

**IN THE MATTER OF PART 3 OF THE
LEGAL PROFESSION ACT, RSA 2000, c. L-8**

AND

**IN THE MATTER OF A HEARING REGARDING
THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTINA LAUGHLIN
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA**

ORDER OF THE HEARING COMMITTEE

UPON THE ISSUANCE OF CITATIONS by the Law Society of Alberta (LSA) to Christina Laughlin pursuant to section 56 of the *Legal Profession Act* (the Act);

AND WHEREAS:

- a) Christina Laughlin and the LSA have entered into a Statement of Admitted Facts and Admission of Guilt (the Statement, attached to this Order) in relation to Ms. Laughlin's conduct on May 25, 2020;
- b) Christina Laughlin admits in the Statement that the conduct set out in the Statement is deserving of sanction;
- c) On June 16, 2020, the Conduct Committee found the Statement acceptable, pursuant to subsection 60(2) of the Act;
- d) On August 13, 2020, the Chair of the Conduct Committee appointed a single Bencher as the Hearing Committee (Committee) for this matter, pursuant to subsection 60(3) of the Act;
- e) Pursuant to subsection 60(4) of the Act, it is deemed to be a finding of this Committee that Christina Laughlin's conduct is deserving of sanction;
- f) On October 22, 2020, the Committee convened a public hearing into the appropriate sanction related to the conduct of Christina Laughlin;
- g) The LSA and Christina Laughlin have provided a joint submission on sanction for the Committee's consideration, seeking a reprimand;
- h) The parties have also agreed that it is reasonable for Christina Laughlin to pay \$1,785.00 in costs in relation to this matter;

- i) The Committee has determined that the joint submission is reasonable, consistent with sanctions in similar cases, does not bring the administration of justice into disrepute and is therefore in the public interest;
- j) The Committee has accepted the joint submission on sanction, and accepted the submission with respect to the payment of costs;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The appropriate sanction with respect to Christina Laughlin's conduct is a reprimand, which was delivered orally by the Committee to Christina Laughlin at the hearing.
2. The text of the reprimand will be attached to this Order as a schedule prior to the Order being published.
3. Christina Laughlin must pay costs in the amount of \$1,785.00. The costs are payable in monthly installments of \$500.00 per month commencing November 22, 2020 and continuing until the costs are paid in full.
4. No Notice to the Profession or Notice to the Attorney General is to be made.
5. The exhibits and this order will be available for public inspection, including the provision of copies of exhibits for a reasonable copy fee, except that identifying information in relation to persons other than Christina Laughlin will be redacted and further redactions will be made to preserve client confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege (Rule 98(3)).

Dated at Calgary, Alberta, on October 22, 2020.

Deanna Steblyk, QC

IN THE MATTER OF THE *LEGAL PROFESSION ACT*
AND IN THE MATTER OF A HEARING REGARDING
THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTINA LAUGHLIN
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

STATEMENT OF ADMITTED FACTS AND ADMISSION OF GUILT

BACKGROUND

1. I, Christina Laughlin, was admitted to the Law Society of Alberta (the “LSA”) on December 6, 2007. My current status is “Active/Practicing”.

CITATION

2. I am facing one citation arising from a Law Society complaint, as follows:

CO20181670

1. It is alleged that Christina Laughlin practiced law while administratively suspended and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.

ADMITTED FACTS

3. I was administratively suspended on July 1, 2018 for failing to file my annual Law Firm Self-Report and Accountant’s Report (the “Reports”) with the LSA. The Reports were due on March 31, 2018.
4. I received several notices from the Trust Safety Department of the LSA prior to my suspension indicating that the Reports were overdue, including on June 8, 2018 and June 21, 2018, but did not read them at that time. My e-mail address on file with the LSA was my personal e-mail address that had become inundated with e-mails. On the date I received the final notice from the LSA, June 21, 2018, I was away from the office attending the funeral of a close family member and did not read the notice until August 2018.
5. I was away from the office from July 1 – 4, 2018 and did not practice law during this time.
6. I returned to the office on July 5, 2018 and continued to practice law until July 20, 2018, not realizing that I was administratively suspended. I specifically admit to doing the following during this period:
 - a. I signed 33 trust cheques between July 5 and 13, 2018;

- b. I acted as solicitor for the respondent at a Court of Appeal hearing on July 17, 2018;
 - c. I met with clients on various dates from July 5 – 20, 2018 to provide legal services.
- 7. I was away from the office on holidays from July 21 – August 8, 2018 and did not practice law during this time.
 - 8. My accountant attended my office while I was on holidays. Upon my return, I reviewed the Accountant’s Report with my accountant and sent my Self-Report to the Law Society via courier on August 13, 2018. My accountant couriered the Accountant’s Report to the Law Society on the same day. The following day, I was informed by the Law Society that I must upload my Self-Report through the Lawyer Portal. I did so on August 14, 2018, after which time my status was restored to Active/Practicing.
 - 9. I have since changed my e-mail address on file with the LSA to my work e-mail address that I monitor daily to ensure that I receive and review all important communications from the LSA in future.

ADMISSION OF FACTS AND CONDUCT DESERVING OF SANCTION

- 10. I admit as facts the statements contained in this Statement of Admitted Facts and Admission of Guilt for the purposes of these proceedings.
- 11. For the purposes of s. 60 of the *Legal Profession Act* (the “Act”), I admit that I practiced law while administratively suspended and that such conduct is “conduct deserving of sanction” as defined under s. 49 of the *Act*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 12. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to consult legal counsel.
- 13. I acknowledge that I have signed this Statement of Admitted Facts and Admission of Guilt freely and voluntarily.
- 14. I acknowledge that I understand the nature and consequences of this Admission.
- 15. I acknowledge that, although entitled to deference, a Hearing Committee is not bound to accept a joint submission on sanction.

This Statement of Admitted Facts and Admission of Conduct Deserving of Sanction is dated the 25 day of MAY, 2020.

“Witness”

Witness

“Christina Laughlin”

Christina Laughlin

Reprimand

Ms. Laughlin, I thank you for your cooperation in resolving this matter. I understand that it has been a difficult one for you, and probably is a source of some significant embarrassment.

Often in the Law Society's conduct process we do see serious misconduct that breaches our code of conduct and places the public at risk. I'm satisfied that this case was one of inadvertence rather than negative intent, and I'm pleased to see that you fully and actively engaged with our Practice Management Department in order to work towards solutions that hopefully will assist you in organizing your practice so that this type of occurrence does not happen again, and so that you feel in control and not overwhelmed by your circumstances. I certainly hope that you now feel better supported and more in control of your professional life.

That said, you have admitted to some significant breaches of the Law Society's rules. As a self-governing profession, we must all be diligent in ensuring we do everything we must to maintain the privilege of self-governance. That includes being vigilant with respect to administrative matters, such as filing required trust reports when they are due.

Although some such obligations may feel a bit like administrative nuances, they are all important to the protection of the public and the reputation of our profession. Maintaining our self-governing status also requires all of us to ensure that we are responsive to communications from the Law Society, so it's important to ensure that the Law Society has the correct contact information for you, and that you update it with the Law Society any time it changes. If you had done so in this case, I suspect that this entire matter could have been avoided.

While it appears that no one was harmed by your conduct in this instance, you may not be so fortunate if it happens again. The public and the Courts rely on lawyer's representation that she's authorized to practice law, and practicing while not authorized is a serious matter that could undermine public confidence.

You are hereby reprimanded. I expect that you will do your best to abide by all of the Law Society's requirements going forward and I expect that I will not see you in the conduct process again. And I would caution you, please do not disappoint yourself, your clients or your regulator again. With that, I wish you the best of luck in your practice and into the future.