

NEWS RELEASE

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Ontario Association of Child Protection Lawyers Names First President

The Ontario Association of Child Protection Lawyers has named David A. Sandor of Windsor as the organization's first president. Established in May of 2017, the OACPL has quickly grown from a handful of defence lawyers in southwestern Ontario to province-wide representation, including a newly-formed Toronto Chapter.

"Our main objective is to increase the efficiency and level of professional expertise of child protection lawyers in Ontario," said Mr. Sandor. "In the past, families, children and communities have suffered disadvantages because the child protection defence bar has lacked the unity that exists in other areas of practice. This Association helps defence lawyers across the province connect and work together to find solutions to complex legal issues that exist only in child protection."

In addition to unifying child protection lawyers, the OACPL has worked with the Mother Risk Commission to address flaws in drug testing and has begun working with Bands and Native groups to overcome systemic issues associated with residential schools and the '60s Scoop in Ontario.

"Supporting the recovery of native identity in Ontario is a high priority for the Association," Mr. Sandor said. "The over-representation of Native families and individuals in the child welfare system shows that we have not yet done enough to help Natives recover from the cultural genocide that happened in the past."

OACPL Vice-president Maggie Vicente said, "David Sandor is really the innovator of this Association, taking it from a great idea into a reality. He has worked tirelessly to promote it, gain membership and support his colleagues. I look forward to working alongside David as the Association strives to have a meaningful impact on the practice of child protection parents' counsel across the province."

Toronto Chapter President Tammy Law believes the OACPL is particularly valuable in metropolitan areas like Toronto, where some of the most complex child welfare cases are litigated. "Unifying and strengthening parents counsel is extremely important as a strong bar will lead to higher quality advocacy and better outcomes for parents and ultimately families," she said. "Parents' counsel is an essential part of the child welfare system and OACPL will help our voices be heard."

On February 2, the OACPL is hosting its first professional development conference and webcast, "2018 Developments in Child Protection," focusing on significant changes in child welfare law that take effect on March 1. In November, the Association is hosting a 2-day conference at the University of Windsor dealing with Advanced Issues in Child Protection Law.

To participate in these continuing professional development events or to become a member, contact OACPL Secretary Kristen L. Hales at (519) 253-5529 or hales@KLHLaw.ca.