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Letters from the Law Commission of Canada

by Shauna Van Praagh, LCC President

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Two weeks ago, I arrived in Ottawa ready for my first day of work as leader of the renewed Law Commission of Canada. Like anyone starting a new job, I carried with me a combination of optimism, confidence and trepidation. As someone who has taught for three decades, I felt a little like I do at the start of each academic year: ready but a bit reticent, excited but also worried, prepared but somewhat shaky.



Entrance to the LCC office in Ottawa, ON

Transition is always tricky. A move to a new home, or a change in place and type of work, may be potentially exhilarating. It is also necessarily exhausting. It took me less than three hours to drive from Montreal to my new apartment. It took me fewer than the first three days to figure out the walk and alternative bus routes to my office. It will take a little longer to figure out which nearby grocery stores offer the best combination of price and quality, which gardens in the neighbourhood are worth a pause to admire the flowers, which downtown corners hold out a good possibility of bumping into my past law

students now working as jurists in Ottawa. It will take a lot longer to reimagine, rebuild, and revitalize the Law Commission 17 years after its doors closed.

I have suggested to my small and enthusiastic on-site team that it may be helpful to think of the Law Commission as entering the stage of adolescence. 1997-2006 marked its childhood, full of remarkable development and energy. Its earlier incarnation, the Law Reform Commission of Canada, provided a valuable inheritance and a past to be proud of. Now, as it hits its teenage years, the Law Commission of Canada has many directions to consider, much to learn, important friendships to consolidate, multiple associations to try out, and even significant risks to take! Sometimes painful, often turbulent, always intense, adolescence is full of tensions and possibility - a time of emerging autonomy supported and shaped by relationships.

In the same week that I officially put on a new hat, made a move, and took on a new position, out-of-control forest fires meant that many Canadians couldn't stay in their homes or head to their places of work. People across the world continued to be displaced by war, to have their lives and communities disrupted by climate-related crises, to lose their jobs and livelihoods, to



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struggle through precarious transitions on their own or with their families. In all of these contexts, people live with uncertainty. They may identify unfairness or failures of responsibility. And they always show remarkable energy and determination. All of this is inspiration for the constant pursuit of justice by individuals and groups in all kinds of ways and places.

Positive transition for people thrives on hope and hard work, faith and friends. This is likely true for law as well. As I look ahead, I remind myself that moving too fast is not a wise choice in addressing complex and entrenched challenges. Discovery and learning take time. There will be speed bumps in the roads that the Law Commission of Canada will travel. Exploring the shapes and sites of law for people across this land promises to be complicated. To mark the start of this new role I am honoured to take on, I have bought myself two agendas: a bright red one to carry with me on my adventures and a shiny black one for my desk to keep me rooted in my responsibilities. I look forward to filling them up and sharing my notes along the way!