

LANDS

Monthly Newsletter

ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the November edition of the Law and Society Students' Association Newsletter! In this newsletter, we bring you updates on legal news, insightful recommendations and highlights of our club activities and events.



IN THIS EDITION, YOU WILL FIND:

- ✦ WHATS NEW WITH LANDS
- ✦ POLICY SPOTLIGHT
- ✦ LEGAL NEWS
- ✦ TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS
- ✦ AND MORE!





What's New for LANDS?



We hosted a Halloween themed trivia night filled with prizes and pizzas. It was hosted in collaboration with the Law and Society Student Association, McLaughlin College Council, York Undergraduate Political Science Council, and The Muslims in Law Association at York University.

Attendees put their knowledge to the test with questions covering law, social sciences, Canadian general knowledge, and of course, Halloween! The night featured exciting lightning rounds, with teams from McLaughlin College Council and York Undergraduate Political Science Council facing off against a team of executives from the Law and Society Student Association and The Muslims in Law Association.



For November, we have more events on the docket and make sure you are following our instagram @LANDSYU to have the latest information and update about our upcoming events, so stay tuned!





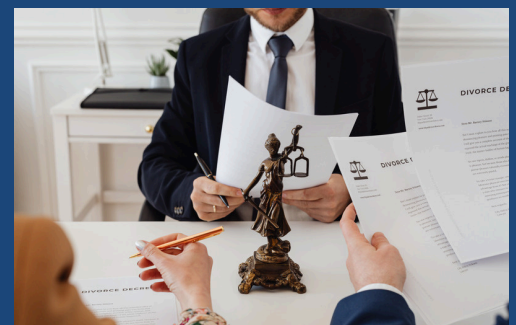
Policy Spotlight

The Future of DEI in Higher Education: Legal Challenges to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs

Policies for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at post-secondary education institutions are controversial. Supporters believe DEI can expand representation of minority groups like women, Indigenous peoples, or ethnic minorities who have faced socio-economic barriers. It can provide marginalized groups with more opportunities to participate in higher education. Preferential hiring of instructors from diverse backgrounds and selective recruitment of racialized students may act as remedial justice for historical discrimination.

Nonetheless, DEI initiatives cannot eliminate power imbalances and leadership structures that perpetuate white privilege. Certain DEI activities are criticized as performative or tokenistic gestures, without improving social mobility nor rectifying systemic discrimination. Meanwhile, critics claim reverse discrimination in lawsuits against universities' DEI strategies. Instead of social identity, critics prefer a merit-based criteria based on applicants' achievements, personal skills, and qualifications.

In this dilemma, formal equality of opportunity conceptually conflicts with substantive fairness. The Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard* [2023] that race-conscious affirmative action breaches the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection clause. In contrast, section 15(2) of the Canadian Charter permits ameliorative programs to rectify social or legal disadvantages by groups due to sex, colour, national or ethnic origin, and disability. For example, York University has initiated an action plan for Decolonization, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEDI). Although implementation is a complicated process, DEDI is an organizational framework with important commitments to promote an equitable and inclusive learning environment. Moreover, critical conversations in socio-legal studies can unpack the legacy of colonial mentality in academia.



Legal News

A Rise in U.S. Law School Applications Increases Competition

Applications to U.S. law schools have risen by 33% compared to last year, marking another surge following a previous 26% increase (Setty, 2025). This jump implies tougher competition for limited seats, though it benefits law schools with a wider pool of candidates. Experts attribute this rise to an uncertain economy, political instability, and shifting job prospects due to artificial intelligence.

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) participation is also up 22%, signaling strong interest in legal education. A Kaplan survey found that 56% of admissions officers believe the political climate is the main driver, and 90% expect this year's cycle to be even more competitive than last year's (Setty, 2025).

Ontario Reverses Course on Rent Control Changes Amid Legal Concerns

The Ontario government has backed down from parts of Bill 60 after backlash from tenant groups and legal advocates. The proposed amendments would have weakened renters' rights under the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) by requiring tenants to pay 50% of alleged unpaid rent before being allowed to file a counterclaim in eviction cases (CBC News, 2025).

Tenant lawyer Samuel Mason warned that this will unfairly disadvantage renters facing financial hardship and limit access to justice. Advocacy groups, such as the York South-Weston Tenant Union, celebrated the government's reversal as a victory for collective action, although they remain concerned about ongoing threats to tenant protections (CBC News, 2025).



References:

Setty, E. (2025). U.S. law school applicants increase 33%, boosting competition. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/us-law-school-applicants-increase-33-boosting-competition-2025-10-15/>

CBC News. (2025). Ontario backs down on proposal to weaken rent control after public pushback. *CBC news*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-backs-down-proposal-rent-control-9.6954571>



LANDS Team Recommendations

Movies/Shows/Books/Podcasts

With exam season approaching enjoy some of our favourite articles/books podcasts and educational resources to keep your minds at ease.

1. What happens in a U.S Government shutdown

Check out Andy Sullivan's Reuters article on what really shuts down when the U.S. government runs out of funding, and what keeps running. It's a clear, timely breakdown of how a shutdown impacts federal workers, public services, and everyday life.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-government-shutdown-what-closes-what-stays-open-2023-09-21/>

2. The 7Sage Admissions Podcast - Next Stop: Law School

Tune in to Next Stop: Law School, the 7Sage Admissions Podcast that guides you through the law school journey. Each episode delivers insights on LSAT prep, application strategies, admissions trends, and advice from law school insiders, essential listening for anyone serious about getting into law school.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6AGkBIHA1IGKpWzqWMJmem?si=7a5ea2ae66c44b49>

3. The Loophole in LSAT Logical Reasoning by Ellen Cassidy

PowerScore LSAT Bible Duology (2025–2026) Sharpen your LSAT strategy with the trusted PowerScore LSAT Bible Duology by Dave Killoran and Jon Denning. This two-book set, covering Logical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension, offers clear explanations, proven techniques, and targeted drills to master every question type. Perfect for building a strong conceptual foundation and boosting your score with efficient, expert-backed strategies

<https://powerscore.com/lsat/publications/the-powerscore-2025-2026-lsat-bible-workbook-pack>



Faculty Updates

Jobs (Work Study Positions)

1. Program Administration Assistant Lead - Osgoode Hall Law School - Work Study

This job will require you to provide administrative services and act as a lead for other Program Administration Assistants.

2. Nellie Library Assistant - Nellie Library - Work Study

This is a casual work-study position where you will support library operations by performing clerical and customer service duties. This position is affiliated with the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies.



Volunteer Positions

1. Be the Change – Volunteer with NoTimeToWait 2025

This is a volunteer opportunity for a youth-led national summit focused on health, advocacy, and HIV prevention. Volunteers will support event operations, assist participants, and help create an inclusive, engaging environment for youth changemakers.

2. Peer Mentor - Support at RISK KIDS

In this position, you will serve as a peer mentor for children aged 6-15 who are dealing with mental health issues and/or cultural transition challenges. Your role will include offering companionship, support and positive guidance to help these youth adjust and thrive.





Famous Legal Cases: R v Bissonette

On January 29, 2017, Alexandre Bissonnette, armed, entered the Great Mosque of Québec and began shooting at the people praying. The attack resulted in the deaths of six men and caused serious injuries to five others. Bissonnette pleaded guilty to six counts of first-degree murder, each carrying a life sentence with no parole eligibility for 25 years. The prosecution aimed to apply section 745.51 of the Criminal Code, which permits parole ineligibility periods to be served consecutively, potentially extending parole ineligibility to 150 years.

However, the Supreme Court of Canada invalidated section 745.51, ruling that it violated section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects individuals against cruel and unusual punishment. Chief Justice Richard Wagner further notes that sentences exceeding a human lifespan not only eliminate any possibility of rehabilitation but also diminishes human dignity. Consequently, the Court declared section 745.51 unconstitutional and affirmed that parole ineligibility periods for multiple murders must be served concurrently. As such, Bissonnette became eligible for parole after 25 years.

Reference:

<https://www.scc-csc.ca/judgments-jugements/cb/2022/39544/>





AI in the Courtroom:

Ethical and Legal Ramifications of Generative AI in Legal Practice

The legal industry is changing significantly because of the emergence of generative AI, from contract drafting to case outcome prediction. However, as algorithms start to "think" alongside attorneys, there are new moral and legal issues that need to be addressed in the courtroom.



Faster research, increased accessibility, and cost effectiveness are promised by generative AI tools like ChatGPT and other legal-specific models. However, using them into legal practice poses important concerns about responsibility, bias, and accuracy. Who is at fault, the developer, the lawyer, or the machine, when an AI system generates faulty logic or references made-up cases?

AI use must adhere to professional norms of competence and confidentiality in order to be ethical. AI programs that have been trained on sensitive data run the danger of disclosing client information or introducing systematic bias, which could compromise the impartiality of court decisions. The question of whether AI-generated submissions should be revealed, validated, or even allowed is currently being debated by courts.

Legally, new rules are being developed to regulate intellectual property, data provenance, and AI transparency. "Human-in-the-loop" oversight, making sure that ultimate legal judgments stay in human hands, is emphasized in both the European Union's AI Act and the developing state guidelines in the United States.

The legal industry is at a turning point as generative AI becomes increasingly prevalent in courtrooms and law firms. The technology has enormous potential, but if moral boundaries aren't upheld, there are also significant risks. The way people choose to utilize machines may have a greater impact on justice in the future than how intelligent they get.

Reference:

Bias in Ai. Chapman University. <https://www.chapman.edu/ai/bias-in-ai.aspx>

European Commission. (2024). The Artificial Intelligence Act: Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council on Artificial Intelligence. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>





Alumni Spotlight: Aneesa Lakeram



Can you briefly summarize your academic and/or professional journey since graduating from the Law and Society program at York University (e.g., further studies, career path, personal projects, or other experiences)?

After completing my Honours BA in Law and Society, I pursued further training in Public Administration and Law, followed by a Paralegal Diploma at Humber College, becoming a Licensed Ontario Paralegal in 2020. Early in my career, I worked in legal settings such as Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP and community legal clinics, where I gained hands-on experience supporting clients with corporate, administrative, and social benefit matters. Through volunteering over time, my path expanded into broader program and stakeholder engagement roles. I've held positions in the nonprofit, education, and policy sectors, including Donor Care Manager at Penny Appeal Canada, Employment Specialist at Trios College, and most recently Program Officer at the Smart Prosperity Institute - University of Ottawa. Across these roles, I've focused on program coordination, knowledge mobilization, and capacity building, while continuing professional development in areas like project management and French. The LSA Program set me up to have some really great professional experiences.

What advice or tips do you have for current students in the program?

Stay open to the wide range of directions a Law and Society degree can take you. The program provides a strong interdisciplinary foundation, so don't feel limited to a strictly "legal" career path, your skills are valuable in policy, nonprofit, government, corporate, and education sectors too. I'd also recommend building practical experience early, whether through internships, volunteering, or student leadership opportunities, as those experiences can open doors and help clarify your interests. Your undergrad will set a career foundation for you but while studying don't forget to maintain a healthy balanced lifestyle - join those campus clubs, create study groups with your peers and stay open-minded to all opportunities that come your way. You never know who you'll meet and how the small seeds you sow are a part of building yourself personally and professionally. Finally, stay connected with professors, mentors, and peers, your network will become one of your greatest career resources.

What skills or experiences from the Law and Society Program have you found most valuable in your post-graduate journey?

The critical thinking and analytical skills I developed have been essential across every role, whether I'm evaluating policy, drafting plain-language resources, or managing stakeholder relationships. The program's emphasis on connecting law to broader social, political, and cultural contexts has also been invaluable, particularly in roles where I translate complex legal or policy issues into accessible tools for communities, students, or decision-makers. Strong research and writing skills, as well as the ability to question systems and advocate for marginalized voices, continue to guide my work and passions.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with current students, faculty, or alumni about your experience or journey?

My journey has not been linear, but every step built on the foundation of my Law and Society degree. I've been able to pivot between legal practice, nonprofit management, education, and policy, which shows how versatile this background can be. I'd encourage students to embrace that flexibility and trust that the skills they're building will remain relevant, even if their careers evolve in unexpected directions. Stay passionate about continuous learning and personal and professional development.

