



A Note on Voting:

Online & telephone voting begins mid-April and will continue until April 30. Watch for an email from Computershare this week or next with your access code.

The StopSOP slate is encouraging our supporters to vote for ALL members of the slate (and those non-slate candidates we endorse who also undertake to roll back the compelled Statement of Principles). Voting exclusively for these candidates will help to avoid vote-splitting. (Remember: you can vote for candidates in all regions, not just where you live or work.)

Check [our website](#) for an up-to-date list before you vote.

The Law Society of Ontario's Statement of Principles: A Problem and a Solution

This is the fifth in a series of regular e-blasts, brought to you by the StopSOP Team. Visit [our website](#) to find out more, read past editions of our newsletter, and meet our slate of Bencher candidates opposing the compelled Statement of Principles.

The Problem:

Recommendation 3(1) - Statement of Principles (SOP)

AS ADOPTED BY CONVOCATION: The Law Society will “require every licensee to adopt and to abide by a statement of principles acknowledging their obligation to promote equality, diversity and inclusion generally, and in their behaviour towards colleagues, employees, clients and the public.” This requirement is part of a mandated and "accelerated" culture shift within the legal profession.

PROBLEM #5: THE MANDATORY SOP IS A SIGNAL OF SUBMISSION

Václav Havel, the political dissident, prisoner, and eventual politician, wrote about the nature of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in his essay [The Power of the Powerless](#). He described a submissive greengrocer putting a sign in his shop window, declaring “Workers of the World, Unite!” – the sign acted as a shield to protect him from potential informers and a signal to the authoritarian regime above him that he had fallen in line and would not cause trouble.

But this virtue-signalling, this ‘going along to get along’, only fed the authoritarian government’s power by demonstrating that the people were afraid to stand up to an ideology that demanded conformity. Ideology in such societies, Havel wrote, “has a natural tendency to disengage itself from reality, to create a world of appearances, to become ritual,” while at the same time becoming an increasingly important component of power. The greengrocer’s ritualistic action in putting up the sign perpetuated this power over him, while simultaneously stripping him of his dignity as an individual.

No, the Law Society of Ontario isn’t communist Czechoslovakia. But the Statement of Principles has a whiff of “Workers of the World, Unite!” And the consequences of failing to check the box, to put the sign in the window as it were, are not benign.

When a government, or regulator, needs to bully and intimidate its citizens into submission and demand a symbol of obeisance, you know you are on the road to tyranny. That bullying was evident from the very birth of the SOP, and it continues today against anyone who dares to dissent.

In [December 2016](#), when the Equity Advisory Group presented its thirteen recommendations including the Statement of Principles to Convocation, it was made clear to benchers that this was a complete package. No questioning of the individual components would be countenanced. Bencher Sidney Troister brought a motion to separate out the Statement of Principles requirement, expressing concern about the compelled speech and violation of our Charter freedoms of conscience and belief, and was subjected to bullying (see Professor Cockfield's [paper](#) at page 15):

"According to the Dissenting Benchers (and at least one Majority Bencher), they faced terrible "bullying" (their word) to vote in favor of the SOP. They were told by other benchers and SOP-supporting lawyers that no dissent is possible, and that the benchers must demonstrate their commitment against racism by unanimously supporting the passage of the SOP. Moreover, they were also told there was no room to change anything surrounding any of the recommendations."

Although Troister was joined by a couple of brave benchers in bringing and supporting the motion, namely Anne Vespry and Jeffrey Lem, it ultimately failed. The entire package was passed by a vote of 47-0, with three abstentions.

The message was clear: the Statement of Principles was not to be challenged. Nor were the people who were pushing it.

In [December 2017](#), Bencher Joseph Groia brought a motion to allow for a conscientious objection to the SOP. It was expressed by several benchers, both for and against the motion, that the SOP was meaningless compelled speech, and it was deeply divisive. Groia said, in referring to those opposing the SOP on principle: "Let's be perfectly clear. Those men and women fully support the goals of greater equality and diversity, so I hope that in our debate today no one will suggest that they do not." Some, however, did so suggest. As Bencher Avvy Go

stated, "I'm voting no in honour of the many conscientious lawyers and paralegals who object to being part of a profession that perpetuates white privilege and yet refuses to acknowledge the existence of racism."

Anne Vespry, who seconded Groia's motion, made an impassioned plea: "Sadly, what has become quite clear is that there are at least an equal number of people wrapping themselves in the flag of equity, diversity, inclusion, who are acting in their everyday lives in a manner to exclude, marginalize, or bully anyone who dares to express a different opinion, and that, in my opinion, is a betrayal of what they're proposing....It is my hope that my fellow Benchers consider diversity, including diversity of experience and thought, and support this motion so that I and others like me do not need to look for a new career a few years down the line from now."

Once again compromise was not to be entertained. The motion failed.

StopSOP candidates and organizers have been taking considerable heat as well – having our position grossly misrepresented; facing attempts to shut us down; being called racists and bigots on social media and even in the *Law Times*; and being mocked for being "old white men" (those not fitting that category dismissed as "tokens").

Corey Shefman, the organizer of a [Pro-SOP website](#), was quoted in the [Law Times](#) as saying, "We can't be complacent in the face of bigotry." In other words, the *only possible reason* you could be opposing a compelled Statement of Principles is that you, and many esteemed and decent people of principle in our professions, are racists and bigots. You would think that lawyers, of all people, could have a rational discussion of issues. You would be mistaken.

Read Mr. Shefman's response below, and consider:



Corey Shefman
@coreyshefman

Correct.

Sam Goldstein @Willweargloves

"We can't be complacent in the face of bigotry," @coreyshefman Reasonable people can disagree but for SOP supporters, if you disagree with them you're a racist.
#BencherElection2019 @LawSocietyLSO @...

11:58 AM · 2019-04-03 · TweetDeck



When citizens (and even dissident members of the governing body) cannot ask questions, cannot bring motions without being bullied, cannot run in a democratic election without being vilified, then perhaps what you are questioning isn't an 'initiative' but an 'orthodoxy.'

The StopSOP slate of candidates stands for individual rights and freedoms for ALL members of the professions. We believe that jealously guarding those freedoms is critical for the protection of minorities who may find themselves at the mercy of an intolerant majority.

We will not put a sign in the window and hand over those hard-fought freedoms willingly.

The Solution:

The Law Society remains a democratically-elected body, for now, but continued self-regulation of the profession, a privilege granted to us to ensure our independence, may be jeopardized by the Law Society's imposition of a political litmus test (the SOP) as a condition of practicing law.

We, as members, have the ability to rein in the Law Society and get it back on

track. This April, vote for the entire StopSOP Slate of Candidates, and those we endorse. Meet four of our candidates:



Geoff Pollock

I am running because our society needs to focus more on empowering our members and less on its own perception and branding. We need to do more to ensure that the public receives top-quality service from new and existing lawyers.

I oppose the implementation of a statement of principles for the same reasons. Our law society needs to focus on protecting the public from problem practitioners, not engineering the political values of its members. If elected, I will work with my fellow benchers to repeal this needless and divisive burden on the profession.

[Read Geoff's Platform & Bio](#)

Alexander Wilkes

The SOP and the accompanying EDI recommendations advanced by the LSO, though well-intentioned, reflect policies that focus on dividing and categorizing people, and thus inevitably do more harm than good to society when implemented. Like most lawyers in Ontario, I am committed to addressing and eliminating any residual racism in the profession, but this must involve a return to a societal focus on individuals over group identity, where, as advocated by Martin Luther King Jr., people are judged by the quality of their character and not



the color of their skin, nor any other immutable characteristic.

[Read Alexander's Platform & Bio](#)



Scott Marshall

The Society has also become recklessly bloated in recent years. Its core mandate is licensing, (reasonable) regulation and discipline. Anything that deviates from that core mandate is a waste of your money. The financial and regulatory burden on the private bar has grown excessive and must be pruned back.

By working with other members on the #StopSOP slate, we'll put money back in your pocket and check the bureaucratic grandiosity in which the LSO is mired. Bureaucracies naturally metastasize and lose sight of those they're meant to serve: members and the public.

[Read Scott's Platform & Bio](#)

Joseph Chiummiento

The Law Society has become a bureaucratic organization driven by its own machinations and politically imposed ideals forced on us by the few internal or loudest voices that are far removed from the everyday lawyer experience.

Excessive fees, increasing CLE requirements and related training, and the proliferation of



privatizing access to case law and resources that make us better has only increased the competitive nature or divide among us.

[Read Joseph's Platform & Bio](#)

The StopSOP Slate:

Inside Toronto

[Robert P. Adourian](#)

[D. Jared Brown](#)

[John F. Fagan](#)

[Sam Goldstein](#)

[Philip H. Horgan](#)

[Liran Kandinov \(endorsed\)](#)

[Murray Klippenstein](#)

[Lubomir Poliacik](#)

[Geoff Pollock](#)

[Chi-Kun Shi](#)

[Nicholas dePencier Wright](#)

Paralegal

[Ian G. Wilkinson](#)

Outside Toronto

[Ryan Alford](#)

[Gerard Paul Charette](#)

[Joseph Chiumminto](#)

[Jean-Jacques Desgranges](#)

[Gary D. Graham](#)

[Cheryl R. Lean](#)

[Cecil Lyon](#)

[C. Scott Marshall](#)

[Trevor Robert Parry](#)

[Jorge E. Pineda](#)

[Brian L. Prill](#)

[Alexander D. Wilkes](#)

This list includes non-slate candidates we are endorsing (as noted). This list may be updated with additional candidates, so please check our website for an up-to-date list of candidates before voting.

In the News...

Professor Bruce Pardy in the National Post: [Your Rights Depend on an Election You Haven't Heard of](#)

Elias Munshya in the Canadian Lawyer: [Why I Don't Support the Statement of Principles](#)

What Are YOUR Principles? StopSOP Candidates share why they are opposed to a compelled Statement of Principles.



How You Can Help StopSOP (click for links):

SPREAD THE WORD - forward this newsletter to your colleagues (click for a PDF version)

DONATE to Campaign Expenses - any contributions welcome!

TAKE A STAND - add your name to the supporters list on our website

Most Importantly - VOTE for the StopSOP slate, starting mid-April. (Click for a list of our candidates)



Thank you for reading. Please add us to your contacts to ensure you receive next week's e-blast.

If you support the SOP and do not wish to receive further mailings, we respect your decision. Please click on the "unsubscribe" button below.

