Essential Websites for Regulators

One of the greatest resources for information for regulators is the internet. A number of websites are so useful that they should be bookmarked by everyone involved in the regulation of a profession or an industry. While the websites discussed in this article are directed towards Ontario regulators, many will be useful for regulators outside of Ontario or will point to corresponding websites within their own jurisdiction.

Law on the Internet

The website that we use the most sets out Ontario’s statutes and regulations: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca. To find the current version of almost any Ontario statute or regulation is a simple matter of clicking on the alphabetical index. You can view the text of the legislation as a webpage or download it as a Word document. The legislation is consolidated so that it has all of the amendments incorporated into the text. However, if you need to know what a specific amendment was, you can (at least for recent years) see the statute or regulation as enacted.

The website has a useful search feature that enables you to explore either statutes, or regulations, or both, for key words. In addition to helping you find a particular statute when you cannot remember its name, this feature permits you to search every statute and/or regulation on a particular topic. For example, where a profession or industry uses a unique and protected name (e.g., veterinarian, land surveyor), it is a simple matter to see every provision that refers expressly to it. You may be surprised what such a search turns up.

Regulators need to keep up with Bills that may affect them. In Ontario, these are found at the legislative assembly website at: http://www.ontla.on.ca. One can also find out when public hearings will be held on pending legislation and can search Hansard for the transcript of any legislative or committee debate on the Bills.

The equivalent sites for Canadian statutes (e.g., the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Criminal Code) and regulations are: http://lois.justice.gc.ca/en/ and http://www.parl.gc.ca/ and, for Canadian
In the last few years, most Canadian courts have been putting many of their decisions online. The best website for accessing Canadian caselaw is http://www.canlii.org/. In addition to providing access to statutes and regulations for all available Canadian jurisdictions, this site links the Canadian court websites. One can search all of these databases by keyword. Cases are also listed chronologically so one can check for recent decisions that might be relevant. While these search functions and added features are not as sensitive as the leading commercial services (e.g., Quicklaw), they provide a valuable tool for those not willing or able to purchase the commercial service.

Privacy Sites

Those wishing to see what is new in the area of privacy law generally need to go no further than the website for the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada at http://www.privcom.gc.ca and the Ontario Information and Privacy Commission at http://www.ipc.on.ca. Both sites contain toolkits and resources for organizations to make themselves compliant with contemporary privacy expectations. They also contain website links to other governmental privacy organizations, statutory law, case law and other non-profit privacy organizations.

Only where one tries to find private privacy advisory and consulting services will one have difficulties. The other weakness of these sites is that they tend to focus on entities dealing directly with the public. The issue of how organizations collect personal information on behalf of third parties (lawyers, accountants, non-government regulators) is not adequately addressed as of yet.

The federal Information and Privacy Commissioner’s rulings will be particularly of interest for those coping with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, since he oversees the enforcement of that legislation.

Umbrella Organizations

There are some umbrella organizations for regulators of professions and industries that have valuable websites.

The largest such organization, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (“CLEAR”), has a website with resources and links for regulators. While an international organization with a strong American emphasis, it has tried to be Canada-friendly and recently had its annual conference in Toronto. At http://www.clearhq.org you can find a number of articles and publications as well as a detailed list of websites of other regulators and associations.

The Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges of Ontario website is found at: http://www.regulatedhealthprofessions.on.ca. While the website has more limited content than CLEAR, it does provide a handy list of member Colleges who have some excellent websites.

SOAR (“Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators”) caters more to government regulatory tribunals than self-regulating bodies. However, its website at http://www.soar.on.ca contains some
suggested or sample documents that may be useful for all regulators including a Code of Conduct for Adjudicators and Rules of Procedure. It also contains resources such as a handbook for adjudicators and policy statements on performance management and the making of government appointments.

**Bookmarking These Sites**

One can review and bookmark the websites that are most likely to be used on an individual basis. An alternative is to bookmark our own links page at [http://www.sml-law.com/links.asp](http://www.sml-law.com/links.asp) which in addition to all of the websites mentioned above also has a fairly comprehensive listing of Ontario regulators and associations.

If you have suggestions to add to our links page, please forward them to rsteinecke@sml-law.com.