
Updated: February 2023

Licensure & regulation

- The Law Society of Ontario licenses and regulates all Ontario paralegals and lawyers in the public interest.
- In order to work as a paralegal in Ontario, an individual must graduate from an [accredited paralegal education program in Ontario](#), including the field placement requirement, and pass the paralegal licensing examination.
 - This is explained in greater detail here: [How do I become a paralegal in Ontario?](#)
- Once licensed, paralegals are required to complete continuing professional development programming annually, carry professional liability insurance, submit to occasional practice audits, pay annual fees and file annual reports.
- Paralegals must adhere to professional conduct rules, which regulate conduct and competence, as well as adhering to by-laws related to topics like the management of trust accounts. Failure to comply may result in complaints and potentially the Law Society's disciplinary process.

Paralegal scope of practice

- Paralegals independently provide representation and advice in:
 - Small Claims Court
 - Certain criminal and quasi-criminal matters before the provincial court
 - Administrative tribunals, such as the Landlord and Tenant Board.
- Paralegals can also draft documents and negotiate on a party's behalf in relation to any of those kinds of proceedings.
- In Ontario, lawyers automatically become commissioners for taking affidavits by virtue of their licence. In 2013, the government extended this automatic designation to all licensed paralegals.
- In 2018, a legislative change designated paralegals as “officers of the court,” alongside lawyers, recognizing that they play an important role in the effective administration of justice and are bound by certain duties which the court can enforce.
- Since 2019, paralegals have been authorized to represent individual defendants in some summary conviction matters that carry a penalty of up to two years less a day.
- In 2020, the *Notaries Act* was amended to allow paralegals to be appointed as notaries in the same manner as lawyers. Paralegals can now apply to be appointed a notary public upon becoming licensed by the Law Society. This is a non-restrictive life-time appointment.

Immigration law

- Paralegals licensed by the Law Society of Ontario are limited to providing advocacy before the Immigration and Refugee Board, pursuant to s. 91 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) and prescribed by the Law Society in [By-law 4](#). These services are consistent with the other services that paralegals are licensed to provide and the inclusion of these services in the paralegal scope recognizes that many paralegals have a great deal of expertise representing parties at tribunal proceedings.
- The permitted scope of practice does not include preparing applications to other administrative decision-makers, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or advising clients with respect to such applications. If paralegals want to provide services set out in s. 91 of the IRPA beyond what is permitted in By-Law 4, they are required to be licensed by the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants (the College).
- Accreditation and licensing with the College requires completion of the same mandatory diploma program in immigration and citizenship law at Queen's University that immigration consultants must complete. The Law Society has worked closely with Queen's University to recognize paralegals' training and expertise when determining application priorities so that paralegals who wish to provide legal services in this area of law are able to undertake the requisite training.

Family Legal Services Provider (FLSP) licence

- On December 1, 2022, Convocation approved the creation of an FLSP licence. Paralegals who complete the specified training will be able to assist clients with process navigation, completing applications for joint and uncontested divorce and motions to change for child support, based on the payor's "line 150/T4 slip" income, with some limitations.
- The proposed scope of the FLSP licence also includes responding to proceedings to enforce support payments and court appearances on motions to change, with some limitations. [The full details can be found in the report.](#)
- The Law Society will begin development of the educational and licensing program for the FLSP licence in 2023. Depending on the response from education providers and the interest shown by paralegals in this new licence, the first group of family legal service providers could be ready to assist the public by the winter or spring of 2025.
- The Access to Justice Committee will review the FLSP licence within three years of its implementation to determine its impact on access to justice and report to Convocation.

The Law Society regulates [lawyers and paralegals](#) in Ontario in the public interest. The Law Society has a mandate to protect the public interest, to maintain and to advance the cause of justice and the rule of law, to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario and to act in a timely, open and efficient manner.

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