**Webcast for Current Lawyer Licensing Candidates – Air date: June 26, 2024**

Good morning, everyone. I extend a warm welcome to you on behalf of the Law Society. Our aim today is to bring you up to speed on the latest developments within the Law Society and how these changes impact candidates in the lawyer licensing process. Just so you know, this webcast was pre-recorded. For those of you viewing this webcast on its release date, there will be time at the end where we will be able to answer any questions you have. If you are viewing this webcast later, please feel free to send us any questions at licencesupport@lso.ca, and they will be addressed as soon as possible. Let's get started!

As you may have seen, the Law Society is replacing its current IT systems with a new system, LSO Connects, which will be rolled out to all lawyers, paralegals and licensing candidates this summer. LSO Connects will provide a more streamlined and reliable online service for almost all of your interactions with the Law Society.

In connection with the launch of the new system, the Law Society is also changing a number of processes and policies to improve efficiency and provide exceptional support and services to licensing candidates, lawyers, paralegals, and the public.

We’d like to begin by telling you more about the new system coming this summer, LSO Connects. LSO Connects is a secure platform through which the Law Society will interact with licensing candidates, licensees, and the public. This platform will replace the current online portal accounts used in the licensing process. All communication, application submissions, exam registrations, and other licensing tasks and requests will now happen through LSO Connects.

The transition to LSO Connects brings several advantages. First, the new system promises to be more user-friendly. It will enhance operational efficiency and simplify the licensing process for candidates. Second, LSO Connects consolidates the Law Society’s systems into one portal, simplifying the process for you both during the licensing process and once you become lawyers. This means that you can keep your same account for all interactions with the Law Society moving forward once you become licensed.

After launch, LSO Connects will serve as the sole communication channel between you and the Law Society. Instead of emailing different departments, you will simply message through your LSO Connects account and receive prompt responses to your questions.

As a licensing candidate, you will see many additional self-service features in LSO Connects. This means that you will be able to register for exams, experiential training, call to the Bar and other licensing process services directly through LSO Connects.

A key feature of LSO Connects is the 'service request'. Candidates will submit service requests on LSO Connects for many components of the licensing process. This will replace most of the PDF forms currently used.

In the next slides, we will be going over the many changes coming to the licensing process and how they will impact you as a current candidate in the lawyer licensing process.

Almost everything having to do with the licensing examinations will take place on LSO Connects.

Once LSO Connects is rolled out, you will register for your licensing examinations via your LSO Connects accounts. When you register on LSO Connects, you will be able to select your examination dates and location on LSO Connects. Your licensing examination study materials will be paid for when you register for your examination, and you will access the study materials through LSO Connects. Requests to defer a licensing examination and requests for tutoring will also be made by submitting a service request through LSO Connects.

If you require accommodation, you will request it through your LSO Connects account. You will submit a service request and upload relevant documents in the document upload section. You will be able to view the status of the request through your LSO Connects account.

You will be responsible for ensuring that you provide the required supporting documentation when applying for accommodation through your LSO Connects account. This includes the required documentation from medical practitioners. These documents will no longer be submitted directly to the Law Society by the medical practitioner.

You will also be able to view your examination results through your LSO Connects account.  When the results are available, you will receive an email telling you that you have a message in your LSO Connects account. You will then log-in to your account to view the results.

Although not directly related to LSO Connects, it is important to know that the Law Society will no longer be producing candidate ID cards after the summer 2024 licensing examinations. Beginning in fall 2024, candidates will be expected to provide valid government-issued photo identification for identification purposes at exam sites and during their experiential training.

There will be several changes relating to articling and experiential training.

With the launch of LSO Connects, articling candidates will no longer need to submit articles of clerkship or a certificate of service form e-signed by their principal. Instead, you will complete an articling placement record through your LSO Connects account. The articling placement record will be reviewed by Law Society staff and verified by your principal through the principal's LSO Connects account.  You must complete an articling placement record at the start of your articling placement and at the end of the placement.

For candidates who wish to submit a request for an exemption from or abridgment of articles, the request will be made through LSO Connects as a service request. The online PDF forms will no longer be accepted.

You and your principal are no longer required to report time off to the Law Society during your placement. Your principal will manage your time-off and be responsible for ensuring you do not exceed the maximum permitted time-off or, if you do, that you make-up the time. Similarly, principals will be responsible where a candidate requires an abridgement of their placement based on compassionate grounds or where a temporary assignment of articles is required. You and your principal will remain accountable to the Law Society, but there is no longer a need to submit forms or requests to the Law Society regarding these matters.

 With LSO Connects, the Law Society is shifting to a pay-for-service model. This means that instead of being invoiced for a component of the licensing process, you will be required to pay for it at the time you submit your application or request. The Law Society will no longer send invoices to your account.

For example, previously, when you registered for an exam, you received an invoice for the exam fee with a payment deadline. With LSO Connects, when you register for an exam, you will be required to pay for it at the time of registration or enroll in a payment plan. We’ll talk more about payment plans in the next slide.

Payment for applications and requests directly through LSO Connects also means that the Law Society will no longer be accepting bulk or third-party payments. Currently, some firms and organizations pay the Law Society directly for candidates’ licensing process expenses. This will no longer be possible with the rollout of LSO Connects this summer. Going forward, your licensing process fees must be paid directly through your LSO Connects account. The Law Society is also communicating this change to firms and principals. If this impacts you, you may work with your firm or organization to determine the best way for the organization to reimburse you for your licensing process fees.

There will also be changes to your payment options. When LSO Connects is rolled out to all licensing candidates this summer, payment of all licensing process fees must be made through your LSO Connects account.  You may pay by Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Visa Debit or Mastercard Debit.  We will no longer accept other payment methods such as electronic fund transfers, cheques and money orders.

The Law Society is making changes to its monthly payment plans with the rollout of LSO Connects. You will be able to use the on-demand monthly payment plan to pay for examinations, articling, and Law Practice Program fees. Monthly payment plans will no longer be scheduled or bundled, meaning that when you register for each of these licensing process components, you will have the option to pay in full at that time or enroll in a monthly payment plan for the individual component.

Monthly payment plan durations will be 10 months for lawyer candidates, and you will be charged an administration fee each time you enroll in a monthly payment plan.

Please note that examination study materials will no longer be eligible for a monthly payment plan. Candidates must pay for these materials in full before registering for the exam.

If you require financial assistance, you will be able to submit a request for support from the Repayable Allowance Program through your LSO Connects accounts.

With the rollout of LSO Connects, the requirements and time limits will be changing for supervision agreements.

Candidates who have completed their experiential training, but who are not yet licensed, may enter into a supervision agreement with a supervising lawyer for up to six months without approval from the Law Society. The candidate and their supervisor must complete a supervision agreement form and retain a copy. The form will not need to be submitted to or approved by the Law Society.

After up to six months of working under one or more supervision agreements, if a candidate wishes to continue to work under supervision and retain the corresponding rights of appearance, the candidate must be supervised by an approved principal. If the supervisor is not an approved principal, the supervisor must first apply to the Law Society for approval. The candidate must then submit a service request for an extended supervision agreement through LSO Connects. Provided the requirements are met, the Law Society will grant the extended supervision agreement for up to six additional months.

As is currently the case, candidates who are the subject of a good character investigation or proceeding will not be eligible to enter into a supervision agreement.

In all cases, candidates will only be able to work under a supervision agreement for a maximum of 12 months total. The first six months do not need to be approved by the Law Society, and the last 6 months must be approved through a service request on LSO Connects.

For those candidates who have filed supervision agreements for dates commencing after LSO Connects launches this summer, please note that the Law Society will not be approving these supervision agreements since approval for a first supervision agreement is no longer required. If you want an extended supervision agreement beyond 6 months, you will need to complete a service request through LSO Connects once it launches.

There will also be some changes to the process for becoming licensed. Once you meet all the licensing requirements and become eligible for licensure, you'll need to log into your LSO Connects account to select whether you want to be licensed administratively or attend a scheduled Call to the Bar ceremony.

In future, administrative licensing will occur on a rolling basis, meaning this will occur more frequently. This process change will ensure you can receive your licence as quickly as possible.

You can expect to receive more updates from us regarding the next steps in the coming months through your online account.

It is also critical that you make sure that your email address in your online licensing candidate account is current and up to date. This will be the email through which you will receive an invitation to create an account on LSO Connects when it’s time.

Your information will be moved over from your online licensing candidate account to LSO Connects; however, when prompted, you will need to log-in to LSO Connects and ensure that your information is accurate.

We are also working hard to refresh our webpages with the new processes and policies, so that you will have accurate and up to date information once LSO Connects launches this summer. In the meantime, there is a dedicated website—lso.ca/coming-soon—that will be updated regularly with the most up to date information and supports for candidates and licensees with respect to LSO Connects and the changes that are coming. Please make sure to check the Law Society website regularly to stay informed.

We thank you for taking the time to hear about the many exciting changes coming to the Law Society and to the licensing process. We have now completed the formal presentation portion of today's webcast. We are receiving questions in the Q and A section. I would encourage you to start to send in your questions if you haven't done so already, and we’ll endeavor to address as many of them as we possibly can.

If we don’t have the opportunity to answer your question live today, don't hesitate to reach out to the Law Society. All questions about the changes coming and about the new system should be addressed to licencesupport@lso.ca. This email address is being actively monitored to ensure that your questions about LSO Connects and about how these changes will impact your licensing process can be answered promptly.

Before we open the webcast up to the Q and A portion of today’s programming and to our panelists who are standing by to answer your questions, I would just mention that if you have questions that are related to specific personal circumstances, the best forum for addressing those questions is through licencesupport@lso.ca, so that you can address your particular circumstances. We are hoping today to be able to answer generalized questions about the changes and the new system, LSO Connects.

And now, we will have Licensing and Accreditation panelists introduce themselves and proceed with the Q and A session.