



THE CANADIAN
BAR ASSOCIATION
Alberta Branch

Law Society of Alberta
Canadian Bar Association - Alberta

LawSocietyofAlberta



Celebrating Excellence

Program

January 30, 2015
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Fairmont Hotel Macdonald
Edmonton, Alberta

Lunch

11:30 a.m.

Opening Remarks

12:30 p.m.

Wayne Barkauskas
Vice President, Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch

Distinguished Service Awards Presentations

12:40 p.m.

Presented by:
Kevin Feth, QC, President, Law Society Alberta
Steven Mandziuk, QC, President, Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch

Recipients



Bruce Churchill-Smith has dedicated much of his three-decade career to providing access to justice to all Albertans, especially its most vulnerable – children. His leadership, vision and experience have helped establish and advance pro bono law within his firm and across the province.

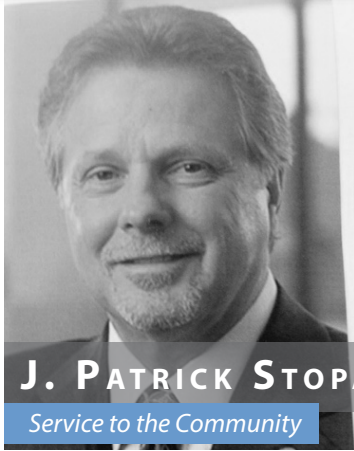
Bruce was called to the Alberta Bar on August 20, 1982 and received his Queen's Counsel designation in 2003.

Bruce is a founding member of Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA) and has contributed extensively to the creation, establishment and growth of PBLA. Gillian Marriott, QC, Executive Director of PBLA, writes "I believe that PBLA would not be the same organization it is today without Mr. Churchill-Smith's ongoing dedication and support. This allows PBLA to achieve its goals of developing and enhancing organized provincial pro bono legal service delivery and promoting and providing unique volunteer opportunities for hundreds of Alberta lawyers to give back to their communities."

At his firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG), Bruce is the chair of the National Pro Bono Committee. With Bruce at the helm, BLG enacted a formal pro bono policy to encourage all lawyers of the firm to engage in pro bono work and to incorporate it into their professional development. Through the firm's pro bono program, Bruce spearheaded an exclusive agreement, brokered by PBLA, for BLG to provide free legal advice to Calgary's Children's Legal & Educational Resource Centre (CLERC), as part of the Child Advocacy Project. Dale Hensley, QC, Executive Director of CLERC states that "under Bruce's leadership, BLG has assisted and supported us in a myriad of ways."

Bruce holds a number of active roles within the Alberta pro bono legal community including President of PBLA, Chair of BLG's National Pro Bono Committee and past member of the Law Society of Alberta's Pro Bono Task Force. Bruce also volunteers for and supports the Civil Claims Duty Counsel Pro Bono Project, which provides individuals of all ages with assistance in small claims related matters. He is also a past chair of the Volunteer Lawyers' Service, a PBLA program that provides not-for-profits with access to legal services for which they would otherwise be unable to pay.

Nominator, John Blair, QC, summed up Bruce's exemplary service best, "he has taken the best of his abilities and the experience gained through decades spent representing major clients in the court and mediation rooms, and leveraged this for the betterment of his local community."



As a lawyer, educator and volunteer, J. Patrick Stopa's lifetime contribution to the community was nothing short of remarkable. Pat was called to the Alberta Bar in 1974 and began articling at Caron & Partners LLP, where he remained for 40 years. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2003.

Despite a busy municipal law and family law practice, his strong support of access to justice for low-income Albertans was apparent in his numerous extra-curricular activities. Pat was a member of the Southern Alberta Appeals Committee of Legal Aid Alberta for almost 20 years, hearing appeals and helping make decisions on coverage for individuals. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of Legal Aid Alberta and served for two years as Chair of the Board.

"Mr. Stopa clearly understood and was able to articulate the unique challenges Legal Aid Alberta was experiencing, the funding pressures and the societal needs. This, of course, made him a powerful and well respected advocate in his dealings with government and other funders," expressed the Honourable Madam Justice Marina S. Paperny in her letter of support.

In addition to his work with Legal Aid, Pat was a volunteer Dispute Resolution Officer at the courthouse in Calgary since the program's inception in 2001, assisting parties to reach resolution and avoid litigation.

Pat had a passion for education. He designed and developed the diploma course for legal assistants at Mount Royal University and taught in the program for nine years. He also instructed the Alberta Bar Admission Course.

His volunteering ventures also led him outside of the practice of law. He was a founding member of the Alberta Bobsleigh Association and served as President for 10 years. During the 1988 Calgary Olympics, Pat was Chief of Access Control for the Bobsleigh Committee. He also served as both Secretary and Director of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton and became an international judge, as well as a well-respected ambassador for the sport. His community spirit extended beyond the bobsleigh track as he was a regular canvasser for both the Foothills Diabetes Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Alberta.

As Madam Justice Paperny wrote, "Mr. Stopa's untimely passing leaves a gap in our profession. He represented what all of us swear an oath to uphold: he was ethical, committed to access to justice and the rule of law, congenial and helpful to his colleagues and to the bench. He gave of himself every day."

Posthumous



“Do good work and the clients will follow”. This simple credo has guided Hersh Wolch throughout his 50 year legal career. Also called to the Saskatchewan and Manitoba Bars, Hersh became a member of the Alberta Bar on March 6, 1978 and was designated as Queen’s Counsel in 1982.

The Honourable Mr. Justice Peter Martin writes that Hersh “was, and is, the consummate lawyer, always mindful of his duty to his client, the court and the community.”

His dedication to good work is exemplified in the wrongful conviction case of David Milgaard. Hersh worked tirelessly to free Mr. Milgaard for many years without a reasonable prospect of collecting any fee. After 23 years of imprisonment, an innocent and wrongfully convicted Mr. Milgaard walked free – much to the credit of Hersh’s strong belief and dedicated service.

He has also acted as counsel to exonerate, free and obtain compensation for other internationally recognized wrongful conviction cases including Kyle Unger, Steven Truscott, Steven Kaminski and Herman Kaglik.

His cases have influenced the development and interpretation of the law. Hersh has been credited as instrumental in advocating for, and helping to develop many of the principles that now form part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our justice system in general.

Many in the legal profession have benefited from his willingness to share his wealth of knowledge and experience. Formally, he has regularly taught law at seminars and courses across North America, and spent 16 years as a faculty member of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, National Criminal Law Program. Informally, Hersh mentors a cadre of young lawyers and has inspired countless others who have had the opportunity to work both with him and opposite him.

Greg Rodin, QC, deems Hersh as a “shining example of everything that can follow by focusing on doing good work for one’s clients – possession of unparalleled legal skills in and out of the courtroom, successful practice involving significant, important precedent setting cases; being held in the highest regard by the bench, bar and public; local, national and international recognition as being among the very best of the best in his field.”

Hersh’s respected legal career serves as a reminder that success will inevitably follow when the first priority and focus is the work done for clients.



The Distinguished Service Awards celebrate excellence in the legal profession. Jointly awarded by the Law Society of Alberta and the Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch, these prestigious awards recognize the many outstanding contributions Alberta lawyers make to legal scholarship, pro bono legal service the community and to the profession.