, at such time, reconsider its oversight of ALF.

This is critically important work to so many, and I'll be keeping a close eye on developments. I'll share any further updates with you as they become available. In the meantime, you are welcome to reach out to me at [president@lawsociety.ab.ca](mailto:president@lawsociety.ab.ca).

Sincerely,



Bud Melnyk, KC, President, Law Society of Alberta