

**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 IKECHUKWU OKAFOR  
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA**

**Hearing Committee**

Kathleen Ryan, KC – Chair and Former Benchers  
Stephanie Dobson – Benchers  
Jamie Tiessen – Adjudicator

**Appearances**

Meryl Friedland – Counsel for the Law Society of Alberta  
Simon Renouf, KC – Counsel for Ikechukwu Okafor

**Hearing Date**

May 27, 2025

**Hearing Location**

Virtual Hearing

**HEARING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Overview and Summary of Result**

1. In October 2022, Ikechukwu Okafor, a practicing lawyer in Calgary and member of the Law Society of Alberta (LSA), forged the signatures of his clients on transaction documents, knowingly submitted forged transaction documents to the Alberta Land Titles office (LTO), and then made a further misleading statement to the LTO attesting to documents that he knew were forged. This conduct is conduct deserving of sanction.
2. Mr. Okafor entered a Statement of Admitted Facts, Exhibits, and Admission of Guilt (SAF) which is attached hereto as Appendix A.
3. The SAF is acceptable to the Hearing Committee (Committee) per section 60 of the *Legal Profession Act*, RSA 2000 c. L-8 (*Act*) and, together with the Exhibits, forms the basis of the finding of conduct deserving of sanction.
4. After review of the evidence, multiple sanction authorities, and after hearing submissions of the LSA and Mr. Okafor, the Committee determines that a suspension of four months is the appropriate sanction for Mr. Okafor's conduct.

5. The LSA and Mr. Okafor made submissions on costs. Costs are ordered to be paid by Mr. Okafor in the amount of \$9,895.38.

### **Citations and Preliminary Matters**

6. The following citations were directed to hearing by the Conduct Committee Panel on May 14, 2024:
  - 1) It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor forged the signatures of his clients on transaction documents and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  - 2) It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor submitted forged transaction documents to the Land Titles Office and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  - 3) It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor submitted a misleading statement to the Land Titles Office and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
7. On May 27, 2025, the Committee convened a hearing into the conduct of Ikechukwu Okafor, based on the above citations.

### **Preliminary Matters**

8. There were no objections to the constitution of the Committee or its jurisdiction; a private hearing was not required. No witnesses were called. The LSA and Mr. Okafor relied entirely on the SAF.

### **Statement of Admitted Facts/Background**

9. Mr. Okafor is a lawyer who practices in Calgary. He practices primarily in real estate law. Mr. Okafor has been a member of the LSA for 15 years. He was admitted in July 2010. He was 63 at the time of this hearing. Prior to Mr. Okafor practicing law in Alberta, he practiced law in Nigeria.
10. The critical facts are set out in the SAF. In summary, Mr. Okafor was assisting clients in refinancing a property. One of the owners had been deported. The deportee had executed a Power of Attorney providing authority to another owner. Registration documents were submitted to the LTO on September 8, 2022. The documents were rejected. Rather than properly addressing the deficiencies in the documents, Mr. Okafor instead personally signed a new land transfer forging the signatures of the owners. He also swore a false Affidavit of Execution for the forged signatures and resubmitted the package to the LTO. Mr. Okafor admits that he did not witness the signatures on the Affidavit of Execution. On October 4, 2022, the package was rejected by Land Titles noting the apparent differences of the signatures of one of the owners on the documents.

11. Instead of proceeding properly, Mr. Okafor instead doubled down on the forgeries and false Affidavit. He tendered a misleading representation to the LTO. He made a handwritten notation on the Notice of Deficiency stating that the owner signed the document when he knew that he had forged the document. This is apparent from the evidence in the SAF.
12. The LTO then brought this conduct to the attention of the LSA. The LSA began an investigation culminating in the SAF.
13. Mr. Okafor has been cooperative with the LSA and has made plain and full admissions of his conduct thereby obviating the need for a hearing. Mr. Okafor did not gain personally from this transaction, nor did his clients. Nor is there any assertion that he assisted his clients in an improper purpose.
14. The sole question for the Committee was the appropriate sanction for this conduct.

#### **Submissions of the LSA on Sanction**

15. The LSA submitted that the appropriate sanction for Mr. Okafor's conduct was a suspension in the range of 3 to 8 months. The LSA submitted that a 6-month suspension was proper. In that regard, the LSA tendered several authorities. In particular, the LSA stressed the fact that Mr. Okafor had multiple opportunities to take a proper pathway, that there was no duress or need for Mr. Okafor to engage in this conduct, and that when faced with a concern from the LTO identifying the irregularities in the signatures, Mr. Okafor instead "doubled down" on the forgeries. As noted by both Mr. Okafor and the LSA, Mr. Okafor "prioritized efficiency over integrity."
16. The LSA put forward multiple authorities on sanction, including the following:

- a) *Oledzki v. Law Society of Saskatchewan*, 2010 SKCA 120:

A lawyer signed a will and engaged another individual to be a witness who was not actually in attendance. The lawyer arranged for a personal gift to himself of \$50,000.00 in the will. The lawyer was disbarred. The disbarment was upheld on appeal as being within a range of possible sanction.

- b) *Law Society of Alberta v. Shustov*, 2014 ABLS 23:

A lawyer fabricated a court order and lied to a client about it. The lawyer sought a suspension of 3 to 6 months. The LSA sought a disbarment. The hearing committee ordered an 8-month suspension plus practice review, supervision, and legal ethics education.

c) *Law Society of Alberta v Kramar*, 2020 ABLS 31:

A young lawyer made over 50 false health benefits claims to his law firm's employment benefits provider. After a joint submission, the lawyer received a 4-month suspension. The conduct was inexplicable. The sum falsely claimed was around \$4,000.00; this was a small fraction of the lawyer's salary. The hearing committee referred the matter to the Attorney General.

d) *Law Society of Alberta v Persad*, 2020 ABLS 27:

A lawyer faked a divorce judgment to be able to further a relationship outside his marriage. The lawyer was a crown prosecutor. The lawyer and the LSA tendered a joint submission of a 6-month suspension plus \$7,000.00 in costs. The hearing committee accepted that joint submission and made a referral to the Attorney General.

e) *Law Society of Ontario v. Manilla*, 2021 ONLSTH 33:

A lawyer self-reported after signing his name to five client documents filed with the Court. The Law Society of Ontario noted a presumption of revocation absent exceptional circumstances. The lawyer had no record and showed remorse. There was no personal benefit for the lawyer. The Law Society of Ontario sought a suspension of 3 to 5 months. The lawyer sought a reprimand. The hearing committee ordered a 3-month suspension.

f) *Law Society of Alberta v. Ralh*, 2023 ABLS 9:

A lawyer allowed a forged signature for a spouse on a real estate transaction. When the lawyer was caught in the misconduct, he tried to dissuade that spouse acting on it. The lawyer was criminally convicted for his conduct. He voluntarily stopped practicing for 6 months. The LSA sought an 18-month suspension at hearing. The lawyer sought a shorter suspension. The hearing committee credited the lawyer for 6 months of voluntary removal from practice and directed a 12-month suspension bringing the lawyer's total time away from practice to 18 months.

g) *Law Society of Alberta v McHenry*, 2024 ABLS 15:

A lawyer forged a signature on a transaction document. He signed the client's signature on a missing signature line. The lawyer was found not to have an intention to deceive. He removed himself from practice for one month and self-reported. Then he removed himself entirely from the practice of law for three years. The lawyer had no prior discipline record. He was highly remorseful. He had medical issues at the time and obtained treatment. Considering the lengthy self-withdrawal from the practice, the hearing

committee ordered a 1-day suspension and declined to make a referral to the Attorney General.

### **Submissions of Ikechukwu Okafor**

17. Through counsel, Mr. Okafor made submissions respecting an appropriate range of sanction. Mr. Okafor submitted it was not necessary or desirable to impose a suspension. He submitted a fine, reprimand, and costs were sufficient sanction to meet the principles of denunciation and proportionality. Mr. Okafor put forward several authorities including the following:

a) *Law Society of Alberta v. Rigler*, 2008 LSA 10:

A student-at-law was not honest about an alcohol-related criminal prosecution for which he was ultimately acquitted. The student said that he had been driven home by a designated driver when he actually drove the vehicle. In doing so, he provided a false statutory declaration. The student received a 3-month suspension.

b) *Law Society of Alberta v Roth*, 2024 ABLS 27:

A student-at-law failed to admit to cocaine use. He also received money for the sale of cocaine and lied about that as well. The student received a 1-month suspension and a \$4,000.00 fine.

c) *Law Society of Alberta v Sanghi*, [2023] LSDD No 208:

A junior lawyer altered a document to mislead a client. The lawyer sought less than a 3-month suspension, but the lawyer also agreed that the proper range was 3 months to 8 months. There was no medical evidence to support any basis for the lawyer's conduct. The LSA sought a 6-month suspension. The hearing committee ordered a 3-month suspension plus \$9,000.00 in costs and a referral to the Attorney General.

d) *Law Society of Alberta v Shawar*, 2019 ABLS 8:

A student signed a certificate stating that he was in Edmonton even though he had moved to Israel and had not returned. He was not in Alberta for the entire period of his article. The LSA and the student made a joint submission for a reprimand and \$2,500.00 in costs. There was no referral to the Attorney General.

e) *Law Society of Alberta v Sangha*, 2024 ABLS 24:

A lawyer filed a Revocation of a Power of Attorney at the Land Titles Office knowing the documents submitted were false. He commissioned an Affidavit of Execution knowing it was false. He failed to provide conscientious service and did so for personal gain. He misled his clients. His misconduct extended to students and employees. The hearing committee determined that the misconduct on the matter was from “cradle to grave” from the outset of the file through to its end. The lawyer was already subject to an interim suspension for a separate matter months before the hearing. The hearing committee ordered a suspension of 6 months.

f) *Law Society of Alberta v Hillenbrand*, 2023 ABLS 19:

A lawyer signed a record for a client as “authorized agent,” but the lawyer did not have such authority from the client. The lawyer signed his own name. The act was thus not a forgery; it was instead a misrepresentation of authority. The lawyer accepted guilt readily. He was remorseful and had no record. Under a joint submission, the hearing committee issued a reprimand and a fine of \$4,000.00 together with a referral to the Attorney General.

g) *Law Society of Alberta v Saleem*, 2023 ABLS 3:

A lawyer failed to bring court applications in a timely manner. He misled his client by telling them important work was done when it was not done. The hearing committee accepted a joint submission of a 1-month suspension and a fine of \$5,000.00.

h) *Law Society of Alberta v Anderson*, 2024 ABLS 26:

A lawyer failed to identify that his client facilitated artificial pricing for a corporate security. The hearing committee accepted a joint submission for a 1-month suspension as being appropriate, but the hearing committee noted that this was the low end of the range for sanction.

i) *Law Society of Alberta v Wheat*, 2021 ABLS 27, 2022 ABLS 9:

A lawyer allowed a client to sign an instrument affecting land on behalf of his wife knowing that there was no authority to do so. The conduct was a single aberration caused by succumbing to the pressures of unreasonable urgent client demands. The lawyer was suspended for a period of 2 months.

j) *Law Society of Alberta v Bittner*, [2002] LSDD No 52:

A lawyer was duped by his client into believing that a co-owner was too ill to attend at the lawyer's office. The lawyer signed a transfer of land as a witness despite the signatory not being in the lawyer's presence. The lawyer then swore a false affidavit. Two years later, it was discovered that the client forged the co-owner's signature. The lawyer was duped by his client, but he should never have sworn an affidavit of execution without witnessing the document. The lawyer received a reprimand. Once the lawyer was confronted, he was completely candid with the LSA. The hearing committee found that this was an appropriate case for the exception to the normal suspension that should accompany this conduct.

k) *Law Society of Alberta v Coley*, [2008] LSDD No 162:

A lawyer sent an agreement out to a client to sign and got it back. The lawyer falsely swore that the agreement was signed in Edmonton when in fact it was not. The lawyer had not witnessed the client's signature. The hearing committee determined that a reprimand was an appropriate sanction.

l) *Law Society of Alberta v Gish*, [2006] LSDD No 132:

A lawyer swore a false Affidavit of Execution. A husband and wife were to execute financing documents. The husband never attended. The wife insisted on bringing the document home to sign and she received funds from the transaction. In fact, the husband had no idea that the wife had refinanced. The lawyer self-reported after the client's urging and was then cooperative throughout. There was a referral to the Attorney General. The hearing committee found that the appropriate sanction was a reprimand, a \$10,000.00 fine, and actual hearing costs.

m) *Law Society of Alberta v Peterson*, [2005] LSDD No 92:

A junior lawyer forged a client's signature on an Affidavit and provided it to opposing counsel. The hearing committee found that the usual penalty for forgery would be disbarment. The hearing committee held that some cases allowed for an exception; it accepted a joint submission for a reprimand. The hearing committee determined that there would have been a more substantial sanction but for the delay in the proceeding. There was no referral to the Attorney General.

## Analysis and Decision

18. The LSA Pre-Hearing and Hearing Guideline (Guideline) sets out the purpose of sanction at paragraphs 185 to 186:

The fundamental purposes of sanctioning are to ensure the public is protected from acts of professional misconduct and to protect the public's confidence in the integrity of the profession. These fundamental purposes are critical to the independence of the profession and the proper functioning of the administration of justice.

Other purposes of sanctioning include:

- a. specific deterrence of the lawyer;
- b. where appropriate to protect the public, preventing the lawyer from practising law through disbarment or suspension;
- c. general deterrence of other lawyers;
- d. ensuring the Law Society can effectively govern its members; and
- e. denunciation of the misconduct.

19. The relevant factors for sanction include those stated paragraphs 198 to 206 of the Guideline. Considering these factors, and in no particular order, the Committee considered the following evidence to be the most relevant to Mr. Okafor's sanction:

- 1) Mr. Okafor is senior counsel and has no prior disciplinary record.
- 2) Mr. Okafor's misconduct was serious and was repeated over a period of time across multiple instruments. He opted to "double down" on uttering the forged documents in an effort to have the LTO accept the forgery.
- 3) Mr. Okafor gained no personal benefit from his conduct.
- 4) Ultimately, Mr. Okafor's clients were not prejudiced.
- 5) Once confronted by the LSA, Mr. Okafor fully admitted his conduct and cooperated, entering into the SAF that avoided a lengthy hearing.
- 6) Mr. Okafor does not dispute that his conduct must be referred to the Attorney General.



- 7) Mr. Okafor has continued in practice for years since these events with no other issues.
20. The overriding concern in considering the appropriate sanction is to impose a sanction that effectively protects the public and, as noted in *Law Society of British Columbia v McGuire*, 2006 LSBC 20 at paragraph 24, leaves the legal profession knowing that this kind of conduct will be met with significant sanction:
- Protection of the public lies not only in dealing with ethical failures when they occur, but also in preventing ethical failures. In effect, the profession has to say to its member, “Don’t even think about it.” And that demands the imposition of severe sanctions for clear, knowing breaches of ethical standards. [cited in Kramar at para. 34]
21. Mr. Okafor’s conduct is not akin to a lawyer who has been duped by a client into believing that a signature of another is real. Although swearing a false affidavit of execution is also conduct deserving of sanction, forgery of a signature, let alone repeated forgeries, is more serious conduct and therefore must attract more severe sanction. This was not a case where the lawyer was first misled by his client. Rather, Mr. Okafor actively and repeatedly tried to mislead others. Mr. Okafor first forged a signature, then he swore a false Affidavit of Execution respecting the forgery, then he submitted the forgery and the false affidavit to LTO, and then he reiterated the forged document in attempts to knowingly mislead the LTO.
22. The LTO performs a critical role for the public in Alberta. Lawyers know this. When an LTO reviewer raises a concern about a document, that response should be met with complete candor. Of the many concerning aspects surrounding Mr. Okafor’s misconduct, the most concerning one is Mr. Okafor’s choice to reutter the forged document by writing a handwritten note to the LTO stating that the Affidavit and documents were properly signed when he knew with certainty that they were false. Mr. Okafor had multiple opportunities to correct the problem over a period of several days; he chose not to do so. This is an aggravating factor in the imposition of sanction.
23. Mr. Okafor has no prior disciplinary record, nor has there been any issue with his practice since these issues arose. He cooperated with the LSA fully and, in this hearing, has fully and candidly admitted to conduct deserving of sanction. These are mitigating factors on sanction.
24. Having regard to the authorities above and the evidence before the Committee, and the overriding principles respecting the purpose of sanction, this conduct must be met with a suspension; a reprimand or fine is not sufficient. The Committee imposes a 4-month suspension. The suspension will commence one month after the issuance of this written decision.
25. The mandatory Notice to Profession shall issue.

26. Pursuant to section 78 of the *Act*, a referral to the Attorney General is required. The Committee finds that there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the lawyer has committed a criminal offence. The Executive Director is therefore directed to send a copy of the hearing record to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.
27. Costs were agreed and are payable by Mr. Okafor in the amount of \$9,895.38. Costs must be paid within 6 months of the date of Mr. Okafor's reinstatement.

### **Concluding Matters**

28. In summary:
- 1) Mr. Okafor will be suspended for 4 months. The suspension commences one month after the issuance of this decision.
  - 2) Mr. Okafor shall pay costs in the sum of \$9,895.38. The costs shall be paid within 6 months of the date of Mr. Okafor's reinstatement.
  - 3) A Notice to Profession shall issue pursuant to section 85 of the *Act*.
  - 4) The Committee directs the Executive Director of the LSA to send a copy of the hearing record to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.
29. 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 Mr. Okafor, including his clients, will be redacted and any other further redactions will be made as are necessary to preserve client confidentiality and solicitor-client privilege as required by Rule 98(3).

Dated August 19, 2025.

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Kathleen Ryan, KC

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Stephanie Dobson

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Jamie Tiessen

IN THE MATTER OF THE *LEGAL PROFESSION ACT*

- AND -

IN THE MATTER OF A HEARING REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF  
**IKECHUKWU OKAFOR**  
A MEMBER OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

HEARING FILE HE20240151

**STATEMENT OF ADMITTED FACTS, EXHIBITS  
AND ADMISSIONS OF GUILT**

**Background of Member**

1. On July 13, 2010, I was admitted as a member of the Law Society of Alberta (the “LSA”).
2. My date of birth is June 5, 1961. I am 63 years old. Prior to coming to Canada, I practised law in Nigeria.
3. My current status with the LSA is Active/Practicing.
4. I do not have a prior disciplinary record with the LSA.
5. My practice is primarily focused on real estate conveyancing.
6. In March 2022 I completed a Mandatory Conduct Advisory (“MCA”) addressing concerns regarding client service on real estate matters. That complaint was closed following successful completion of the MCA.

**Procedural Background**

7. This hearing arises from one complaint: CO20221062.
8. On October 20, 2022, Land Titles Alberta informed the LSA of concerns arising from Document Registration Requests (“DRR”) submitted by myself.

**Tab 1 – Email dated October 20, 2022 from [SK]**

9. I provided a response to this complaint on May 11, 2023. I was interviewed by the LSA on November 11, 2022, and November 28, 2022.

**Tab 2 – Response from Mr. Okafor**

10. The LSA conducted a review of the allegations, resulting in a referral to the Conduct Committee.
11. On May 14, 2024, the Conduct Committee directed that the following three citations be dealt with by a Hearing Committee:
  1. It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor forged the signatures of his clients on transaction documents and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  2. It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor submitted forged transaction documents to the Land Titles Office and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.
  3. It is alleged Ikechukwu Okafor submitted a misleading statement to the Land Titles Office and that such conduct is deserving of sanction.

**Tab 3 – Citations**

**Background of the Parties**

12. In 2006, [BG], his wife [SG] and his brother [HG] purchased a residential property at [address redacted], Calgary, Alberta (the “**Property**”).
13. In 2010, [HG] was deported from Canada and has not returned.
14. In July 2011, [HG] signed an enduring power of attorney to his brother [BG] (the “**POA**”).
15. In or around April 2022, I was retained by [BG] and [SG] to assist with refinancing the Property. A mortgage was obtained from [a lending corporation].

**Refinancing Transaction**

16. On May 13, 2022, I submitted a DRR to Land Titles Office (“**LTO**”) to transfer title from [BG, SG, and HG] jointly to only [BG] and [SG]. [BG] signed the transfer on behalf of [HG] under the POA.

**Tab 4 – Land Transfer**

17. On September 8, 2022, the LTO rejected the registration and notified me that the POA could not be relied upon to transfer title.

**Tab 5 – Notice of Deficiency**

18. On or about October 4, 2022, I personally signed a new land transfer as [SG] and [BG] along with an Affidavit of Execution and resubmitted the DRR package to the LTO. I admit that the Affidavit of Execution was also false as I did not witness [BG] and [SG] sign the document.

**Tab 6 – Land Transfer & Affidavit of Execution**

19. The October 4<sup>th</sup> package was again rejected by the LTO who indicated that the signatures of [SG] appeared to be different on the documents.

**Tab 7 – Notice of Deficiency**

20. On or about October 7, 2022, I made a handwritten notation on the Notice of Deficiency and confirmed that [SG] signed the documents and then resubmitted that notice to the LTO. I admit that this notation was untrue as I had signed the documents personally.

### **ADMISSIONS OF FACTS AND GUILT**

21. I admit as facts the statements in this Statement of Admitted Facts and Admissions of Guilt for the purposes of these proceedings.
22. I admit that:
- a. I forged my clients' signatures on transaction documents;
  - b. I submitted forged transaction documents to the LTO; and
  - c. I admit I submitted a misleading statement to the LTO.
23. When I admit guilt to the conduct described in herein, I admit that the conduct is "conduct deserving of sanction" as defined under section 49 of the *Legal Profession Act*.
24. I can state, and the LSA accepts, that I did not gain personally nor did my clients gain from these transactions, and there is no assertion that I assisted my clients in an improper purpose.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

25. I have had the opportunity to consult with legal counsel.
26. I have signed this statement freely and voluntarily, without compulsion or duress.
27. I understand the nature and consequences of my admissions.
28. I understand that, although entitled to deference, a Hearing Committee is not bound to accept a joint submission.

**THIS STATEMENT OF ADMITTED FACTS, EXHIBITS, AND ADMISSIONS OF GUILT IS MADE THIS \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2025.**

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**Ikechukwu Okafor**