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Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

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It's cold out there. That's what I thought to myself - with good reason - as my train pulled into the station in Quebec City early last week. With the wind making the temperature feel close to -25 over the two days of our Law Commission of Canada visit, it was the kind of weather that makes it very tempting to head into hibernation mode. It can be hard to embrace winter.

The polar freshness of the air in Quebec might not be an experience shared by everyone across the country. What we do share is the feeling of uncertainty in a shifting social-economic-political context that has marked the start of this new year and the first few days of the second quarter of the 21st century. The warm stability associated with hibernation might be something a lot of people are looking for. It can be hard to embrace dynamism and change.

With respect to the cold air, getting outside can be energizing when we dress warmly. With respect to the evolving societal landscape, participation can be invigorating when we aim to be constructive. Even if difficult, the challenge of complex conversation can feel much better than the loneliness of hibernation or retreat. That conviction on the part of the Law Commission of Canada nourishes the "listen and learn" mode in which we began to rebuild a year and a half ago. It supports the listening and learning we continue to do. And it explains why we welcomed the chance to bundle up for a January visit to Quebec City.

Our Listen and Learn itinerary took us first to Wendake to meet with Simon Picard, Director of Legal Services for the Huron-Wendat Nation. There we learned about some of the priorities and projects in which the community is involved, including the ongoing work of figuring out – often through complicated litigation – the contemporary consequences of historical treaty obligations. The LCC hopes to make connections this summer with law students working in Wendake and to highlight some of the ongoing reform efforts of Huron-Wendat lawyers. Tiawenhk, merci, thank you to maître Picard for his generosity in meeting with us and sharing insight into law's multi-pronged pathways to change. Tied to his work with his team in Wendake is his teaching of Indigenous Law (Droit des peuples autochtones) to students at Laval preparing to become members of Quebec's next generation of jurists.



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The significance of teaching and research for the ongoing evolution of law underpins the LCC's ongoing agenda of Listen and Learn visits to university campuses. In Quebec, we were hosted by the Faculty of Law at Laval University, members of which enthusiastically shared their preoccupations in looking to the future. We heard about the effectiveness of public consultations in responding to violence experienced in the workplace, about the importance of learning from fields of knowledge beyond law, and about the crucial and rich comparative network of ideas and approaches that exists across Canada. Participants talked to us about the fundamental building blocks of criminal procedure, of consumer protection, of global technological advances. They shared their commitment to socio-economic justice, to the development of effective indicators of health, to narratives of individual freedom, and to effective dialogue between legal traditions. The session illustrated that what feels like an era of uncertainty is full of potential for positive change.



As is often the case when we hold these Listen and Learn sessions, colleagues around the table underscored how happy they were to learn from each other. Even if they share a building, even if they take turns teaching in the same classrooms, they don't always take time to knock on a neighbour's office door and engage in a complex conversation about their respective projects. The LCC's visit provides a reason for them to learn from each other and to listen to the ways in which they strive to connect scholarly inquiry to on-the-ground impact. We heard loud and clear their expectations and hopes that the Law Commission serve as co-ordinator, facilitator, supporter, and connector.

As 2025 gets underway, many people are talking about the crucial nature of conversation, the value in talking to strangers, the fundamental nature of open curiosity, the importance of true listening. In the face of extreme cold, striking uncertainty, and deep complexity, people can't really choose hibernation. Neither can law.