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Approved Bencher Public Minutes

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

May 1, 2025

In person in Calgary, AB and by videoconference

ATTENDANCE	
Benchers	Stacy Petriuk, KC, President A. Danielle Bourgeois (videoconference) Glen Buick 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 (videoconference) Louise Wasylenko, CPA, CMA
Executive Leadership Team	Elizabeth Osler, KC, CEO and Executive Director Cori Ghitter, KC, Deputy Executive Director and Director, Policy and Education

ATTENDANCE

	Nadine Meade, Chief Financial Officer
	Kendall Moholitny, Director, Regulation and Professionalism
	Andrew Norton, Chief Information Officer and Director, Business Operations
	David Weyant, KC, President and CEO, Alberta Lawyers Indemnity Association
Staff	Barbra Bailey, Manager, Education (In person)
	Nancy Bains, Tribunal Counsel & Privacy Officer
	Catherine Bennett, Executive Assistant to the CEO & Executive Director
	Reed Bjerkseth, Support Staff, Business Technology (In person)
	Crystal Blain, Indigenous Initiatives Advisor, Education (In person)
	Colleen Brown, Manager, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (In person)
	Christal Chapman, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Counsel, Education
	Jennifer Freund, Policy & Governance Counsel
	Calvin McCarron, Support Staff, Business Technology (In person)
	Andrew McGrath, Support Staff, Business Technology (In person)
	Noria Neuhart, Policy Counsel
	Michael Oxman, Education Counsel
	Christine Schreuder, Supervisor, Governance (In person)
	Karly Walker, Coordinator, Governance (In person)
	Rebecca Young, Education Counsel
Guests	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)
	Deanna Steblyk, KC, Past-President (In person)
	Liza Worthington, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Legal Education (In person)
Regrets	Arman Chak, KC, Bencher

Secretary's Note: All Bencher and Executive Leadership Team attendees were in person unless otherwise stated. All staff and 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 was called to order at 9:02 a.m.

Ms. Stewart provided a Territorial Indigenous Land Acknowledgement statement.

1. Adoption of the Agenda and Opening Remarks from the Acting President

The agenda was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting and adopted as proposed. Ms. Petriuk read remarks from the departing President, the Honourable Justice Ryan D. Anderson, stressing the importance of the Bencher role, accepting differing opinions, and working to make lasting connections. He expressed gratitude and farewell to the Benchers and Law Society leadership team as he progresses with lessons learned, friendships, and insights from being a Bencher.

2. Presidential Vacancy

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

Ms. Petriuk encouraged the Benchers to consider what is best for the Law Society when deciding on the Presidential vacancy process. Ms. Petriuk declared a conflict of interest and in the absence of a President-Elect, Ms. Petriuk proposed that she recuse herself from the meeting and have Ms. Steblyk, KC, Past-President, member of the Executive Committee and trusted advisor, take the Chair. Ms. Petriuk asked if there were any Benchers opposed to Ms. Steblyk taking the chair and there were none.

Ms. Petriuk recused herself at 9:10 a.m.

Ms. Steblyk took the Chair and reported that the Executive Committee met twice and recommends the following motions. The Benchers requested that the first motion be considered separately.

Motion 1: Sorokin/Petersson
That the Benchers confirm Stacy Petriuk, KC, as President of the Law Society of Alberta, effective immediately.

Carried

The following three motions were considered concurrently.

Motion 2: Louie/Matheson
That the Benchers hold an election for President-Elect as soon as practicable, with the term taking effect immediately following the election.

Motion 3:
That the Benchers approve Stacy Petriuk, KC's, term as President and the incoming President-Elect's term to conclude at the beginning of the February 26, 2026 Bencher meeting.

Motion 4:
That the Benchers approve that the regularly scheduled President-Elect election take place at the November 27, 2025 Bencher meeting.

Carried

Ms. Petriuk rejoined the meeting at 9:18 a.m. and reclaimed the Chair.
Ms. Steblyk left the meeting at 9:18 a.m.

Ms. Petriuk expressed thanks to Ms. Steblyk and the Benchers confirmed that all four motions passed as proposed. Ms. Petriuk stated that a President-Elect vacancy election, and potential Executive Committee vacancy election could be held at this May 1, 2025 Bencher meeting, virtually on May 7, 2025 from 4-5 p.m., or on an alternate date. An anonymous electronic poll was issued to the Benchers to register their preferred election date(s) and Ms. Ghitter, Ms. Meade and Mr. Norton verified the results. Ms. Ghitter confirmed that the majority preferred that both the President-Elect and potential Executive Committee vacancy election(s) be held on May 7, 2025.

Motion 5: Lutz/Melnyk
That the Benchers hold a virtual election to fill the President-Elect and potential Executive Committee vacancy on Wednesday, May 7, 2025 from 4-5 p.m. and that any Benchers interested in putting their name forward for either election advise Ms. Petriuk by 9 a.m. on Monday, May 5, 2025.

Carried

3. Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee Report

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

3.1 Business Process Improvements – Rule Amendments

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

Ms. Freund gave an overview of proposed changes to the Rules of the Law Society (Rules) for business process improvements, clean-up, modernization, and clarity, as well as a cross-referencing amendment.

The Benchers requested that the proposed Motion 1 contained within the materials be divided, with items d. and e. to be considered separately from items a., b., c., and f., as well as independently from each other.

Motion 1: **Sorokin/Stewart**
That the Benchers amend the Rules, as part of an overall clean-up process, as follows:

a. **to amend Rules 46, 68, 69, 110, 116 to remove references to specific Form numbers, as proposed;**
b. **to strike out Rule 166;**
c. **to amend Rules 57.2, 42, and 58 to modernize language around “an assignment of articles” to refer, instead, to “a change of principal”, as proposed;**
d. **to amend subrule 39(4) by amending clause (b) to strike out “spoken” and insert “of practice, in addition to English” and by amending clause (e) to insert “Canadian” after “other” and before “law”.**

Carried

Motion 2: Sorokin/Stewart

That the Benchers amend Rule 169 to automate the removal of members from the roll after a certain period of time under a Rules suspension or a suspension under Rule 168 and to extend that time from 4 years to 10 years, as proposed.

Carried

Motion 3: Sorokin/Stewart

That the Benchers amend Rule 164 by adding a new subrule, as follows:

> **"(6) A member's liability to the Society or ALIA for any payment specified in a notice posted to the member's online Law Society account is their own responsibility and not that of their law firm or other organization or person."**

Carried

Motion 4: Sorokin/Stewart

That the Benchers amend Rule 75, to simplify and clarify the Rules for an application for license as a Foreign Legal Consultant, as follows:

a. **strike out clause (3)(b);**

b. **re-letter clause (3)(c) as (3)(b) and strike out "proof that the applicant has been actively engaged in the practice of law in the foreign country or political subdivision for at least 3 years, or an undertaking" and insert "a declaration" in its place, and insert ", if they have not been actively engaged in the practice of law in the foreign country or political subdivision for at least 3 years," after "that the applicant" and before "will practise";**

c. **re-letter clause (3)(d) as (3)(c) and strike out "an undertaking" and insert "a declaration" in its place;**

d. **re-letter clause (3)(e) as (3)(d) and insert ", through a certificate of insurance or similar," after "proof" and strike out "will, while licensed, carry" after "that the applicant" and before "professional liability" and insert "has" in its place;**

e. **re-letter clause (3)(f) as (3)(e) and insert ", through a certificate of coverage or similar," after "proof" and strike out "will, while licensed, participate in a program or carry" after "that the applicant" and before "a fidelity bond" and insert "has" in its place;**

f. **re-letter clauses (3)(g) and (3)(h) as (3)(f) and (3)(g).**

Carried

Motion 5: Sorokin/Stewart

That the Benchers amend Rules 154, 155, 156, 158, and 159 to simplify and clarify the Rules for Professional Corporations related to the register, approval requirements, permits, permit expiry, and retrospectivity, as proposed, and to strike out Rule 157 regarding the form of permit for Professional Corporations.

Carried

Motion 6: Sorokin/Stewart

That the Benchers amend clause 79(1)(b) by striking out "Rule 75(3) (a), (d)(i), (d)(iii), (e) and (f)" and inserting "Rule 75(3) (a), (c)(i), (c)(iii), (d) and (e)" in its place.

Carried

Ms. Petriuk thanked Ms. Freund for her work on the Rules amendments and presentation.

Ms. Petriuk addressed Mr. Sorokin, Chair, Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee, on his Report. Mr. Sorokin acknowledged the work done by Ms. Ghitter, Ms. Freund and staff to amend the Rules in addition to the strategic project work within the PRRC work plan.

4. Audit and Finance Committee Report and Recommendation

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

Mr. Melnyk, Chair, Audit and Finance Committee, reported that the auditors had no concerns regarding the financial statements and were impressed with staff cooperation, especially with the added complexity resulting from the financial system change.

4.1 Law Society Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended December 31, 2024

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

Ms. Meade provided an overview of the Law Society audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024. In response to a Bencher question, she reported that the Statement of Investment Policies and Goals (SIP&G) provides a benchmark and confirmed the Benchers previously approved a change to the SIP&G to allow the transfer of some of the funds from Mawer Investment Management Ltd. to TD Asset Management to diversify the portfolio. The surplus is due to strong returns from investments.

Motion: Melnyk/Neilson
That the Benchers approve the Law Society of Alberta's audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024, as attached to this report.

Carried

5. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report and Recommendation

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

Mr. Ilochonwu, Chair, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) reported that the EDIC is reviewing and reconsidering how to support the Articling Placement Program and development of a strategic reconciliation framework.

Ms. Bailey introduced and welcomed Christal Chapman, new EDI Counsel, and Crystal Blain, a new Indigenous Initiatives Advisor the LSA will be working with.

5.1 Reconciliation Work Plan

Ms. Bailey gave an overview of the proposed reconciliation framework, emphasizing the need for a cohesive plan to advance reconciliation in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada Call to Action 27 and the Public Confidence goal of the Law Society's Strategic Plan. Ms. Bailey noted that the proposed goals are intentionally broad and include examples of potential initiatives and asked the Benchers for direction to proceed.

Mr. Ilochonwu clarified that the Benchers are being asked to indicate whether they support staff moving forward with this initiative. If approved, staff will develop the rest of the framework with more specifics and return with a draft framework for Bencher approval.

The Benchers requested that the proposed goals outlined in the proposed Motion 1 contained in the materials be separated as three individual motions. There was significant discussion on the wording of the new proposed Motion 3 to better reflect the goal's intent. The Benchers did not move this potential motion and asked staff to refine the language, discuss with the Reconciliation Advisory Roster and include in the draft framework for Bencher approval.

Motion 1: Ilochonwu/Runnalls
That the Benchers adopt the proposed goal to:

> **Support the increase of Indigenous representation in the legal profession, as part of the first layer of a strategic framework to guide the Law Society of Alberta's work with respect to truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the Public Confidence goal of the Law Society's strategic plan.**

Carried

Motion 2: Ilochonwu/Runnalls

That the Benchers adopt the proposed goal to:

> **Support the cultural competency of the profession when working with Indigenous people, as part of the first layer of a strategic framework to guide the Law Society of Alberta's work with respect to truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the Public Confidence goal of the Law Society's strategic plan.**

Carried

The Benchers deemed the originally proposed motion 2 included in the materials as unnecessary, and it was not moved.

6. Complaint Dismissal Appeals Working Group Update

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

Ms. Runnalls, Chair, Complaint Dismissal Appeals Working Group delivered a verbal update highlighting two practice changes that were implemented: 1. Complainants must now email the Law Society to receive the Complaint Dismissal Appeal Form, and 2. Notification to Benchers when a complaint is summarily dismissed, particularly for jurisdictional issues, to simplify decision-making and written decisions. Proposed Rules and Guideline amendments will be presented for approval at the October 7, 2025 Bencher meeting.

Ms. Runnalls thanked the Working Group and expressed appreciation for the support from staff.

7. Lawyer Competence Committee Update

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

Ms. Louie, Chair, Lawyer Competence Committee (LCC) reported that the LCC is focused on approaching the work plan items with a shared understanding of the lawyer education continuum.

The Benchers discussed junior lawyer and internationally trained lawyer (ITL) competence in the courtroom. Ms. Ghitter explained that solutions are multi-faceted and will take time. She explained that the LCC is considering how to address mentorship and supervision gaps at the pre- and post-call stages and reiterated that the LCC is mindful of the lawyer training continuum. An example of progression in improving junior lawyer and ITL competence in the courtroom is the Practice Fundamentals Program (the Program) targeted at junior lawyers and ITLs in their first five years of practice in Alberta. A Bencher observed that COVID-19 impacted these demographics' understanding of courtroom etiquette and recommended considering including such training in future programs. Ms. Ghitter suggested that this may be incorporated in the Program and reported that the Law Society is working with the three level of courts in Alberta to provide a courtroom decorum webinar.

Mr. Jensen noted that cultural competence discussions often focus on majority perspectives understanding minority cultures. He offered that it is equally important to consider the integration of ITLs into the Canadian system and providing them with the tools to succeed. Mr. Jensen observed that other professions excel in this area and suggested that there is an opportunity to enhance cultural competence for these professionals to help them thrive in their new environments.

8. Federation of Law Societies of Canada Update

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

Mr. Jensen provided an overview of his Report and highlighted that a governance review will be part of the new Federation of Law Societies of Canada (Federation) Strategic Plan, the final Duty to Report Consultation Report will be published on the Federation's website on May 1, 2025, and work is being finalized on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 27 recommended revisions.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Documentation or 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 three motions were approved concurrently.

Motion1: Melnyk/Nagina

That the Benchers approve the February 27, 2025, Public Bencher Meeting Minutes.

Motion 2:

That the Benchers approve the reappointments of the following Law Society of Alberta practising lawyers to the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED) Appeal Committee for a two-year term, effective July 1, 2025 until June 30, 2027.

1. **Corie Flett, KC;**
2. **Afshan Naveed;**
3. **Nnam Okoye; and,**
4. **Kathleen Ryan, KC**

Motion 3:

That the Benchers remove the capitalization of "Competency Profile" in paragraph 60 of *Credentials and Education Committee Guideline* and strike out the final sentence of that paragraph, which states: "The Competency Profile is attached to this Guideline."

Carried

10. EXTERNAL AGENCY REPORTS

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

10.1 Alberta Law Reform Institute Report

10.2 Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society (Assist) Report

Ms. Champion reported that the financial statements referred to in her report were approved by the Assist Board on April 23, 2025, then presented to the Assist Annual General Meeting for information that day, and MNP LLP provided a clean review. She confirmed that Assist can reallocate administrative expenses related to fundraising, which helps manage administrative expenses.

10.3 Canadian Bar Association Report

10.4 Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education Report

10.5 Legal Education of Society of Alberta Report

10.6 Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA) Report

A Bencher reported that the PBLA has been pairing ITLs with participating PBLA lawyers on civil law matters to provide informal mentorship and court process education and expressed support for this initiative.

Other Business

There was no other business, and the public meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.