

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lynn Burns, founding Executive Director of Pro Bono Ontario, to retire at the end of 2023

TORONTO, On September 7, 2023 – After 22 years of dedicated service, Lynn Burns, the esteemed founding Executive Director of Pro Bono Ontario (PBO), has decided to embark on her next chapter and will be retiring from her role, effective December 31, 2023.

Since PBO’s inception, Lynn has been the driving force behind its mission. With vision, passion, strategic thinking, good humour and hard work, Lynn has grown PBO from an organization that served four clients in its first year of operations to one that served 34,000 clients last year and has become a pillar of the legal system in Canada.

Throughout her tenure, Lynn has strategically cultivated a nationwide pro bono culture, transitioning the profession from ad hoc activities to methodical and institutionalized engagement, particularly within law firms and legal departments. At the same time, she reshaped the landscape of accessible legal support for people with unmet legal needs. She pioneered court-based legal help centres, Canada’s first medical-legal partnerships, and launched the Free Legal Advice Hotline. This hotline, for the first time, made justice easily accessible to the elderly, individuals with disabilities, those in remote or rural areas and those without access to reliable transit, as well as people with childcare and inflexible work commitments.

“Lynn is a generational leader and a relationship builder who, throughout her many years of service, has guided PBO’s staff, volunteers and board members with a rare blend of compassion and strategic leadership,” says Board Chair, Sarah Armstrong. “She is loved and trusted by staff. She has an impressive track record of bringing people and groups together and inspiring them to push the envelope in ways that vastly improve the delivery of legal services. She has always put the public first and stayed laser focused on how to improve the lives of our community’s most vulnerable people.”

When asked to comment on her legacy, Burns noted, “My greatest wish is for the legal profession to do even more for those without access to justice. There is such great opportunity to build on the efforts of PBO and the many other organizations who do similar work, to make a commitment to foster a stronger and more proactive pro bono culture amongst all lawyers across the province.”

PBO is excited to build upon the foundation she has laid. “We will continue to pursue our mission with the same fervor and dedication to excellence and innovation that Lynn has instilled,” says Armstrong. The Board is launching a search for PBO’s next Executive Director this month.

About PBO

Founded in 2001, Pro Bono Ontario is a registered charity that provides free legal services to more than 30,000 clients each year, assisting vulnerable Ontarians with the civil, non-family legal problems that account for approximately 60 percent of unmet legal needs in the province. PBO is funded, in-part, by the Law Foundation of Ontario. www.probonoontario.org

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