EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

By: Chuck Thompson, IMLA Executive Director and General Counsel



I want to thank all of you who were able to join us for IMLA's 82nd Annual Conference at Niagara Falls.

As the dust (or in this case, the mist) settles, we are hearing from attendees that this event really hit the mark, from many angles: our speakers were well-prepared and energized, we properly honored those among us who demonstrated excellence and commitment in serving their communities, and our social events buzzed with members making new friendships and renewing longstanding ones.

While the Ontario host committee cannot claim credit for our spectacular backdrop—the Falls truly are, hands-down, one of the great wonders of the world—our Canadian hosts selected and helped to fund venues that made the very most of what that remarkable region has to offer. Where else could one discuss the latest in qualified immunity (or baseball) while enjoying a cocktail and sumptuous dinner fare before donning yellow rain gear and descending down a damp catacomb to witness the incredible power of Niagara, up close?

We also thank our sponsors, who greatly contributed to the success of the Conference, both financially and by bringing to our attention new products and services that will assist the practice of municipal law. And if there were any doubts that our newly-configured IMLA team could thrive under the transition process put in place by the now-retired Veronica Kleffner, they were surely put to rest—with an exclamation mark!

But the most important ingredient in this mixture was you—some 700 members who traveled from all over Canada, the lower 48 states, Alaska and Hawaii. You faithfully attended sessions, asked great questions, met to share extra insights at the WONK breakfast, and joined in the State League, Small Cities and International Committee discussions. You made our job easier by relying on the IMLA "app" and exuding an overwhelmingly positive attitude (even if there was an occasional bus ride to contend with).

We are grateful that you could be there to see one great IMLA President, Mary Ellen Bench, hand over her responsibilities to another great—Art Pertile, City Attorney of Stafford, Texas and IMLA Board member—as he takes on our presidency for 2018. We'll look forward to hearing from Art in this spot in future issues of *ML*.

As with many municipal lawyers, no sooner does one all-consuming task end than the next one begins. We are already hard at work putting together the programming for next spring's Mid-Year Seminar in Washington DC and our 2018 Annual Conference in Houston, home to the newest World Series champs. Given our new IMLA President's Lone Star provenance, we expect to offer our members nothing less than the Biggest and Best of the Texas experience next October—so start planning now to join us!

In the meantime, we aspire to provide members with even better versions of our ongoing services. Our goal is to provide more daily case updates to our various work groups, targeting decisions important to each. Members will only need to join those groups to receive notice of these cases. With some we hope to offer practice suggestions and relay concerns about developing trends. We are expanding our already-extensive menu of webinars, delivered by domain experts at a very modest price point. We are augmenting *Municipal Lawyer* with a fully searchable, fully digitized version. We will continue our Sanctuary Cities working group, and are organizing an Opioid Litigation work group as states and localities across the country increasingly seek legal recourse. And we are putting IMLA's credibility and influence behind ever more amicus briefs.

Tomorrow's local governments will clearly be influenced by technological advancements. We intend to highlight the effect these changes will have on local government law and lawyers. Whether the issue is social media and its intersection with the First Amendment, the regulation of drones, the impact of autonomous vehicles, or many other leading-edge issues, our members require up to date information and our goal is to provide it.

Accomplishing all of this with limited resources will be a challenge—but one we are confident we can deliver for you. As always, we thank you for your support and solicit your comments as to how IMLA can be an even better resource. ML

