



LCC | CDC

Living Law | Pursuing Justice | Renewing Hope

Letters from the LCC President

By Shauna Van Praagh

June 2025 to May 2026



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 22

May/June 2025

It has been a long, rainy and cool spring in Ottawa. In late May, many maple seedlings were still waiting to be released from their trees. Others twirled through the air in search of a hospitable patch of earth; still others were putting down roots and starting to change shape. There is an intergenerational feel to this time of year as pale green leaves unfurl, and bright spring flowers pop out. The promise of renewal is in the air.

At the Law Commission of Canada, this is a season of celebration. The 6th of June marks two years since the Law Commission of Canada woke up from a long hibernation. At age two, this LCC is thriving and looking forward to year three with energy and determination. Well nourished and growing with confidence, it might be compared to a young maple tree firmly planted and stretching up to the sky. Here too there is an intergenerational feel and a promise of renewal.



The combination of springtime and a second birthday invites a focus in this letter on the “renewing hope” piece of our three-part *raison d’être* (Living Law, Pursuing Justice, Renewing Hope). Two initiatives recently launched at the Commission – our Emerging Scholars program and our Beyond Tomorrow Reports – illustrate a commitment to the renewal of hope and to future generations.

The LCC’s *Beyond Tomorrow Reports* are designed to support legal research that identifies and addresses challenges in law for Canada’s next generations. Produced by established scholars at Canadian universities, commissioned reports will look to law and justice issues on the horizon. In doing so, they will include a significant public engagement component. As spring gets underway, our first commissioned author of a Beyond Tomorrow Report - Professor France Houle of Université de Montréal - is exploring the future of Canadian immigration law and governance for a report to be published in early 2026. At the same time, we are sitting down to review recently received proposals and circulating a call for the next round of applications due at the end of the summer. Each season will bring fresh ideas and possibilities.

There is a similar rhythm to our freshly minted Emerging Scholars program, aimed at supporting the next generation of legal thinkers and law reformers. Selected doctoral students at Canadian universities are provided with modest financial support over an academic semester, during which they are expected to design and implement a public outreach initiative based on their work. This spring, three inaugural Emerging Scholars – Alexandra Bouchard at Université de Sherbrooke, Michael Law-Smith at University of Toronto, and Esteban Vallejo Toledo at University of Victoria –





had the opportunity to combine their doctoral research with meaningful community engagement at an early stage of their academic careers. We were delighted to learn from them, to welcome them into the LCC community, and to share their projects via our website.

Both the Emerging Scholars program and the Beyond Tomorrow Reports nourish hope for the future. Both reflect the Commission's commitment to facilitating curiosity and imagination, encouraging ability to explain and work with complexity, and ensuring meaningful links between research and community outreach. With one, we count on senior scholars to guide law reform with lasting impact for future generations. With the other, we support the next generation of law reformers by including the Law Commission of Canada on the path of tomorrow's teachers and researchers. The authors of Beyond Tomorrow Reports might be likened to mature trees, solidly rooted and responsible for sending out seedlings for the future. The Emerging Scholars are more like young saplings - past the seedling stage but still in need of care as they grow and stretch.

Finally, the renewal of hope and the importance of intergenerational investment were central to the late May gathering of Canada's law reform agencies in Vancouver. Hosted by the British Columbia Law Institute, the LCC and our provincial counterparts (all members of FOLRAC- Federation of Law Reform Agencies of Canada) met over two days for an annual exchange of ideas, plans, and projects. We learned about comparative approaches to Indigenous conflict resolution, innovative ways to support citizen participation in legislative change, creative family law reform initiatives, paths forward for artificial intelligence and access to justice, and responsiveness to legal needs of young people. Across the speakers and their projects, there was striking optimism, imagination and dedication.

Participants in the FOLRAC conference were also reminded of the diverse histories and contexts of law reform agencies across Canada. Each is distinctive in terms of age, size, scope, organization, funding support, and relationship with government, universities, and other law and justice institutional actors. What we share is critical engagement with law in ways attuned to today's needs and tomorrow's aspirations. In a last nod to springtime growth, I suggest that this annual get-together effectively demonstrates how people and ideas thrive on conversation, connection, nourishment, and the right combination of sunshine and rain.



Let me end with an invitation to readers to enjoy the Law Commission's second birthday from wherever you are. You are welcome to plant an LCC seedling in your own gardens and to send your own seedlings twirling through the air in our direction!



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 23

28 July 2025

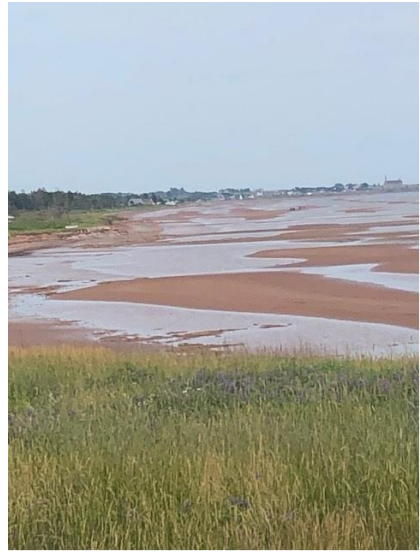
As I prepared to write this mid-summer letter, I found a note to myself to share the following words with readers, excerpted from the writing of Hannah Senesh: "Build upon sand under the blue sky...everything anew. And know, costly is the road to the just and the true."

A Hungarian Jewish poet and World War II resistance fighter, executed at the age of 23, Hannah Senesh offers a combination of beautiful imagery of renewal with an unwavering reminder that the path to justice is ongoing, all-encompassing, and – perhaps above all – hard. The road to the just and the true requires investment. The risks are high. The burden is heavy.

My discovery of these inspiring lines a few weeks ago happened to coincide precisely with an important moment for the Law Commission. We kicked off our third year of existence by proudly sharing [our latest Annual Report](#) with the people of Canada! Officially tabled in Parliament on the 13th of June, the Report showcases the people and projects that have filled the 12-month period from April 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025. Here are some excerpts accompanied by an invitation to read the whole thing!

Readers will find a combination of substantive research-based pathways and public outreach initiatives and partnerships...All incorporate engagement with Canadians in the ongoing and dynamic evolution of law; all demonstrate coexisting and interacting commitments to living law, pursuing justice, renewing hope; and all connect inquiry and outreach today with impact and reform tomorrow...They underscore the Law Commission's efforts to connect scholars, policymakers, and community-based actors as we explore law and justice in constructive, creative and optimistic ways. Law in our everyday lives, law on the horizon, law in an open democratic society, law's complex dimensions, law's many responses to changing needs: all are incorporated into the work of the Commission.

In the time since my last letter, I was honoured to be invited to two special events. At the annual President's Dinner of the Canadian Bar Association, Lynne Vicars, outgoing president of the CBA talked about how crucial it is to collaborate on, and make a collective commitment to, projects designed to reinforce and demonstrate trust in rule of law. At the swearing-in ceremony for Associate Chief Justice Martine St-Louis and Associate Judge Kirkland Shannon of the Federal Court of Canada, speakers warned of the dangers of complacency and issued a strong call to



courage. Also in late spring, members of the Law Commission of Canada staff, alongside fellow members of Canada's public service, were invited to take note of the Prime Minister's mandate letter to Cabinet underscoring the importance of upholding the rule of law, protecting our democratic institutions and building a Canada worthy of our children and grandchildren.

This is what lawyers and judges, Parliamentarians and public servants talk about when they talk about law and justice. As underscored by our Annual Report, the summer of 2025 is a remarkable moment in which to be leading the Law Commission of Canada and thinking about how this agency is one of many contributors to what is a crucial ongoing conversation. We are all bearing the costs of construction and upkeep for the "road to the just and the true".

For the rest of this letter, let me return to Hannah Senesh's imagery of sand and sky, to suggest we can find surprising reminders of law and justice far from the usual, more formal, spaces. I celebrated Canada Day this year in beautiful Prince Edward Island. As the birthplace of Canadian Confederation, Charlottetown was the site of an extraordinary example of nation-building over 150 years ago – a project impressive in its dimensions, and dynamic in its invitation to reimagine and renovate over the decades and into the future. But I didn't visit Charlottetown on this trip. Instead, over two lovely weeks of sand and sky, I enjoyed finding less obvious connections to the LCC's three-part *raison d'être* of living law, pursuing justice, renewing hope.



Here are some of the souvenirs specifically related to "living law" collected over my summer holiday in PEI. The ubiquitous and striking red and white lighthouses served as nice metaphors for law's offer of orientation and security. Law's mosaic of shapes and functions and sources was reflected in the mix of tiny rust-red stones, multi-coloured rocks, and the shells of mussels, clams, and oysters hiding in strands of seaweed on the beach. The joy of sharing with newcomers was captured in the gift of colourful beach glass handed to me by a regular beachcomber with whom I crossed paths. A small stone painted with the Acadian flag, left on the sand at Cap Egmont, served as a concrete reminder of the interweaving of stories in this

space, starting with those of the Mi'qmaq and developing with generation after generation of people arriving and making the Island their home. A sign in front of the village church in Murray Harbour reminded passers-by of good neighbourly relations, a constant preoccupation of law in everyday life: "God bless Canada and God bless America, and let us pray for coming together in peace".



Customary norms of behaviour were evident everywhere: from the patient line-up of cars at every Tim Hortons drive-through, to the comings and goings of swallows to their nests in the red cliffs along the shore, to the "no whistling on the boat" rule in lobster fishing explained on a poster at the Summerside Lobster Festival. The fact that all provincial parks allow dogs, and that owners make sure the beaches stay clean and safe, conveyed the effectiveness of trust in lawmaking. A quote from Lucy Maud Montgomery's fictional and famous Anne, displayed at the Green Gables Museum, underscored the importance of imagination in creating and sustaining law and legal systems: "...because when you *are* imagining, you might as well imagine something worthwhile."

This particular collection of summer souvenirs is probably unique to me, but my guess is that souvenirs of this summer for many people across our country will include images and experiences marked by renewed commitment to participation in, and contribution to, justice in Canada. Even on holiday, enjoying the beauty of sand and sky, we find ourselves on a path that is both costly and promising: a path that welcomes complexity of history, constructive neighbourly exchange, travel across borders and oceans, and collections of memories and artefacts of law in our lives. Enjoy these long summer days and weeks: build anew and continue on the path.



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 24

28 August 2025

As our four Law Commission of Canada summer students came to the end of their time in the Ottawa office, they were each handed tiny colourful squares of origami paper on which to write responses to the following prompts: What is something you helped “build” this summer? How do you see the Law Commission in “repair” mode? Do you have a “dream” for the Law Commission? Is there something special the Law Commission can or should “share”? Framed through the LCC’s overlapping vocations or four-point compass – Dream, Repair, Build, Share – the prompts invited our young jurists to tie together experiences, contributions, reflections and aspirations. What did they take with them after an intensive couple of months with the LCC? What did they leave behind?



Even if not articulated in the same way, the purposes and motivations of the members of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada (ULCC) can be mapped along the same four vectors. As they convened for their 107th annual end-of-summer meeting in Halifax, members of federal, provincial and territorial delegations enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas, build community, envisage repair, and do some dreaming. Everyone left with renewed energy, connections, and hope for a productive year ahead.



In the Criminal Law section of the ULCC, review and renewal happen through four days of focused conversation among prosecutors, defence lawyers, policy advisors and members of the judiciary. Recommendations for reform related to criminal law and procedure emerge by the end of the meeting, ready for further consideration in anticipation of formal revisions to the Criminal Code. In the Civil Law section, individuals from government, provincial law reform agencies, and the legal academy identify and delve into a



range of issues relevant to the daily lives of Canadians that might benefit from greater harmonisation and clarity across the country. Working groups reported on projects including the staying power of payment in cash for goods and services, effective procedures for class actions (for example in consumer protection cases), and revised approaches to defamation in the internet age.

The Law Commission of Canada is fortunate to be included as an observer in both the Criminal and Civil law sections of the ULCC. Being in two places at the same time provides a unique vantage point for appreciating the multiple ways in which change can happen and the diverse range of mechanisms available for directing the evolution of law. In the closing address of the Halifax meeting, the incoming president of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, already looking ahead to next August, referred to the annual meeting as a *"tradition vivante"*. Participants in that living tradition - all of whom had demonstrated unflagging energy and goodwill over the week - took time at the end to review the progress they had made in what must feel like a never-ending building project. Then they waved a "next year in Winnipeg" goodbye to each other before heading home to prepare for September.

During a break in the five-day conference proceedings, I visited the tiny studio of Nova Scotia jewelry designer Dorothee Rosen. As expected, I found exquisite pieces of art in the shape of earrings and bracelets, rings and necklaces. Unexpectedly, I found a striking metaphor for meaningful engagement in law reform: a workspace characterized by dynamic innovation and improvisation, and filled with countless pieces and projects, ideas and influences. This is space that gives concrete form to imagination. It invites experimentation with tools of every shape and size, incorporates souvenirs and reminders of stories into the creative process, and displays evidence of day-to-day encounters and human interaction.



I returned to Ottawa struck by the ways in which the messy yet functional character of Dorothee Rosen's studio offers insight and inspiration. The Law Commission of Canada office doesn't quite look like a workshop occupied by a creative artist, but our summer students appear to have treated it as precisely this kind of space. This is where they exchanged stories, ate lunch together, read the news with an eye for law reform ideas, offered ideas for future projects, and delved into legal sources for projects already on the

go. The colourful squares with their handwritten messages have now been consolidated, leaving us with small, personalized and carefully designed pieces of a collection. Here is a small sample:

"I helped build a culture of learning and collaboration...I helped build the LCC's last What We Heard report...My dream for the LCC is that it continue to grow in its ability to reach and resonate with all

Canadians open to engaging with its work...The LCC could help repair artificial polarization and restore meaningful conversations about law...The LCC can contribute to rebuilding public trust...The LCC will continue to repair by daring to do things differently and to make the invisible visible...The LCC should share a love of law, the power of law for both stability and change, and a vision to inspire hope and interest...The LCC should share its ethos and reimagined view of law...I dream that the LCC becomes a fixture known by lawyers, judges, law students, and lay Canadians."

For the students, unlike ULCC participants, this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. They won't be back at the end of this coming school year. One of the last things they did together was watch fireworks over the Ottawa River on a Wednesday night in mid-August. It was a special way to celebrate the end of a summer filled with hard work and unruly creativity and to look ahead and up with wonder and anticipation.





Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 25

30 September 2025

One beautiful evening this summer, I invited myself to a free concert on the Wood Terrace of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The band was Beòlach, a Cape Breton quartet celebrating its 25th anniversary. The lively music of bagpipes, whistles, fiddles, piano and guitar was interspersed with spoken introductions to tunes (titles included “The Feeling of Free” and “Toss the Fiddler”) and a condensed lesson about Gaelic speaking Scots who brought their music with them to Cape Breton in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The musicians, all of Scots descent, were happy to share history, culture, and dynamic tradition. Members of the audience, aged 8 to late 80’s, were smiling and nodding, clapping and tapping, stamping and swaying – all invited to join enthusiastically in the rhythm and emotion and energy of the music.



The concert served as illustration of the ways in which music – tied to heritage, place, stories, and traditions – evolves over time, through instruments, and in the care of individual musicians. It is always changing and always rooted, always looking simultaneously to past and future. Its rhythm incorporates memory and connections; its melodies are shaped by ongoing improvisation and innovation.

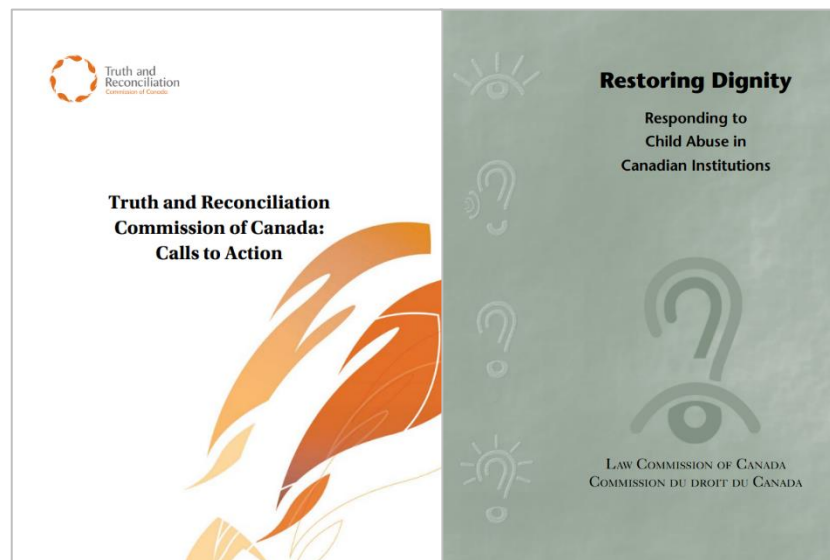
I recently read about, and look forward to listening to, a newly released recording of the words and music of the famous and much-missed American folk musician, Woody Guthrie. Entitled “Woody at Home”, the collection includes the observation – shared with and borrowed by Bob Dylan – that a song is never finished but always evolving. There’s no final end-product, which means there’s no reason to aspire for perfection. Instead, there’s ongoing participation and a generation-to-generation passing on of knowledge and experience and cadence.

If a song is always evolving, then perhaps so too are all the projects in which we immerse ourselves and that keep us going. The project of truth and reconciliation in Canada is an obvious example. This year, as we look ahead to Truth and Reconciliation Day, September 30th, we mark a decade since Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its Final Report and 94 *Calls to Action*. As we celebrate this 10th anniversary, the Calls are still sounding, action is still required, commitments are still crucial. The rhythm continues, generation after generation.



For the Law Commission of Canada, this year marks a related 25th anniversary. In 2000, the LCC – operational from 1997 – 2006 – issued its first Report, entitled *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions*. The *Restoring Dignity* report offered a constructive and wide-ranging framework for understanding co-existing responses to institutional abuse, each with unique strengths in addressing the needs of individual survivors, families, communities and society. The report focused on “total institutions” for children (whether characterized as special needs schools, child welfare facilities, youth detention facilities or residential schools for Indigenous young people). It explored the range of individual and institutional actions and practices experienced by young people as abuse, and reviewed a broad spectrum of response mechanisms for providing redress – from criminal justice to civil liability, from children’s advocates to public inquiries, from community initiatives to compensation schemes. One of the mechanisms identified and described was that of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Today’s Law Commission of Canada has just launched a project to note this double anniversary – 10 years since the *Calls to Action* were issued by Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and 25 years since the publication of the *Restoring Dignity* report. Entitled *Intergenerational Conversations in Law: Marking the 10th Anniversary of the TRC Calls to Action*, this initiative



will support a series of intergenerational conversations between current law students and Elders or other experts in Indigenous legal traditions. Hosted by Canadian faculties of law over the 2025-2026 school year, the conversations are meant to foster learning about the evolution of Indigenous legal orders in Canada before and after the Calls to Action and Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In dialogue with students, participating Elders will be invited to reflect on challenges and opportunities as we look ahead. Short papers written by the students following the conversations will share what they heard and set out questions and hopes that frame the future.

Formal assessment of implementation of the Calls is crucial. But so are ongoing stories, finding ways to encourage and value conversations that inform and inspire young curious people keen to understand, reflect and make connections. The LCC’s newest project is one small way to acknowledge the role and responsibility of a federal agency dedicated to engaging with people across this land in the ongoing and dynamic evolution of law. The anticipated conversations

represent a way to make music together, to share rhythms and melodies as we pick up our instruments and join fellow music makers.

As I imagine the music of Truth and Reconciliation across this land, I share a concluding little story. I was recently at an evening of poetry and music, organized around the theme of harvest moon. It included a reading of Mary Oliver's poem, "Wild Geese".

*...Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.*



The reader paused and, at that very moment, everyone heard the geese flying overhead. They were honking together, right on cue, as they headed home tracing their southbound autumn path. The timing was perfect, the coincidence truly remarkable. Called to action, they inserted themselves in the poem, ready and willing to demonstrate - in compelling harmony and with confident rhythm - the meaning and promise of the words. Inspired by the Canadian geese heading home as September draws to an end, the Law Commission of Canada marks

Truth and Reconciliation Day (Orange Shirt Day) 2025 with a renewed commitment to listening and learning, making music, and aspiring to flight.



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 26

30 October 2025

On the first day of October, the world lost Jane Goodall (1934-2025), remarkable anthropologist and primatologist best known for her lifelong and groundbreaking work with chimpanzees. At the Law Commission of Canada, we marked the loss by reflecting on how one individual can serve as source of inspiration well beyond the domain in which that person dedicates their energies and entire lives. We noted Jane Goodall's insistence that young people are key to enriched understanding and curious exploration. And we underlined some of the quotes included in the stories remembering and celebrating Jane Goodall's path and impact: "Hope isn't just wishful thinking" and "It's no good just talking – we've got to flipping well do it!".

The fall of Year 3 for the Law Commission has been full of encounters with people who, reminiscent of Jane Goodall, are rolling up their sleeves. From Prince Edward Island to the Yukon, individuals and institutional actors doing the work of law and justice reform have taken time this season to share with us their priorities and projects. Since it launched the "Listen and Learn" program in October 2023, the Law Commission has been paying attention to the range of places and formats in which Canadians are engaged in law and the pursuit of justice. Two years later, the importance of hearing frontline stories and participating in face-to-face conversations keeps growing.

In Charlottetown in late September, we learned about the dynamic child and family services program overseen by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI and about an upcoming launch of a Bachelor of Arts program in Indigenous Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. We heard about the challenges of planning long-term justice programs in an environment of short-



term funding commitments, and about the need for better widespread understanding of the roles, capacities and responsibilities of lawyers and judges. From community legal information services, the John Howard Society of PEI, the province's Law Foundation, and the Reaching Home coordinator for the Native Council of PEI, we learned about on-the-ground realities of homelessness and limited access to help with legal issues. In a conversation with representatives from organizations in the charitable sector, we



were overwhelmed by the incredible dedication of individuals truly on the frontline – whether in accompanying individuals in repeat encounters with police, recruiting potential donors of crucial medical equipment, or supporting stray cats on the streets of Charlottetown.

In Whitehorse in late October, we learned how the Public Law Library combines personalized front desk service with thoughtful care for rare books and strong support for the entire justice sector. Lawyers with the Department of Justice shared the cutting-edge and always dynamic nature of their concrete engagement with First Nations across the Yukon. From the Association franco-yukonnaise, we heard about efforts in place to strengthen support for the significant francophone community in the Territory. We learned how people in public legal education, court operations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations continue to draw inspiration and guidance from Dave Joe, the first and going-strong Indigenous lawyer in the Yukon who generously took time to share some of his justice-related insights and projects. In conversations with current and past Chief Justices of the Yukon Supreme Court, we discussed the need for big thinking on access to justice in the Yukon and learned how self-governing First Nations are exercising responsibility in all areas from wildlife management to community wellness to economic development in the Territory. Leaders of Yukon University shared their sense of responsibility and responsiveness in shaping what Yukon could be, and how their vision for the future – developed in consultation with First Nations – includes a program of legal education. Hosted on their territory by the Teslin Tlingit Justice Council in their light-filled Heritage Centre, we learned of the striking accomplishments combined with high expectations tied to the negotiated and recently established community safety and corrections programs within the Nation's Administration of Justice agreement.



When asked what motivates the incredible ongoing commitment on display, one participant in a roundtable exchange in Whitehorse responded, “I like building things”. The range of “building” projects the Law Commission of Canada learned about over the past few weeks is truly extraordinary. Building First Nations governance structures, building university programs in law and justice, building delivery of legal services and support, building responsive library resources: all are ongoing construction projects that demand energy and provide outstanding opportunities

for people keen to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Throughout our meetings, we discovered striking ambition, an embrace of open-endedness, and huge enthusiasm for creativity. Nothing felt fixed or stale; everything was in a state of transformation and aspiration. Fragility and strength, crisis and potential, dismantling and renovating were combined in dynamic coexistence. If Jane Goodall recognized that investment in young people is crucial, so do the people and projects we met in both PEI and the Yukon. Indeed, as the Teslin Tlingit Justice Council reminded us with remarkable confidence and optimism, each new generation promises to be healthier and stronger.



In between the visits East and North in this country, the LCC participated in a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Law Commission of England and Wales. This was an opportunity to reintroduce the comparatively young Canadian Commission to the international community of independent law reform agencies and to be on the lookout for interesting ideas and constructive suggestions. We shared with our counterparts our openness to trying out a range of approaches to problems and possibilities in law, nourished by “listen and learn” encounters that include surprising shapes and structures of law reform. While 60 years is an important milestone for our fellow Commission based in London, it is interesting to note that neither Prince Edward Island nor Yukon has a formal law school or law reform agency. As we have



seen, that doesn't keep them from being places full of learning and change in the realms of law and justice.

Frontline narratives and actions serve as reminder that it would be a mistake to develop or present the Law Commission of Canada as an isolated, removed, or somehow sacrosanct site of knowledge creation or policy directing. Instead, it acts as caretaker, steward, translator, connector, and – if truly successful – long-term and intergenerational spark for valuable questions and conversation. Every encounter becomes part of the work of law reform: the impact of the Commission exists in the bringing together of people and learning from them what pathways forward might look like. It turns out

that sharing forms a crucial part of what Jane Goodall would refer to as “flipping well doing it”!





Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 27

5 December 2025

On the very first day of November 2025, people across this country, from coast to coast to coast, joined together to watch the 7th and last game of the World Series. 18.5 million viewers in Canada - a remarkable 45% of the population - tuned in to cheer on the Toronto Blue Jays. We connected with each other in our focused attention, in demonstrating our pride and support, in holding our collective breath in hope, and in sharing the heartbreaking loss that came in the 11th inning. Baseball is not Canada's sport in a formal sense, but this fall the Blue Jays turned it into a sport for all of Canada. Together we celebrated the talent and capacity, togetherness and tenacity of a truly inspiring team.



Lessons and insights are no doubt being drawn from the Blue Jays in many corners and contexts in the aftermath of this year's World Series. For the Law Commission of Canada, this year's baseball season leaves a significant imprint. It offers a challenge to an image of law as something only experts can truly understand. And it draws attention to the long-term sustainability of any team whose members show up to play.

Right off the bat, let's notice how people became followers of the Blue Jays regardless of how well they understood the complicated rules of baseball. No in-depth prior expertise was required to

watch and cheer, ask questions when things got confusing, or develop an appreciation of the different kinds of pitches and the speed at which a fastball can travel. A very specialized vocabulary exists in baseball. There are many rules and multiple roles, and the complexity can feel somewhat overwhelming. Yet non-experts clearly count as valid and valuable fans. They can learn to distinguish strikes from balls (sometimes questioning the umpire's call!), to anticipate a double play, to participate in a 7th inning stretch, to acknowledge the elements of an extraordinary performance of a pitcher, and to celebrate the incredible accomplishment of a home run. True appreciation of the rules that structure the game of baseball is thus possible even without deep expertise or experience. Indeed, that appreciation is crucial to meaningful recognition of the hard work and striking success of the Blue Jays.

Law too comes with specialized vocabulary, many rules, and multiple roles. Appreciating its structures and systems can feel overwhelming. But, just as in baseball, specialized expertise and experience does not exclude more general understanding and appreciation. Perhaps actors in Canada's legal systems can be inspired by the Blue Jays to renew and reenergize their efforts to share law, to open paths to participation, to invite people to figure out the rules and follow the game. At a time when actors in law are wondering how to fight cynicism, to convey the importance of impartial decision-making, to value structures in place to ensure fairness and accountability, baseball might just show some of the ways and reasons people get all of this.

Beyond reminding us that a domain of expertise can be open to everyone, the Blue Jays illustrate what it takes to create and sustain a team. Their followers expressed collective hope and pride and joy this fall. As they did so, they celebrated the value of showing up, regular practice, playing together, supporting teammates, and believing in a long-term building project. The



fans clearly loved the team's wins, but the losses didn't diminish solid support. As the Law Commission continued its Listen and Learn encounters through November and into early December – in Toronto, in Sherbrooke, in Calgary – the similarities are palpable. Faculties of law are exploring initiatives in experience-based teaching and learning within and beyond classrooms; researchers are designing justice-related projects into which voices and experiences of youth are incorporated; community organizations are enriching the work of student volunteers in legal information clinics. We heard from appellate court judges grappling with principles and



precedents to respond to multifaceted problems, from law deans embracing the responsibility of leadership and innovation, and from lawyers providing guidance in a climate of uncertainty. In the world of law and justice, team players are showing up, learning from practice, investing in long-term growth and value, and inspiring each other and the people whose lives they might touch. They are contributing to the changing ways in which issues are examined, stories are shared, and responses are shaped.

The intertwining of law and baseball, while possibly surprising to some, is an illustration of how law intersects with so many other ways of knowing and acting in the world. The month of November for the Law Commission has been full of those intersections. At a conference organized by the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice, historians offered crucial contributions to a rich and critical discussion of the rule of law and democracy. At Downtown Legal Services in



Toronto, the walls are decorated with the work of young people encouraged to express their aspirations for justice through art. At an event at the School of Architecture at Toronto Metropolitan University, teams of law and architecture students presented projects that envision a new building in downtown Toronto for the Lincoln Alexander School of Law. History, art, and architecture: all join baseball as domains of human knowledge and energy that enrich and interact with law.

Invited to address the law and architecture students, I quoted Benjamin Cardozo, a famous American judge who told a class of law graduates a century ago that a lawyer “must be historian and prophet all at once”. For the audience to which I was speaking, I suggested lawyers must also be architects. In closing, it seems right to add that lawyers have much to learn from baseball fans.





Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 28

23 January 2026



A beautiful combination of bright sunshine and fresh snow offers inspiration for writing this brief mid-January letter. This is a quiet period at the Law Commission. Written texts for our ongoing research projects are slowly but surely moving through a demanding process of drafting and development. The engagement calendar for early 2026 is still under construction so there are not yet any formal activities or travel adventures to report. The calmness of the moment makes it ideal for reflection and resolution.

In looking back to the close of 2025, members of the LCC staff team were invited to share informal experiences or encounters from their time away from the office that prompted them to think of the work of the Law Commission. One described a Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec exhibit on the striking work of Niki de Saint Phalle and the ways in which exploration and discovery

shaped the artist's life and commitment to social justice. Another talked about experiencing law's diversity while driving south through the Appalachians and noting the ways in which regulation of highways signs changed with the crossing of each state border. One repeated his six-year-old's observation after swimming lessons that "there are a lot of rules in the world!" Another made a comparison between revisiting foundational ingredients of law and justice and reaching for old, trusted, and well-worn cookbooks over the holidays.

We listened as one colleague recounted the heavy sense of personal responsibility in volunteering to take on the work of book-keeping and tax return preparation for a small charitable organization. We learned how another colleague drew on a news-related discussion at the office about international law to enrich a conversation with a Venezuelan Canadian she met at



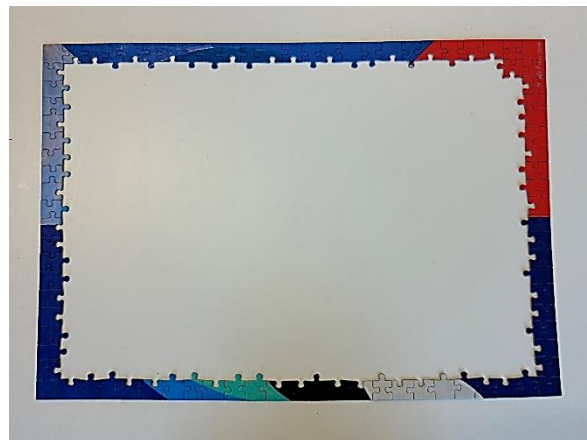
a New Year's celebration. The stories continued around the table, all tied in some way to the storytellers' reflections on the substance and form of the work and commitments of the LCC. Together they illustrated the creative thinking and concrete contributions that nourish the Law Commission even when officially closed for business.



We followed our inventory of "out-of-office" LCC-related moments with a collective sharing of New Year's wishes for the Law Commission. The list was impressive and heartfelt. We heard warm wishes for ongoing discussions and learning, for continued maturing, for enjoyment of close work and big ideas. There was a wish for fun and progress, a wish for collaborative pride, and a wish to take time to notice inspirational moments. We wished for the right mix of sprint and marathon running in the months ahead, successful execution of the LCC's plan to have visited every province and territory by the end of 2026, and a productive mix of support, optimism and hope. Finally, the Commission was wished good adventures guided by our compass with its four points - dream, repair, build, share – that characterize our ever-growing mix of projects and programs.

These are wishes full of hope. They offer light at a moment that does not feel as calm and peaceful as the winter sunshine in Ottawa might suggest. Indeed, the first two weeks of January 2026 have been marked by intense upheaval and uprising in our world; from day to day, it is hard to imagine what tomorrow will bring. It remains worthwhile and important to pause and to share good wishes and positive energy. But for everyone, and in every context, general wishes and resolutions for the new year will need to be accompanied by tangible plans and actions.

At the Law Commission of Canada office, our research director has brought in a puzzle. The pieces have been placed on our lunch table as an explicit invitation into a collective project. No picture has been provided of what the completed product might look like. In the first two weeks, the straight-edged pieces were sorted and the borders finished. The rest is waiting.



Happy New Year!



Law Commission
of Canada

Commission du droit
du Canada

Canada



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 29

19 February 2026

Mid-February in Ottawa marks the end of the National Capital Region's Winterlude festivities. This has been a winter of extended stretches of very cold temperatures, consistently solid ice on the Rideau Canal, and impressive banks of accumulated snow. For some, the bitter wind and the slippery sidewalks have reinforced a sense of hibernation and disconnection. For others, the weather has invited an enthusiastic and determined embrace of winter activity, inspired by our impressive Canadian athletes at the Winter Olympics. While winter can be experienced as a period of severe and sometimes dangerous solitude, it can also hold out an invitation for taking on new challenges and contributing to the building of community.

There are many ways in which we can support each other as we look ahead to the emergence of spring. For the Law Commission of Canada, recent weeks have been dedicated to making meaningful connections within and across communities to which we belong. Like all individuals and institutions, our identity is shaped through interactions and relationships with others. This winter, we have been happy and fortunate to spend time with actors and leaders in law reform, public legal education, research universities, and charitable organizations.



The Law Commission of England and Wales paid a visit to our office at the end of January. Together, the Chair of the Commission, the Right Honourable Lord Justice Peter Fraser, and the Criminal Law Commissioner, Professor Penney Lewis, shared with us the structures and parameters within which their law reform agency works. They noted with admiration the experimentation and creativity associated with restarting the Canadian Commission after 17 years of non-existence; we noted, also with

admiration, the stability and confident presence associated with 60 years of uninterrupted operations. There are opportunities and challenges to be found in both histories, and much to learn from open and curious exchange.

In February, the Public Legal Education Association of Canada held its annual conference in Ottawa. Bringing together public legal educators, legal clinic lawyers, people who work to support community organizations and courts, and representatives from different levels of government, the conference focused on exploration and innovation in a time of change. Honoured to be asked to

deliver the opening address, I drew connections between public legal education and responsive law reform, both of which invest in literacy, confidence, and participation related to rule of law. I included in my address the words of one of our Law Commission Fellows, Amélia Souffrant, reflecting on an important lesson learned from her Haitian grandmother: “My grandmother never studied law. She never learned how to read or write. Yet her lived experiences taught her very stark lessons about the rule of law. In what she would refer to as “stable societies”, the rule of law is often taken for granted. It is invisible to those who live under it. Only by living through its absence was she able to grasp its value and importance.”

Strong links between educators and the Law Commission of Canada, going well beyond formal inclusion at a conference, have been strikingly evident over the past days and weeks. Our “Obiter” podcast released two new episodes, one featuring Duncan McCue’s teaching and mentorship of Indigenous journalists, and the second highlighting the leadership of Daniel Jutras, Rector of the University of Montreal, in nourishing the vitality of postsecondary education in Canadian democracy. As the Law Commission visited UQO (Université du Québec en Outaouais) for our most recent Listen and Learn roundtable, we were inspired by the dynamic and energy-filled projects of members of Canada’s youngest university program of legal education. Indeed, Law at UQO started up in 2023, so it will celebrate its third birthday along with the LCC later this year!

Finally, the Law Commission’s ongoing project dedicated to Charity in Canadian Law continued to connect us to extraordinary individuals who support communities in a wonderfully diverse range of ways. In a “Charity Discussion Circle” held in Montreal, we met with leaders of Équiterre, Chez Doris, Old Brewery Mission, and Montreal Community Cares Foundation. Throughout an inspiring and intimate roundtable conversation, they shared a truly



infectious commitment to positive change – whether by encouraging young people through basketball, providing shelter for individuals and families, or influencing directions in social justice. There are real successes day after day, they told us. At the same time, significant hurdles underscore the need for constant flexibility and resilient collaboration.

These are all ways in which community building has characterized recent weeks for the Law Commission. But the events of one day in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, overshadow everything else that has happened in Canada this winter. In the time following the horrific and heart-breaking loss of life at a school where young people should feel safe as they learn and grow,

we have seen and felt remarkable solidarity and support. People have joined together – both in and beyond a small community whose name is now intertwined with tragedy – to remember, mourn, listen, and lean on each other.

The raison d'être of the Law Commission is expressed in three parts: living law, pursuing justice, renewing hope. Tumbler Ridge suggests a reversal of the order. Right now, it seems, renewal of hope belongs right up front. Law will continue to operate in many ways, some of which will be questioned in the months to come, in everyday lives. The pursuit of justice will be woven into ongoing investigation and future action. But it is hope that comes first, hope that feels most important, expressed through pathways for healing, the sharing of stories, and the showing of compassion.



Winter is starting to feel like it is coming to an end. In the Law Commission's hometown of Ottawa, there is an occasional "almost spring" feel to the sunshine. As is the case every year, of course, Canadian crocuses and daffodils will pop up first in British Columbia. As we hold the people of Tumbler Ridge in our hearts, the renewal of spring in the form of tiny bright flowers may offer a fitting way to treasure the warmth associated with coming together, offering support, strengthening community, and embodying hope.





LCC | CDC
Living Law | Pursuing Justice | Renewing Hope

Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 30

26 March 2026

The beginning of the spring season is also the start of the last stretch of the academic year. Which week of the month gets labelled “March break” depends of course on where you go to school in Canada. Regardless of location and level of education, the week offers a change of routine and the opportunity to return reenergized. While there may not be a formal “March Break” in the calendar of the Law Commission of Canada, this month seems like the right moment to underscore the LCC’s connections to places and people dedicated to teaching and learning. Our “Obiter” podcast, our ongoing “Listen and Learn” program, and our newly launched “Rule of Law Commitment” are featured here as the obvious three places, all front and centre this March, to find those connections.

One year ago, in a letter dated March 2025, I shared the exciting launch of our brand-new podcast. As listeners will know, the Law Commission named the podcast “Obiter” - a Latin term used to refer to passages not central to a judgment – embracing the fact that words characterized as marginal may turn out to be the most significant. Our freshly released trio of podcast episodes features guests whose words offer inspiring and long-lasting messages for the evolution of law and the pursuit of justice. Despite what appear to be very different roles and titles, Duncan McCue (creator of a program in Indigenous journalism in Canada), Daniel Jutras (president of a Canadian university), and Lisa Grushcow (rabbi of a Canadian Reform Jewish congregation) are all brilliant teachers and leaders. They share a deep and broad commitment to learning, understanding, telling stories, asking questions, and imagining change. It was a delight to spend time in dialogue with each of them and the Law Commission is honoured to showcase their insights and ideas.



Let me excerpt some of their words here. We invite you to listen (or re-listen) to the episodes and to keep your eyes and ears open for upcoming episodes to be released later this spring.

From Duncan McCue:

“Lawyers could help shape the power and the path for First Nations in this country, and it’s quite clear that journalists could do the same...I needed to start incorporating my Indigenous worldview and values into my journalism...When I see my Indigenous students wanting to go on and tell stories of our communities, it gives me a thrill and the hairs on the back of my neck are standing up just thinking about it

because, you know, if I have learned a thing or two and I can help these young people go on to become great storytellers, then I will be incredibly satisfied.”

From Daniel Jutras:

« Réfléchir le droit en dehors des catégories habituelles de la législation ou des activités des juges, de penser aussi aux citoyens comme participants à l'ordre juridique, comme des créateurs de normes dans l'ordre juridique qui doivent prendre conscience de leur pouvoir sur ce terrain-là...Je demeure vraiment convaincu que l'interaction humaine en présence est absolument fondamentale. Je pense que on ne peut pas maîtriser ces éléments-là - interactions humaines, capacité pour dialogue, perspective critique - si on n'est pas en présence les uns avec les autres. »



From Lisa Grushcow:



"I think of both law and religion as old traditions, and yet traditions that change...One of the great benefits of studying those traditions is that you get to engage with big questions...Being answerable to a real life community makes you more aware of the responsibility sometimes to speak up, but also more thoughtful about how you say it, because you really do want to keep as many people in the conversation as possible...Hope is a muscle like anything else. We need to do what we can to exercise and to strengthen that muscle. And it's very hard, if not impossible, to do that alone."

On our ongoing "Listen and Learn" travels across the country, the Law Commission visited three university law schools in three provinces over the past month. Whether scheduled right before March Break or on the first day back, the roundtables brought together scholars eager to share innovative projects and to talk about issues they see on the horizon. At the University of New Brunswick, at McGill University, and at the University of Windsor, the Law Commission heard about a striking range of projects aimed at enriching and responding to challenges of today and tomorrow for law and justice.



Law Commission
of Canada

Commission du droit
du Canada

Canada

Here are just some of the activities in which researchers are immersing themselves: assessing social and legal implications of increasingly sophisticated robotics; expanding modes of citizen participation in law reform; intertwining law and urban design; exploring language and norms of Haudenosaunee law; examining the potential of artificial intelligence for improved access to justice; drawing on lessons



from science fiction to imagine the future of international law. And here are some of the priorities identified as warranting attention: basic understanding of structures and concepts crucial to democracy and lawmaking; productive intertwining of postsecondary legal education and provincial governance; capacity of lawyers to work with Indigenous legal orders; adequate support for migrant workers across the country; including individuals with disabilities in legal institutions such as jury service; support for building tangible confidence in law and justice institutions. Law teachers at Canadian universities continue to demonstrate unflagging levels of responsiveness, determination, and infectious curiosity.

Finally, the LCC has been delighted to receive an enthusiastic response to its offer to support a 2026 series of public lectures focused on the Rule of Law. To be hosted by university law faculties across the country, the lectures promise to challenge members of the Canadian public to identify, question, and engage with the principles and promise of a complex yet fundamental concept in our collective life. This is one initiative within the Commission's Rule of Law Commitment. Through the upcoming lectures and related projects, we aim to nourish exploration and reflection related to the meaning and practice of rule of law. Watch

for a rule of law public lecture coming soon to a law school near you!



Students across Canada are back from March Break. Active exploration is in full swing in classrooms, corridors and common rooms across the country. The LCC's podcast guests, the law teachers immersed in their projects, and the public speakers invited to deliver the LCC's rule of law lectures, are all recounting stories and sparking conversations. We are proud to support them and eager to keep learning.



Law Commission of Canada Commission du droit du Canada

Canada



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 31

30 April 2026

One year ago, in my letter of April 2025, I shared a poem entitled *The Masks of Love* by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan. It served as an introduction to a reflection on the intensity of the month of April, with a specific nod to the fact that this is annual report preparation season at the Law Commission of Canada. Indeed, the LCC team is immersed again this spring in the project of creating and sharing a comprehensive portrait of twelve months of our activities for the people of Canada.

With this in mind, I went back to a collection of Alden Nowlan's poems for my April 2026 letter. His poem entitled *The Nation's Capital* seemed particularly promising. After all, Ottawa is home to the office in which LCC team members are devoting their time and energy to the work of reviewing, gathering, consolidating, and demonstrating what we have done over this past year.



Here are the opening lines of the poem:

*The first thing you learn here
is that the country
bears the same relationship
to the government
that outer space
bears to the earth.*

*The second thing you learn
is that nothing is unimportant.*

Readers will rightly suspect that the poem continues in a somewhat critical and even cynical vein, offering compelling insight into the perspective of a New Brunswick poet writing in the 1960's. The message, communicated in the initial lines and developed through what follows, reminds people working for the federal government - and we could include independent commissions based in Ottawa - of the risks of disengaged distance and exaggerated self-importance. That isn't a bad message to pay attention to, even if it can be hard to hear.



Reading these lines this year, however, invites a different and unexpected connection. The poet clearly intends to underscore the complete lack of closeness and exchange that characterizes the relationship between outer space and the earth. But the Integrity mission undertaken by Artemis II this month provided all of us as human beings an extraordinary opportunity to renew and reimagine that relationship. Readers of the poem in April 2026, as observers of the Artemis II flight, might reflect instead on the inspiring proximity between the earth and deep space, and between all of us on our planet and the dark side of the moon.



The remarkable accomplishments of the Artemis II mission, and the awe-producing lessons it offers for human potential, were part of a recent conversation around the Law Commission's boardroom table. No doubt similar conversations were happening at gatherings in workplaces, classrooms, and kitchens across the country as we followed our

Canadian astronaut, Jeremy Hansen, and his fellow crew members on their incredible flight. The mission necessarily pushed us out of any "business as usual" mode of doing things; it redefined time and commitment and ability in striking and breathtaking ways. The crew travelled over a million kilometres in their ten days together on board a tiny capsule the size of two minivans. As they flew behind the moon, they lost all radio contact with earth for 40 minutes, making them the first human beings to let go of their connection to our home planet. As they re-entered our atmosphere at 40,000 km/h, they were travelling at a speed that could have taken them from Ottawa to Vancouver in under six minutes.

Upon their return, the members of the Artemis II crew demonstrated the joy and friendship that supported their collaboration throughout the mission. Together they had solved problems, taken risks, and pushed limits. The flight's success relied on curiosity, energy, and substantial investment in generation after generation of people and projects. It offered proof of human capacity to follow our imagination along truly incredible and unexplored paths.



That kind of energy and excitement, albeit less universal and subject to front page coverage, drives the young researchers in law supported by the Law Commission of Canada's Emerging Scholars

program. They too are taking risks and envisaging new frontiers in knowledge and practice. Over the past months, our most recent cohort of doctoral candidates has succeeded in sharing their research-based ideas through innovative outreach and engagement activities. They may not operate as a team in close quarters on a flight through space, but the LCC is proud to gather them together to celebrate and disseminate their paths and projects.

José Saldaña Cuba is writing on mining projects in Indigenous territories, with comparative insights for Canada drawn from a study in Peru. In organizing a panel discussion focused on revitalization of Indigenous Justice in the Americas, he contributed to ongoing dialogue on environmental governance, Indigenous ecological frameworks and Indigenous-industry agreements. Sébastien Meeùs is examining rights protection within regulatory frameworks governing access to personal data. Through short accessible video interviews, he integrates accounts of personal experience and knowledge into his analysis of compliance with data protection guidelines. Andrea Menard delves into consultation directives and practice in legal profession governance, with a focus on informed consent by and within Indigenous organizations. The insights from her experience designing a survey to gather feedback from Indigenous clients and communities on modes of constructive interaction and consent-based engagement will shape her ongoing research and writing.



José Saldaña Cuba
McGill University



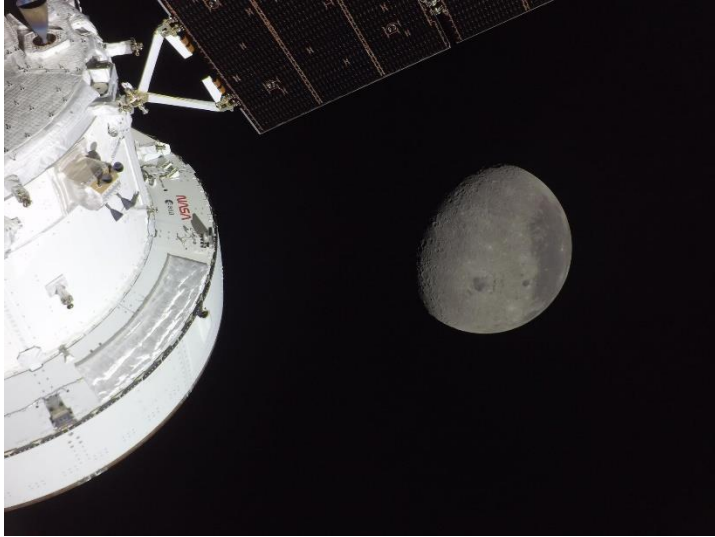
Sébastien Meeùs
Université de Montréal



Andrea Menard
Royal Roads University

The Commission's support for all three Emerging Scholars over the 2025-2026 academic year operates as an expression of faith in their potential. We acknowledge the ways in which they search for inspiration in the questions they ask and the people with whom they interact. The program, although extremely modest in comparison to the one that led to the launch of Artemis II, represents solid investment grounded in the trust that next generations should and will take risks and explore new possibilities.





If Artemis II on its Integrity mission offers a rewrite of the relationship of outer space to earth, then perhaps – as suggested by the poem that opened this letter – it also shines a light on the relationship between the people of Canada and the work done at a federal agency based in the Nation's Capital. Roderick Macdonald, president of the Law Commission of Canada in its first stage of existence from 1997 to 2006, used to repeat, "If it's not impossible, it's not worth doing." He meant it about

teaching students, about designing research projects, about building and changing law and Canadian society. The message would come as no surprise to an astronaut. As this April winds down and we look up and ahead, Artemis II challenges us to explore the unknown and aim for the impossible.

