

Mental health, AI on radar of Manitoba law society president

By **Terry Davidson**

Law360 Canada (October 1, 2026, 3:56 PM EDT) -- Mental health, job stress and keeping up with AI remain “front of mind” for the new president of Manitoba’s law society.

And when Ken Mandzuik isn’t busy with his presidential duties or his practice, he can usually be found at home, minding his pets: two geckos and a salamander.

Mandzuik, 53, officially became the Law Society of Manitoba’s (LSM) 106th president in May, following a year as vice-president. During an interview with Law360 Canada, he spoke of issues facing the law society.



Ken Mandzuik, Law Society of Manitoba

As did the last two LSM presidents, Mandzuik will be placing members’ mental wellness high on his list of priorities. And while the LSM has gained some ground in this area, mental health is “still a concern” for the regulator.

“This is important because ... the public is protected by healthy lawyers,” said Mandzuik. “Happier lawyers are better at their jobs; they’re keeping up; they’re doing good things — first and foremost our obligation is to protect the public. It’s still a work in progress. It’s not something that’s ever going to be finished or finalized or done. It’s part of our strategic plan going forward. It’s going to be on our radar from now on, just making sure wellness of lawyers is front of mind.”

For some time, the LSM has invited members dealing with mental health challenges to come forward for assistance. However, there is still work to do — both because of the stigma attached to mental illness and the belief by some that the law society is primarily there to punish lawyers.

But Mandzuik says this seems to be changing, at least somewhat — particularly when it comes to younger members.

“The younger crew, you know, kids these days ... are able to talk more freely about their mental health and their well-being,” he said. “They’re less likely to sacrifice happiness and health for their work lives. It doesn’t mean that everyone does, but they’re more likely to seek out help.”

In terms of support, Mandzuik noted the Law(yer) Strong program, a non-profit, peer-support organization backed by both the LSM and the Manitoba Bar Association — its mandate is to connect members with therapy, education and services. He also pointed to the LSM’s health recovery diversion program, where lawyers in trouble due to missteps found to be caused by mental illness or addiction can opt for treatment instead of going through the traditional discipline process.

Mandzuik was asked why he thinks lawyers, in particular, are susceptible to mental illness. Much of it, he said, stems from the pressures of the profession itself — particularly when it comes to the adversarial nature of litigation.

“We’re kind of in a weird profession because there’s someone being paid to undo what we do. So, I’m being paid lots of money to put forward one argument; there is someone on the other side being paid a lot of money to put forward the exact opposite argument — and how hard a way is it to make a living like that? Pipe fitters don’t have to worry about someone coming up behind them [and] undoing or unfitting all the pipes that they’re fitting. So, that’s part of it. ... It’s a stressful living.”

He also said AI can play a role in causing mental stress — but not in a way one would immediately suspect.

Mandzuik spoke of instances where a client would show up to a meeting with their lawyer and bring an AI-generated legal argument they want the lawyer to use in their case. The lawyer then may have to take the time to explain why the AI argument may not work.

“AI is certainly on the list because we’ve got clients who come in sometimes with scripts on how to talk to lawyers: ‘I’ve got an appeal on Monday, and I just got a couple dozen sheets [from the client] on how I can frame my appeal.’ You understand people want to be able to communicate with their lawyers, make sure that this case — [which] means everything to them — has no stone unturned. And it takes an incredible amount of time to explain why some things don’t apply, and you can spend two hours telling someone why they can’t do X or why you haven’t even considered X — those two hours you wouldn’t have had to spend otherwise.”

Mandzuik also cited stress caused by lawyers’ attempts to keep up with ever-evolving AI technology.

“The problem with AI, of course, [is] you think you’re caught up to date on September 1st, and [by] October 1st things have moved precipitously, so you’re never going to be caught up. What you think you know one day is gone the next, and that’s going back to issues outside of lawyers’ control and how that’s going to create issues for mental health.”

In 2024, the LSM released its guidebook for AI use in the legal profession. A law spokesperson confirmed this remains the regulator’s “current guidelines for the use of AI in the profession.”

But Mandzuik said the LSM is joining forces with the other western-province regulators to address the AI issue.

“That’s what the western societies are working on. ... They’re going to see what kind of guidelines they can put out collectively because ... even the big [law] societies don’t have the resources to vet every AI program.”

As for his time away from lawyering, Mandzuik pursues his love of music — British jangle pop, in particular.

“Yes, The Smiths, Morrissey are still my favourites, but I do try to keep current, so I’m religious with checking my Spotify and checking for new stuff by people I’ve never heard of — and old stuff because I don’t want to be one of those people where your musical tastes just stop when you [turn] 30.”

Working at a pet store while in university, Mandzuik developed a love of pets — particularly reptiles and the like. Currently, he has two geckos — Nebbiolo and Lynch — and a salamander named Sir Isaac. Soon, his family will be growing with the addition of a bearded dragon.

"I'm just currently building a habitat, and I'll pick that up in a couple weeks."

Currently, Mandzuik is a partner with Winnipeg's Tradition Law, practising civil and commercial litigation and estate litigation. He has appeared before administrative tribunals, mediators, arbitrators and all levels of court in Manitoba, as well as the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mandzuik was called to the bar in 1997. He has a BA in philosophy and a law degree from the University of Manitoba.

If you have any information, story ideas or news tips for Law 360 Canada, please contact Terry Davidson at t.davidson@lexisnexis.ca or 905-415-5899.