

**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 GRACE AKPAN  
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA**

**Hearing Committee**

Sharilyn Nagina, KC – Chair and Bencher  
Cal Johnson, KC – Former Bencher  
Tammy Pidner – Public Adjudicator

**Appearances**

Will Cascadden, KC – Counsel for the Law Society of Alberta (LSA)  
Grace Akpan – Self-represented

**Hearing Dates**

September 16-17, 2025

**Hearing Location**

Virtual Hearing

**HEARING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Overview**

1. Grace Akpan is a lawyer who practices in Calgary, Alberta. She was admitted to the Alberta bar in 2019. Prior to this matter, Ms. Akpan had no disciplinary record with the LSA.
2. On May 17, 2022, Ms. Akpan notarized a document entitled, “Notice of Interest, in-trust” and the attached exhibits for her client, AM. Ms. Akpan also provided AM with a “Notary Public Affidavit of Identity Certificate” which she also notarized. Paragraph 5 of the Certificate states:

The certificate verifies only the identity of the person who signed the document(s) to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document(s).
3. AM subsequently filed a package of documents with the Court of King’s Bench. The package included the notarized Notice of Interest, in-trust and the notarized Notary Public Affidavit of Identity Certificate.

4. The documents notarized by Ms. Akpan have been the subject of proceedings in the Court of King's Bench and Court of Appeal, and underlie the citation at issue in this hearing.
5. The following citation was directed to a hearing by a Conduct Committee Panel on May 13, 2025:

It is alleged that Grace Akpan brought the administration of justice into disrepute by notarizing improper documents contrary to express Law Society of Alberta direction, and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.

6. On September 16, 2025, the Hearing Committee (Committee) convened a hearing into the conduct of Ms. Akpan, based on the above citation.
7. After reviewing all the evidence and exhibits, and hearing the testimony and arguments of the LSA and Ms. Akpan, for the reasons set out below, the Committee finds Ms. Akpan guilty of conduct deserving of sanction on the citation pursuant to section 71 of the *Legal Profession Act (Act)*.

### **Preliminary Matters**

8. There were no objections to the constitution of the Committee or to its jurisdiction, and a private hearing was not requested, so a public hearing into Ms. Akpan's conduct proceeded.
9. Prior to the hearing, Ms. Akpan served the LSA with two Notices to Admit.
10. By letter, the LSA denied the entirety of the requested admissions in Ms. Akpan's first Notice to Admit.
11. At the start of the hearing, Ms. Akpan brought an application for the Committee to accept and consider the second Notice to Admit as evidence. The Committee heard submissions from both parties.
12. The LSA responded to the second Notice to Admit by letter. Rather than responding to each requested admission, the LSA advised Ms. Akpan that the LSA had spent a significant amount of time addressing the first Notice to Admit and was not prepared to respond again to the second Notice to Admit, because it appeared to be a duplication of the first Notice to Admit.
13. In argument, Ms. Akpan argued that pursuant to Rule 90.4(4) of the Rules of the LSA (Rules), the LSA should be deemed to admit the facts included in the second Notice to Admit based on the LSA's failure to provide a substantive response. Ms. Akpan also advised that paragraphs 1 and 8 of the second Notice to Admit are disclosure requests.

14. In response, the LSA argued that while Ms. Akpan was permitted to serve a second notice to admit, the second Notice to Admit should not be considered because it is not a proper notice to admit. Specifically, the second Notice to Admit went beyond requested admissions and included disclosure requests, speculation, legal arguments, and irrelevant matters. The LSA also submitted that if the second Notice to Admit was accepted, the LSA would address the second Notice to Admit in closing argument.
15. After hearing submissions from the parties, and considering the Rules, including Rule 90.4, the Committee held:
  - 1) Paragraphs 1 and 8 of the second Notice to Admit are disclosure requests and are not properly part of a notice to admit; and
  - 2) The Committee will accept the balance of the second Notice to Admit with the exception of paragraphs 1 and 8.
16. Additionally, the Committee considered and dismissed Ms. Akpan's disclosure requests in paragraphs 1 and 8 of the second Notice to Admit.
17. The Committee also notes that Rule 90.4(9) states: "Notwithstanding an admission made under this Rule, the Hearing Committee shall determine whether the admitted facts or authenticated documents support a finding of conduct deserving of sanction."

#### **Citation**

18. The Committee considered all the evidence properly before it in coming to this decision. Accordingly, references in this decision to specific portions of the evidence should not be taken as an indication that the Committee did not consider all the evidence.
19. The LSA called two witnesses: CD, an Authentication Officer with Alberta Justice and AS, the Senior Advisor of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement with the LSA. Ms. Akpan cross-examined AS.
20. Ms. Akpan gave evidence on her behalf and was cross-examined by LSA counsel.

#### **Undisputed Evidence**

21. The majority of the relevant evidence was undisputed, key portions of which are outlined below.

#### *LSA Communications Regarding OPCA Documents*

22. The LSA circulated two e-Bulletins to members of the legal profession about organized pseudo-legal commercial argument (OPCA) litigants:

- 1) May 13, 2021 – LSA e-Bulletin entitled, “New Resources Available: OPCA Litigants – The Phenomenon of Freemen on the Land”; and
- 2) June 16, 2022 – LSA e-Bulletin entitled, “OPCA Litigants: Reminder to the Profession”.

23. Ms. Akpan received both e-Bulletins.

24. The May 13, 2021 e-Bulletin states:

The Law Society continues to hear concerns regarding “Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument” litigants (OPCA litigants), and specifically Freemen on the Land. Consequently, we want to remind lawyers of their obligations when dealing with OPCA litigants since lawyers and students are often consulted to notarize and commission documents.

In the leading case regarding such individuals, *Meads v. Meads*, 2012 ABQB 571 (CanLII), Associate Chief Justice Rooke provides an excellent summary of the characteristics of OPCA litigants. Other identifying names for them are “Freemen on the Land”, “Sovereign Citizens” or “de-taxers”. The decision is worth reading to assist lawyers in identifying these individuals....

As seen in *Meads*, OPCA Litigants often present documents that have no legal effect, or which are otherwise legal fictions, for notarization. The Law Society has cautioned lawyers previously not to engage in notarizing such documents. All lawyers are officers of the court and are obliged not to participate in the preparation of a document that resembles a court document, or any other document intended to deceive the recipient.<sup>1</sup>

25. The May 13, 2021 e-Bulletin also contained links to additional resources and information regarding the decision in *Meads v. Meads*<sup>2</sup> and a lawyer’s obligations regarding OPCA documents.

26. The June 16, 2022 e-Bulletin was circulated after Ms. Akpan signed the Notarized Documents. It contains similar information and updated resources regarding a lawyer’s obligation when presented with documents that may be OPCA documents.

#### *Notarized Documents*

27. The undisputed evidence about the documents notarized by Ms. Akpan for AM includes:

- 1) On or about May of 2022, Ms. Akpan’s client, AM, brought a package of documents to Ms. Akpan and requested that Ms. Akpan notarize them.

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<sup>1</sup> May 13, 2021 LSA e-Bulletin, Ex. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Meads v. Meads*, 2012 ABQB 571.

- 2) Within the package of documents, there was a document entitled, "Notice of Interest, in trust" with attachments. Ms. Akpan notarized this document.
- 3) Ms. Akpan drafted a document entitled, "Notary Public Affidavit of Identity Certificate." Ms. Akpan notarized this document and it was included in AM's package of documents.
- 4) At all relevant times, Ms. Akpan knew that AM intended to file the package of documents with the Alberta Court of Justice with respect to a criminal matter.

The "Notice of Interest, in trust" and attachments and the "Notary Public Affidavit of Identity Certificate" are collectively referred to as the Notarized Documents.

28. The "Notice of Interest, in-trust" is in letter form. It is stated to be from AM to the Clerk of the (then) Provincial Court of Alberta, with a copy to the then Chief Justice of that Court, and a blind copy to the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench. It purports to appoint the Deputy Clerk of the Court as AM's Fiduciary and Trustee. It goes on to attempt to impose demands on the Trustee and threatens the Trustee with liability for securities fraud. The document also references removal of a "death issued warrant".
29. The Notary Public Affidavit of Identity Certificate (Certificate) was drafted and notarized by Ms. Akpan. This document outlines that Ms. Akpan met with AM and verified his identity prior to notarizing the documents. The last paragraph of this document states:

The certificate verifies only the identity of the person who signed the document(s) to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document(s).
30. Ms. Akpan did not represent AM in the court proceedings.
31. Ms. Akpan was not complicit in the actions of AM.
32. Ms. Akpan's notarization of the Notarized Documents underlie the citation.

### **Prior Court Decisions**

33. In 2012, the then Associate Chief Justice J.D. Rooke of the then Court of Queen's Bench released his decision in *Meads*.<sup>3</sup> The *Meads* case is a lengthy decision that provides guidance to lawyers and to the courts on recognizing OPCA litigants. In this decision, Rooke ACJ provides an introduction to OPCA litigation, describes common characteristics of OPCA litigants and groups, and outlines a lawyer's duties when dealing with or acting against an OPCA litigant.
34. In *Meads*, Rooke ACJ provides specific guidance to lawyers with respect to the notarization of OPCA materials as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

One duty is not to participate in or facilitate OPCA schemes. ...

This Court has, on previous instances, drawn to the attention of the Law Society of Alberta that this kind of action is inappropriate for an officer of the court. It assists implementation of vexatious litigation strategies. In my view, a lawyer has a positive duty not to engage in a step that would 'formalize' (though typically in a legally irrelevant manner) an OPCA document. ....<sup>4</sup>

35. Prior to this hearing, there have been a number of court proceedings that specifically addressed Ms. Akpan's involvement with the Notarized Documents. The LSA did not participate as a litigant or participant in the prior court proceedings.
36. For the purposes of this hearing, the Committee notes four aspects of the prior decisions.
37. First, the Court of Appeal found that the Notarized Documents are OPCA or "pseudo law" materials.<sup>5</sup> The Committee accepts the finding that the Notarized Documents are OPCA documents.
38. Second, the Court of Appeal found that in notarizing the Notarized Documents, Ms. Akpan did not intend to participate in any nefarious or improper scheme that AM may have attempted to perpetrate.<sup>6</sup> This finding was not challenged by the parties in this hearing. The Committee accepts the Court's finding in this regard.
39. Third, the Court of Appeal held:

In our view, the Law Society of Alberta is the appropriate body to assess notarization of "pseudo law" documents on a case-by-case basis. Given its mandate, it is best positioned to determine whether the member is in need of education or whether their conduct merits a possible sanction.<sup>7</sup>

This finding was not challenged by the parties in this hearing. The Committee accepts the Court's finding in this regard.

40. Fourth, the Court of Appeal also held:

Simply put, a lawyer's obligation is not restricted to verifying the identity of the affiant. They must refrain from notarizing any document that is false, incomplete, misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraphs 642-645.

<sup>5</sup> *Akpan (Re)* 2025 ABCA 47, paragraph 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 10.

## Ms. Akpan's Evidence

41. Ms. Akpan specifically advised the Committee that she is not a litigator.
42. Ms. Akpan testified that when she reviewed AM's identification cards and AM's package of documents, she did not find them to be unusual or irregular.
43. When Ms. Akpan reviewed AM's identification cards, she did not review the information on them because that was not what she was looking for. She was looking to confirm that the identification cards and the photo were those of the person she was meeting with. While Ms. Akpan did not read the portion of the identification cards that stated that AM's business activity was, "Benevolent Services" and that the owner was an Estate Trust, had she done so, she would not have found these sections to be irregular, and they would not have caused her any concern.<sup>9</sup>
44. Ms. Akpan also testified that she understood her role as the notary was simply to verify AM's identity, which she did.
45. Further, Ms. Akpan's evidence was that other than notarizing the Notarized Documents, she did not act for AM.
46. In Ms. Akpan's opening statement, she advised the Committee that:

So I reviewed those documents, and I believe [AM]'s story, but because I didn't want to associate myself with the facts because nothing stop [sic] him from complaining to the Court. I gave him a certificate to say I was only identifying him and not associating myself with his complaint to the Court because he was making complaint to the Court. When we talk about access to justice, he has the right to make complaint to the Court.<sup>10</sup>
47. It was also Ms. Akpan's evidence that another reason why she provided the Certificate was solely to identify AM, because she is not familiar with any matter that goes to Court.
48. With respect to the e-Bulletins circulated by the LSA, Ms. Akpan's evidence was that, as she is not a litigator, she likely would not have read the e-Bulletins because they related to litigation matters.
49. Ms. Akpan also gave evidence about her understanding and familiarity with the concept of OPCA documents. Specifically, Ms. Akpan advised that at the time she signed the Notarized Documents, she was not familiar with the concept of OPCA.
50. With respect to her understanding at the time of the hearing, Ms. Akpan's evidence was that she still may not be familiar with the concept of OPCA documents:

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<sup>9</sup> Hearing Transcripts, pages 111-114.

<sup>10</sup> Hearing Transcripts, page 49.

Like I said in my testimony yesterday, as at the time, I was not familiar. And, even today, I may not be familiar with this concept because it's not written in any book to say, okay, look at it. This is how it looks. This is what they say. Even document, in my understanding, is untrue, is false, is this, and that. I acknowledge what I'm going through. But if I see it -- a -- an OPCA document, I may unlikely recognize it because it's a difficult task. That's just what I'm saying. It's a difficult task. It's a concept that not everybody is aware of it.<sup>11</sup>

51. This is despite the fact that Ms. Akpan is aware of at least two LSA e-Bulletins highlighting the decision in *Meads* and has been involved in litigation in the Court of King's Bench and the Court of Appeal that focused on Ms. Akpan's professional obligations with respect to OPCA documents.

### **Submissions of the Parties**

52. The parties agreed that Ms. Akpan notarized the Notarized Documents.
53. The parties also agreed that in notarizing the Notarized Documents, Ms. Akpan was not complicit in any strategy or scheme that AM may have been attempting to pursue.
54. The parties disagreed on whether Ms. Akpan's notarizing of the Notarized Documents brought the administration of justice into disrepute contrary to express LSA direction, and whether such conduct is deserving of sanction.

### *Submissions of the LSA*

55. The LSA argued that the decision in *Meads* and the LSA e-Bulletins very clearly identify what constitutes an OPCA litigant and how to recognize OPCA documents.
56. The LSA argued that any reasonable lawyer or notary public who reviewed the package of documents presented to Ms. Akpan would recognize the documents as being highly irregular and on that basis refuse to notarize them.
57. The LSA argued that Ms. Akpan's failing was not acting in accordance with the directions of the courts and the LSA and notarizing the Notarized Documents.
58. Ms. Akpan's failure was the result of a gap in her education. This gap in education resulted from Ms. Akpan refusing to take that education. Ms. Akpan's intentional refusal to take that education is what results in a determination of conduct deserving of sanction.
59. By choosing not to read the e-bulletin, Ms. Akpan has acted contrary to express LSA direction.

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<sup>11</sup> Hearing Transcripts, pages 231-232.

60. Further, by notarizing the subject documents, Ms. Akpan failed to discharge her responsibility to tribunals, honourably and with integrity in breach of sections 2.1-1 and 2.1-2 of the LSA Code of Conduct (Code).
61. The LSA also argued that despite having gone through the Court and LSA processes, Ms. Akpan is still taking the position that AM's documents were appropriate, not irregular, and it was appropriate for her to sign them.
62. The LSA also argued that the administration of justice is under direct and vigorous attack by OPCA litigants as noted in the *Meads* decision.
63. The LSA submitted that the justice process is severely hampered and impugned by OPCA documents. When a lawyer improperly notarizes documents that are used to negatively impact the administration of justice, that brings the administration of justice into disrepute, and it also reflects, very poorly, on the legal profession in the eyes of the court.
64. Lastly, the LSA noted that Ms. Akpan has not acknowledged any wrongdoing, or expressed remorse or promise to do better.

#### *Submissions of Akpan*

65. Ms. Akpan argued that there is no evidence on how her notarization of the Notarized Documents has brought the administration of justice into disrepute. Rather, Ms. Akpan is the one that has suffered from this matter.
66. Ms. Akpan also argued that the second LSA e-bulletin post-dated the notarization of the Notarized Documents.
67. Ms. Akpan further submitted that she did not need to read the LSA e-bulletins since she was not a litigator and they were not addressed to her.
68. Ms. Akpan also argued that her conduct in signing the Notarized Documents is not deserving of sanction. This practice is widespread throughout the profession as addressed by Rooke ACJ in *Meads*. To Ms. Akpan's knowledge, no other lawyer has been cited for signing OPCA documents. In her view, it would not serve the interests of justice to find that Ms. Akpan's conduct at issue in this hearing is deserving of sanction.
69. Rather, she argued, the citation is not about facts. She stated she had been targeted, and the citation is based on bias and discrimination.

### **Analysis and Decision**

#### *Relevant Rules and Authorities*

70. Both parties provided the Committee with a number of authorities. The relevant authorities are referenced below.
71. Chapter two of the Code outlines Standards of the Legal Profession. Sections 2.1-1 and 2.1-2 address integrity as follows:
- 2.1 Integrity
- 2.1-1 A lawyer has a duty to carry on the practice of law and discharge all responsibilities to clients, tribunals, the public and other members of the profession honourably and with integrity.
- 2.1-2 A lawyer has a duty to uphold the standards and reputation of the legal profession and to assist in the advancement of its goals, organizations, and institutions.
72. The *Meads*<sup>12</sup> and *Akpan*<sup>13</sup> cases were submitted by both parties and are referenced above.
73. The LSA also provided the decision in *Law Society of Alberta v. Zang*<sup>14</sup>. In the *Zang* decision, the hearing committee accepted the principle that where a lawyer has previously actively participated as a party in other proceedings related to the same events giving rise to the citation, a hearing committee may admit the findings from those proceedings as *prima facie* evidence in support of the citation of conduct deserving of sanction.

### Analysis

74. The citation states:
- It is alleged that Grace Akpan brought the administration of justice into disrepute by notarizing improper documents contrary to express Law Society of Alberta direction, and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
75. The Committee finds that Ms. Akpan notarized the Notarized Documents.
76. Ms. Akpan actively participated in the Court of Appeal proceedings; had various levels of participation in the King's Bench Proceedings; and all of the court proceedings related to the same Notarized Documents and circumstances that give rise to the citation. Thus, the Committee accepts the Courts' findings that the Notarized Documents are, "pseudo-law" or OPCA documents and are improper documents.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, note 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, note 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Law Society of Alberta v Zang*, 2023 ABL 27.

77. As noted above, on May 13, 2021, the LSA issued an e-Bulletin that referenced the *Meads* decision, the characteristics of OPCA litigants, and cautioned lawyers about notarizing OPCA documents. While Ms. Akpan received this e-Bulletin and enclosed direction, she declined to review it.
78. The Committee can accept that Ms. Akpan's decision to notarize the Notarized Documents was not an intent to participate in any nefarious scheme that Ms. Akpan attempted to perpetrate.
79. However, the Committee also finds that Ms. Akpan's conduct was the result of Ms. Akpan's practice of not reviewing legal updates or e-Bulletins because she thought they pertained to litigation matters and she was not a litigator.
80. As noted in the *Meads* decision, OPCA litigants abuse the justice system, and their tactics directly attack the inherent jurisdiction of the courts. Rooke ACJ also held that when a lawyer notarizes OPCA documents, the lawyer, "assists with implementation of vexatious litigation strategies."<sup>15</sup>
81. While the Committee accepts that Ms. Akpan did not intend to participate in any nefarious scheme, as noted in *Meads*, by signing the Notarized Documents, AM assisted with implementation of vexatious litigation strategies. This brought the administration of justice into disrepute.
82. The Committee also notes that Ms. Akpan's refusal to read the OPCA portion of the e-Bulletin because she was not a litigator, followed by her agreement to notarize the OPCA documents and draft a certificate for use in a litigation matter are actions that undermine public confidence in the profession, particularly with respect to lawyer competence.
83. The Committee finds that the citation has been proven on a balance of probabilities and that Ms. Akpan's conduct is deserving of sanction.
84. In Ms. Akpan's oral and written materials, she raised a number of allegations that the citation is targeted and the result of discrimination and bias on behalf of the LSA. There is no evidence on the record to support Ms. Akpan's allegation of selective enforcement. Rather, Ms. Akpan's allegations fail to recognize the confidential nature of portions of the LSA's disciplinary process. Ms. Akpan's allegations in this regard are not accepted by the Committee.

### **Concluding Matters**

85. A further hearing date will be scheduled to determine sanction and costs in this matter.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* note 2, paragraph 645.

86. 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. Akpan will be redacted and further redactions will be made to preserve client confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege (Rule 98(3)).

Dated February 26, 2026.

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Sharilyn Nagina, KC

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Cal Johnson, KC

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Tammy Pidner