

Approved Benchers Public Minutes

Five Hundred Twenty Second Meeting of the Benchers of the Law
Society of Alberta (Law Society)

February 27, 2025

In person in Calgary, AB and by videoconference

ATTENDANCE

Benchers

- Deanna Steblyk, KC, Outgoing President
- Ryan Anderson, KC, President
- Stacy Petriuk, KC, President-Elect
- A. Danielle Bourgeois
- Glen Buick
- Arman Chak, KC
- Stephanie Dobson
- Adam Drew
- Kene Ilochonwu, KC
- Levonne Louie
- Jim Lutz, KC
- Scott Matheson
- Bud Melnyk, KC
- Kelsey Meyer
- Sharilyn Nagina, KC
- Afshan Naveed
- Mary Ellen Neilson
- Sandra Petersson, KC
- Erin Runnalls, KC
- Ron Sorokin, KC
- Nicole Stewart
- David Tupper
- Moira Váně, KC
- Grant Vogeli, KC



Louise Wasylenko, CPA, CMA

**Executive
Leadership
Team**

Elizabeth Osler, KC, CEO and Executive Director

Cori Ghitler, KC, Deputy Executive Director and Director, Policy and Education

Nadine Meade, Chief Financial Officer

Kendall Moholity, Director, Regulation and Professionalism

Andrew Norton, Chief Information Officer and Director, Business Operations

Staff

Barbra Bailey, Manager, Education

Nancy Bains, Tribunal Counsel & Privacy Officer

Catherine Bennett, Executive Assistant to the CEO & Executive Director

Reed Bjerkseth, Support Staff, Business Technology

Colleen Brown, Manager, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

Jennifer Freund, Policy & Governance Counsel

Sharon Heine, Senior Manager, Regulation

Calvin McCarron, Support Staff, Business Technology

Andrew McGrath, Support Staff, Business Technology

Noria Neuhart, Policy Counsel

Michael Oxman, Education Counsel

Len Polsky, Manager, Legal Technology and Mentorship

Christine Schreuder, Supervisor, Governance

Karly Walker, Coordinator, Governance

Rebecca Young, Education Counsel

Guests

Marija Bicanic, Interim Executive Director, Pro Bono Law Alberta

Loraine Champion, KC, Executive Director, Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society

Carsten Jensen, KC, Law Society of Alberta representative to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (In person)

Christopher Samuel, Canadian Bar Association Alberta

Secretary's Note: All Benchers and Executive Leadership Team attendees were in person unless otherwise stated. All guests attended via videoconference unless otherwise stated. The arrival or departure of Benchers during the meeting are recorded in the body of these minutes.

Call to Order and Introduction

The public meeting convened at 9:03 a.m. Mr. Anderson welcomed new Benchers Adam Drew and Afshan Naveed.

Mr. Matheson provided a Territorial Indigenous Land Acknowledgement statement.



1. Remarks from the Outgoing President

Ms. Steblyk provided outgoing remarks, highlighting the accomplishments and challenges faced during her tenure. She expressed gratitude to the Benchers and staff for their support.

2. Opening Remarks from the President

Mr. Anderson thanked all for attending and shared his thoughts on embracing challenges, working together as a team, and the importance of collaboration and communication among the Benchers and staff. He reminded the Benchers that if they have new initiatives they would like to advance to contact him, Ms. Petriuk or Ms. Osler to explore whether the initiative fits within the Strategic Plan and could be proposed to the Benchers for decision to prioritize. He invited Benchers to contact him any time.

Mr. Anderson congratulated Ms. Osler on her King Charles III Coronation Medal for services to the profession, to be awarded at a ceremony on March 7, 2025.

3. Strategic Plan Progress Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Ms. Osler introduced the new Strategic Plan Report format developed to provide a clear and deliberate overview of goal progress and invited Bencher feedback for future versions.

4. Board Relations Guideline Amendment and Review

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Ms. Petriuk presented the Board Relations Guideline for annual review and highlighted a proposed amendment for decision. There will be further discussion related to the Board Relations Guideline during the in-person Governance Training session with Glenn Tecker on February 28, 2025.

Motion: Petriuk/ Wasylenko

That the Benchers amend the Board Relations Guideline, paragraph c, in the Communication Norms section on page 5, to strike out “Media, Lawyer and Public Relations Policy in our Governance Plan” and insert “Communication Department’s Media Request Protocol” in its place.

Carried

5. 2025 Committees, Liaisons and Other Bodies

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Mr. Anderson acknowledged the interest from the profession and the Nominating Committee's thorough review process for committee appointments.

Motion: Dobson/Ilochonwu

That the Benchers appoint the 2025 Bencher committees, liaisons and representatives to other bodies as set out in the 2025 Committees, Liaisons and Other Bodies list; and

To continue the term of appointment for any person on a 2024 committee involved in any ongoing adjudicative matter until such time as a report or decision is rendered on the matter in which they are involved.

Carried**6. Committee Terms of Reference and Mandates**

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Motion 1: Melnyk/Petersson

That the Benchers adopt the “The Law Society of Alberta General Terms of Reference for Board Committees (Audit and Finance; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Executive; Lawyer Competence; Nominating; Policy and Regulatory Reform; and Professional Responsibility committees)” as presented.

Carried**Motion 2: Louie/Bourgeois**

That the Benchers adopt the “The Law Society of Alberta General Terms of Reference for Regulatory Committees (Complaint Dismissal Appeals, Assurance Fund Adjudications (Finance), Conduct, Credentials and Education, Practice Review; and Trust Safety committees)” as presented.

Carried**Motion 3: Meyer/Neilson**

That the Benchers adopt the “Law Society of Alberta Committee Mandates” as presented.

Carried**7. Committee Policy Priorities and Work Plans**

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Mr. Anderson reminded the Benchers that the materials reflect the 2024-2025 strategic priorities endorsed by the Benchers at the April 25, 2024 *in camera* Bencher meeting. Some priorities may need to shift to accommodate unanticipated work arising such as Transforming Us Project-related changes to the Rules of the Law Society (Rules) and limited budgetary and staff resources. Benchers will decide on priority changes as items arise.

Motion: Louie/Tupper

That the Benchers approve the Committee priorities and work plans as presented.

Carried

One abstained

8. Trust Safety Rules – Corrections and Clarifications

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Ms. Freund provided an overview of corrections and clarifications needed for the Trust Accounting and Client Identification and Verification Rules. She noted a typo in motion two, “and” after “insert” and before “client ledger” should be struck out and replaced with “or”.

The following four motions were made concurrently.

Motion 1: Petersson/Sorokin

That the Benchers amend subrule 119(h), the definition of “client”, to strike out the current definition and insert ““client” means one or more persons who receive legal services from a lawyer” in its place.

Motion 2:

That the Benchers amend subrule 119.39(2) to insert “and or** client ledger” after “maintained in a trust account” and before “is insufficient” and to strike out “trust account” after “to eliminate that” and before “shortage”.**

Motion 3:

That the Benchers amend subrule 119.58(3) to strike out “(1)(f)” after “clauses” and before “or (2)(e)” and insert “(1)(g)” in its place.

Motion 4:

That the Benchers amend Rule 119.59 to strike out “must” after “subrule (6)”; insert “must” at the start of clause (a); and insert “must” at the start of clause (b).

Carried

Subsequent Motion: Buick/Melnyk

That the Benchers amend subrule 119.58 (1) to strike out the comma between “separate” and “book”.

Carried

9. Sandbox Update

The presentation was included with the materials prior to the meeting.

Mr. Polsky gave an overview of Innovation Sandbox history and presented updates highlighting the variety of projects and participants involved.

10. Complaint Dismissal Appeals Working Group (Working Group) Update

Ms. Runnalls delivered a verbal update, supported by Ms. Bains, on the Working Group's progress in reviewing the *Legal Profession Act*, Rules, and Guidelines. The

Working Group is working on a recommendation to the Benchers of proposed updates to processes, Rules, and Guidelines for enhanced efficiency in adjudication processes.

11. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

12. Lawyer Competence Committee Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

13. Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

14. Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC) Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Mr. Jensen highlighted the FLSC's strategic planning process, governance review, and ongoing work related to the Model Code of Conduct and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 27. In response to a question about a provision for artificial intelligence (AI) in the Model Code, Mr. Jensen stated that the Model Code sufficiently covers AI issues and the FLSC is monitoring for potential future amendments.

15. Audit and Finance Committee Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

16. Tribunal Office Update

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting.

Ms. Bains expressed appreciation for the Benchers' adjudication work in 2024.

17. CONSENT AGENDA

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting. No requests were made to remove any items from the consent agenda and the following four motions were approved concurrently.

Motion: Louie/Matheson

That the Benchers approve the November 28, 2024, Public Bencher Meeting Minutes.

Motion 2:

That the Benchers approve the date and time of the 2025 virtual Annual General Meeting of the Law Society of Alberta to be November 27, 2025 at 11 a.m., or such other date and time and place (or means) as the CEO and Executive Director of the Law Society may determine in their discretion.

Motion 3:

That the Benchers approve the re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as auditors for the Law Society of Alberta for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025.

Motion 4:

That the Benchers amend the Rules of the Law Society of Alberta, clause 149.8(3)(c), by striking out “149.7(4)” after “subrule” and inserting “149.9(4)” in its place.

Carried

17. EXTERNAL AGENCY REPORTS

The following external agency reports were circulated with the materials prior to the meeting:

18.1 Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society (Assist) Report

Ms. Champion provided an update on usage of Assist's professional counseling services, noting a slight decrease in usage and ongoing monitoring.

18.2 Canadian Bar Association Report

Mr. Samuel highlighted upcoming events, including the Annual General Meeting and Board nominations. He congratulated the Distinguished Service Award winners.

18.3 Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education Report

18.4 Legal Education of Society of Alberta Report

18.5 Pro Bono Law Alberta Report (PBLA)

Ms. Bicanic provided an update on the PBLA Executive Director search and the submission for funding to the Alberta Law Foundation.

Other Business

There was no other business, and the public meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.