

**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 NATALIE REEDER  
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA**

**Single Bench Hearing Committee**

Kene Ilochonwu, KC – Chair

**Appearances**

Shane Sackman – Counsel for the Law Society of Alberta (LSA)  
C. John Hooker – Counsel for Natalie Reeder

**Hearing Date**

April 10, 2025

**Hearing Location**

Virtual Hearing

**HEARING COMMITTEE REPORT - SANCTION**

**Overview**

1. The following citations were directed to hearing by the Conduct Committee Panel (CCP) on September 13, 2022:
  - 1) It is alleged that Natalie M. Reeder failed to identify a potential conflict situation and/or failed to discharge her obligations under section 7.2-12 of the *Code*, and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  - 2) It is alleged that Natalie M. Reeder breached a Court Order by continuing to provide legal services to a client, after she and her firm had been disqualified from acting, and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  - 3) It is alleged that Natalie M. Reeder submitted her own affidavit evidence to the Court, and made submissions on that evidence as legal counsel, and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
2. The LSA and Ms. Reeder entered into a Statement of Admitted of Admitted Facts and Admission of Guilt (Agreed Statement) in relation to Ms. Reeder's conduct. The Agreed

Statement sets out the relevant facts. Ms. Reeder admitted that she failed to identify a potential conflict situation, breached a Court Order by continuing to provide legal services to a client, after she and her firm had been disqualified from acting; and submitted her own affidavit evidence to the Court, and made submissions on that evidence as legal counsel; all of which is conduct deserving of sanction.

3. On January 14, 2025, the CCP found the Agreed Statement to be in an acceptable form. Accordingly, pursuant to section 60(4) of the *Legal Profession Act (Act)*, it is deemed to be a finding of this Hearing Committee (Committee) that Ms. Reeder's conduct is conduct deserving of sanction in relation to the above citations.
4. On April 10, 2025, the Committee convened a hearing into the appropriate sanction.
5. After reviewing all of the evidence and exhibits and hearing the submissions of LSA counsel and counsel for Ms. Reeder, for the reasons set out below, the Committee has determined that a reprimand and a fine of \$5,000.00 are the appropriate sanctions. In addition, costs of \$4,500.00 were also ordered, payable by April 10, 2026.

### **Preliminary Matters**

6. There were no objections to the constitution of the Committee or its jurisdiction, and a private hearing was not requested, so a public hearing into the appropriate sanction proceeded.

### **Background and Agreed Statement of Facts**

7. Ms. Reeder was admitted as a member of the LSA in August 2008. Her practice is primarily in the areas of estate planning, family law, corporate solicitor work and some civil litigation.
8. In 2011, Ms. Reeder acted for CH and AK (Ms. Reeder's brother) in a property title transfer transaction. Ms. Reeder did not advise CH to obtain an independent legal representation, did not ensure that CH was not proceeding under the impression that Ms. Reeder was protecting CH, and did not make clear to CH that she was only acting with AK's interest in mind.
9. After the couple divorced in 2019, Ms. Reeder continued to act for and advise AK in the divorce proceedings.
10. CH, via her lawyer, wrote to Ms. Reeder, objecting to Ms. Reeder's continued representation of AK as a conflict of interest, and asking Ms. Reeder to withdraw from the matter. Ms. Reeder disagreed.

11. CH brought an application to have Ms. Reeder and her firm disqualified from acting for AK (Disqualification Application). Ms. Reeder swore an affidavit in opposition to the Disqualification Application.
12. Honourable Justice W.P. Sullivan granted the Disqualification Application on June 26, 2020. However, Ms. Reeder continued to represent AK and provide him legal advice subsequent to June 26, 2020.
13. The LSA and Ms. Reeder entered into the Agreed Statement in relation to Ms. Reeder's conduct. The CCP found the Agreed Statement acceptable on January 14, 2025. Pursuant to section 60(4) of the *Act*, each admission of guilt in the Agreed Statement is deemed to be a finding by this Committee that Ms. Reeder's conduct is deserving of sanction under section 49 of the *Act*.

### **Submissions on Sanction**

14. As provided by section 60(3) of the *Act*, once the Agreed Statement was accepted by the Conduct Committee, the hearing into the appropriate sanction could be conducted by a single Benchers. As a result, I was appointed to conduct the sanction hearing.
15. Counsel for the LSA presented eight previous decisions that he indicated reflected the possible range of sanctions for conduct having some similarities to breach of conflict of interest and breach of trust conditions. Counsel noted that the cases did not exactly correspond with the case at hand, however acknowledged that the Committee is not bound by prior decisions in any event, but that they serve as a useful guide.
16. Counsel for the LSA referred the Committee to the following authorities:
  - 1) Breaches of conflict of interest:

*Law Society of Alberta v. Francoise Belzil*, 2009 LSA 27  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Wilson*, 2016 ABLS 51  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Wilson*, 2017 ABLS 30  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Broadhurst*, 2022 ABLS 18  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Strang*, 2018 ABLS 15  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Bontorin*, 2021 ABLS 13
  - 2) Breaches of trust condition:

*Law Society of Alberta v. Nguyen (Fox)*, 2013 ABLS 15  
*Law Society of Alberta v. Lacourciere*, 2017 ABLS 6
17. In all but one of the cases, the lawyers were given reprimands and fines between \$1,000.00 and \$11,488.98.

18. Counsel for Ms. Reeder agreed with the submissions and the costs recommended by the LSA counsel.

### **Decision on Sanction**

19. Counsel for the LSA and Ms. Reeder confirmed their understanding that the Committee is not bound by a joint submission on sanction. That said, a committee is required to give significant deference to a joint submission and should not depart from a joint submission on sanction unless it would bring the administration of justice into disrepute or is otherwise contrary to the public interest.
20. In *R. v. Anthony-Cook*, 2016 SCC 43, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that the proper test for assessing the acceptability of a joint submission is the “public interest test”. A judge should not depart from a joint submission unless the proposed sentence would bring the administration of justice into disrepute or is otherwise contrary to the public interest.
21. The approach taken by both Ms. Reeder and the LSA in dealing with this matter through the Agreed Statement avoided an unnecessary contested hearing, witness inconvenience, and process costs.
22. After reviewing all the evidence and exhibits and hearing the submissions of the LSA and Ms. Reeder, for the foregoing reasons, the Committee has determined that a sanction of a reprimand and fine of \$5,000.00 is appropriate as jointly recommended by the parties. The Committee finds the LSA's Estimated Statement of Costs reasonable, and orders Ms. Reeder to pay costs of \$4,500.00, payable by April 10, 2026.
23. The Committee delivered an oral reprimand, at the hearing, as follows:

Ms. Reeder, I acknowledge your co-operation with the Law Society leading up to today and resolving these complaints by admitting guilt and by proceeding with a single Benchers hearing. Your admissions have permitted these citations to be resolved on a more efficient basis, which is not just a benefit to you, but is a benefit to the public and to the Law Society. I conclude that in light of these circumstances, it is in the public interest then to accept the joint submission.

Ms. Reeder, you are an experienced lawyer, having practiced for about 17 years and you have a long and principled career ahead of you. Your career has been exemplary until these citations. I expect that facing these citations now, at this stage of your career, is an enormous disappointment. You have admitted guilt on three citations. While there were no serious consequences to the public

and there was no loss, there was a complaint and a significant investigation. You are receiving this reprimand.

In these matters, you put your professional reputation and integrity at risk. In making these comments today and in expressing this reprimand today, I urge you to constantly have at the forefront of your mind and your practice, the integrity required of all of us as members of this profession and the diligence that we all must demonstrate to maintain our reputation and the reputation of this profession.

In concluding, I wish you the best as you move forward from these difficult circumstances and thank you for your attendance today.

### **Concluding Matters**

24. There shall be no referral to the Attorney General.
25. There shall be no Notice to the Profession.
26. The exhibits, other hearing materials, and this report 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 Ms. Reeder will be redacted and further redactions will be made to preserve client confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege (Rule 98(3)).

Dated May 21, 2025.

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Kene Ilochonwu, KC