

LEGAL AID COMMISSION REPORT

Paul Falvo, LSNT Representative

In 2019 and 2020 I served as Law Society Representative to the Northwest Territories Legal Aid Commission (LAC).

The Commission's role is to ensure oversight of the LAC Executive Director, to approve policy and to hear and determine appeals of client coverage denial and private panel lawyer accounts.

In common with most of the world, the Commission's work was disrupted by the annus horribilis. Staff and contractors soldiered on to ensure the provision of legal services to NWT residents. The Commission met online and by phone instead of in person.

In 2020 the Board's work consisted mostly of hearing client appeals. Challenges presented by the public health emergency and turnover of members meant that less policy work was done than in the year preceding. Fortunately, significant gains were made in 2019, including finalization of the Office of the Children's Lawyer Policy and Procedures manual, guidelines for the Outreach Legal Aid Clinic, and revised criminal coverage guidelines.

Recent appointment of new members means that the Commission now has a full complement, including Chair Alana Mero - Beaufort Delta, Brad Patzer - Public Service, Bronwyn Watters - North Slave and Joan Mercredi - South Slave representative.