



Annual Report

2024-25



About

LAW(YER) STRONG

Law(yer) Strong Inc. is a non-profit corporation, providing confidential and inclusive peer support and education to legal professionals throughout Manitoba about how to recognize and reduce negative impacts on mental health and well-being in the demanding profession of law.

We value diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal profession, and believe that no one should have to struggle alone.

**Compassionate.
Inclusive.
Connected.**



**Law(yer)
Strong**



VISION

An inclusive and supportive community that recognizes wellness and competence as cornerstones of achieving the highest standard of legal services in Manitoba

MISSION

Enhance the immediate and long-term wellbeing of Manitoba's diverse legal community, through inclusive peer support, education, community building and liaison with professional therapeutic services

Together we can make a difference

Message

FROM THE BOARD

Dear Members of the Manitoba Legal Community,

As co-chairs of Law(yer) Strong, we are delighted to present our annual report, highlighting the remarkable progress and achievements of our organization over the past year. Our mission to promote wellness within the Manitoba legal community has been met with enthusiasm and dedication, and we are proud to share the milestones we have reached together.

This year, Law(yer) Strong has successfully launched several wellness initiatives aimed at supporting the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of legal professionals. We have seen a significant increase in community engagement, with more members actively participating in our events and programs.

Law(yer) Strong has been at the forefront of advocating for wellness in the legal profession. Through our awareness campaigns, we have raised important conversations about the challenges faced by legal professionals and the importance of prioritizing well-being. As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the support and dedication of our members. The journey towards a healthier and more balanced legal community is ongoing, and we are excited to continue our work in the coming year. We encourage all members to stay engaged, participate in our programs, and prioritize their wellness.

It takes a village to raise consciousness, and we have greatly appreciated Tamara's boundless and infectious enthusiasm for taking the organization's vision and turning it into reality. Law(yer) Strong's Board of Directors have also played a pivotal role in creating and shaping an organization that can pivot as we identify new areas of need. We would also like to thank Paula Hamilton for the assistance she has provided us in her too short time with us.

We also wish to thank all the funders who make this program possible.

Thank all of you for being a part of Law(yer) Strong.
Together, we are making a difference.

Warm regards,

Maria Mitousis
Greg Evans, K. C.
Co-Chairs, Law(yer) Strong



Message

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

This is the best time to be a lawyer. In these times of uncertainty, division, and challenges to the independence of the legal profession, democratic society needs us more than ever. We need to be united, supporting each other in order to meet the demands of our profession and society. Law(yer) Strong, through education and peer support, creates the connections between community members, mental health education and resources, and promotes the idea that respect, support, and compassion in our profession can strengthen us, and prevent mental health challenges from becoming debilitating. Destigmatizing mental illness and embracing our rich, diverse, and complex humanity, helps us to not only take care of ourselves, but also to be better at taking care of our clients.

Our volunteers are everything. Whether they are involved by volunteering on the board or committees; by being a support to a peer; being a panelist on our zoom webinars and drop-in sessions; providing mentorship for members of our profession; or by coming out to the law school; our volunteers are the heart of this program and are driving change towards a profession where there are lower rates of mental health concerns, less incidents of burnout, and where its members thrive.

The future looks bright. Through our law school program, volunteers engage with our future lawyers throughout the year on topics relating to well-being in law, from work-life balance, imposter syndrome, burnout, addiction and recovery, working and living with a “plus” challenge such as an illness, a disability or neurodiversity; to sharing their best time/work management hacks. We are having conversations that will build resilience and awareness, shaping the future of our profession as it evolves towards one that is conducive to both a happy, healthy life, and excellent legal practice. We look forward to continuing to grow in the years to come.

Growing stronger together: Join the movement towards an inclusive, compassionate and thriving legal community.

TAMARA McCaffrey
Program Director



The Year

IN BRIEF

WE HELPED

SUPPORT PROVIDED & CONNECTIONS MADE

- 23 lawyers and students received peer support through our program
- 21 lawyers attended workshops on Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Awareness
- Monday walks and Friday runs
- Comedy Night - Laughter is Good Medicine

WE LEARNED

EXPANSION OF OUR AWARENESS & EXPERTISE

- Through conferences and mental health roundtable discussions with lawyers across Canada
- Courses taken on compassion fatigue, understanding addictions; preventing suicide in the workplace
- DEI Training to guide, manage and promote diversity and inclusion in Lawyer Strong and its programs

WE EDUCATED

PROVIDING WELL-BEING EDUCATION

- 13 Lawyer education sessions:
 - law firms, Legal Aid MB, Legal Help Centre, Westman Bar, The Pas legal community, Criminal Defence Lawyers Assn;
- Student sessions:
 - Articling students at Legal Aid MB
 - 1L orientation and 2L seminar
 - Panel discussions
- Online Webinars for lawyers
- Wellness Challenge
 - Joint project with LSM & MBA to encourage lawyers to focus on well-being and connection

WE GREW

OUR MOVEMENT IS GROWING

- **22** new lawyers/law students trained as peer supports bringing the total volunteers trained to **85**
- Collaborations with the MBA, the Law Society of Manitoba; Lawyer Assistance Programs in Western Canada, and lawyers from across the country to develop and promote lawyer wellness.

THE REASON

WE DO IT

“The lawyer’s support program was a lifeline during one of the darkest times in my life—it held my hand when I felt most alone. Their compassion, guidance, and unwavering support not only helped me navigate legal challenges but also gave me the space and strength to begin healing.”

“I started practice as a solo practitioner. I had little experience and not many contacts in the field to lean on. I was facing my first family trial and I had little knowledge of what to do. I reached out to Law(yer) Strong. The director was so supportive, and introduced me to a volunteer senior lawyer who was wonderful to deal with. Between the two of them I was given a crash course of what to do and expect and I was able, with diligent work, to pull off my first trial successfully. The program and the people are amazing, I think they really fill an important gap in the system and provide much needed supports. I am so glad that we have this program and incredible volunteers and mentors, and appreciate the great work they do for our profession.”

“It is rewarding to volunteer with the law school program at Law(yer) Strong. Having open conversations with students about how they’re approaching wellness and managing the demands of law school, and being a sounding board for those who may be struggling is both meaningful and energizing. The students are thoughtful, and reflective, and I always enjoy the opportunity to hear their perspective and current challenges. I am able to offer insight and provide suggestions based on my own experiences — including what worked well for me and what I might approach differently with hindsight. Prioritizing mental health and wellness early in a legal career will help lay the foundation for a more sustainable and fulfilling path in the legal profession.”

“As a lawyer, I find on a file even when I am cooperating with opposing counsel, we both always have our eyes on the potential for confrontation. To spend some time with another lawyer who, like us all, occasionally needs an ear and a shoulder, free of any need to show competence or knowledge or competitive edge, reminds me that it is just as important to advocate for one another as it is to advocate for our clients.”

LOOKING AHEAD

TO 2025/26

STRATEGIC AND VISION PLANNING

We will be meeting with the Benchers and Law Society of Manitoba to collaborate on a long-term plan for coming years.

We will be holding our first community planning retreat, where we will have voices representing our diverse profession come together to create a collective vision to guide the program's trajectory for the coming years.

CONTINUE MAKING CHANGE

Priorities identified by the community will create and support paths to mentorship, and bring forth opportunities for lawyers to come together to talk about the challenges of practicing law in the current climate.



GET INVOLVED

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN ANY OF THESE WAYS...

- Peer Supporter
- Mentorship
- Law School Program
- Panel Speaker
- Healthy Group Activities
- Fundraising
- Share ideas on how we can improve our legal community!!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT: EMAIL SUPPORT@LAWYERSTRONG-MB.CA



THANK YOU

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Without the support of our Board of Directors, volunteers and donors, we could not make the impact we do in the community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gregory Evans, K.C. - Co-Chair
Cindy Kindret
Martin Minuk

Maria Mitousis - Co-Chair
Jerritt Lipski
Gerri Wiebe

DONORS

Amica Law
Evans Pollock Family Law
Law Society of Manitoba
Mercier & Associates

Mitousis Lemieux-Howard Law
Rumor's Comedy Club
Taylor McCaffrey LLP
Thompson Dorfman Sweatman LLP

We appreciate the financial contributions from our legal community, which are used to enhance our program reach to be able to connect with our members in all regions of the province. We are seeking volunteers for our fundraising committee. Contact us to help us build Law(yer) Strong to a program that will serve our legal community for now and the future.





For a list of all our upcoming activities
and events see our website at
<https://lawyerstrong-mb.ca>



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