

Approved Benchers Public Minutes

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

May 7, 2026

In person in Calgary, AB and by videoconference

ATTENDANCE

Benchers	Bud Melnyk, KC, President
	Jim Lutz, KC, President-Elect
	A. Danielle Bourgeois, KC
	Ryan Callioux, KC
	Arman Chak, KC
	Stephanie Dobson, KC
	Adam Drew, KC
	John Evans, KC (videoconference)
	Levonne Louie
	Scott Matheson, KC
	Kelsey Meyer, KC
	Sharilyn Nagina, KC
	Afshan Naveed, KC
	Mary Ellen Neilson
	Sandra Petersson, KC
	Ali Rakka
	Erin Runnalls, KC
	Ron Sorokin, KC
	Nicole Stewart, KC
	Dr. Riad Tarrabain
	David Tupper, KC
	Moira Váně, KC
	Grant Vogeli, KC



ATTENDANCE

Executive Leadership Team

Elizabeth Osler, KC, CEO and Executive Director
Sarah Klein, General Counsel
Nadine Meade, Chief Financial Officer
Kendall Moholitny, KC, Director, Regulation and Professionalism
Andrew Norton, Chief Information Officer and Director, Business Operations

Staff

Barbra Bailey, Manager, Policy and Education (in person)
Nancy Bains, Tribunal Counsel & Privacy Officer (in person)
Catherine Bennett, Executive Assistant to the CEO & Executive Director
Colleen Brown, Manager, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (in person)
Reed Bjerkseth, Support Staff, Business Technology (in person)
Christal Chapman, Policy and Education Counsel (in person)
Jonathan Griffith, Practice Advisor and Equity Ombudsperson
Karen Hansen, Legal Counsel, Regulation Projects (in person)
Sharon Heine, Senior Manager, Regulation
Emily Karolyi, Education Coordinator
Calvin McCarron, Support Staff, Business Technology (in person)
Andrew McGrath, Support Staff, Business Technology (in person)
Noria Neuhart, Policy and Education Counsel (in person)
Michael Oxman, Policy and Education Counsel (in person)
Erica Pridham, Manager, Conduct & Membership Legal Services (in person)
Christine Schreuder, Supervisor, Governance (in person)
Rebecca Young, Legal Counsel

Guests

Loraine Champion, KC, Executive Director, Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society
Sarah Coderre, Vice President, Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Alberta
Carsten Jensen, KC, Law Society of Alberta representative to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (in person)
Christine Laing, Executive Director, Pro Bono Law Alberta

Regrets

Kene Ilochonwu, KC
David Weyant, KC, President and CEO, Alberta Lawyers Indemnity Association
Liza Worthington, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Legal Education

Secretary's Note: All Benchers 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.

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment

Mr. Melnyk called the public meeting to order at 9 a.m. and provided a Territorial Indigenous Land Acknowledgment statement.

2. Opening Remarks from the President and Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Melnyk welcomed new Benchers Ryan Callioux, KC, and the guests attending by videoconference. He also congratulated Benchers Ms. Bourgeois, Ms. Dobson, Mr. Drew, Mr. Matheson, Ms. Meyer, Ms. Naveed, Ms. Stewart, and Mr. Tupper, as well as Ms. Moholity, the Law Society's Director, Regulation and Professionalism, on receiving King's Counsel (KC) designations at ceremonies held in Calgary on April 21 and in Edmonton on April 24, 2026.

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Ms. Váně joined the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

3. Conflict of Interest (Standing Item)

Mr. Melnyk reported that a standing item after the Benchers are appointed to other boards is to acknowledge those appointments for the record, for the purpose of the Conflict of Interest Policy. For the 2026-27 Committee year, the following appointments were made on February 26, 2026, unless otherwise stated:

1. Alberta Law Foundation (ALF) Board – Ronald A. Sorokin, KC (Appointment made at the January 13, 2026, *In Camera* Benchers meeting, effective immediately, until March 4, 2027)
2. Alberta Law Reform Institute (ALRI) Board – Sharilyn Nagina, KC
3. The Calgary Foundation Committee of Nominators – Grant Vogeli, KC
4. Faculty of Law Council – U of A – Arman Chak, KC
5. Faculty of Law Council – U of C – Ali Rakka
6. Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA) Board – Afshan Naveed, KC

4. Audit and Finance Committee Report

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

Mr. Sorokin reported that the Audit and Finance Committee (AFC) received an Orientation on March 18, 2026. On April 21, 2026, the AFC reviewed both the interim

financial statements and audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2025. As well, the AFC received a comprehensive Transforming-Us Program update and considered the recommendation to decrease the Bar Admission Subsidy. Agenda items five and six are recommended by the AFC for Benchers approval.

5. Law Society Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended December 31, 2025

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

Ms. Meade reported that the audit was completed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). PwC did not report any material misstatements or internal control deficiencies. She provided an overview of the Law Society audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2025.

Mr. Chak joined the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Motion: Sorokin/Neilson

That the Benchers approve the Law Society of Alberta's audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2025, as proposed in Appendix A.

Carried

6. Bar Admission Program Subsidy

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

Ms. Meade reported that the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED) administers the bar admission program for the law societies of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. Beginning with the Fall 2026 Accelerated Intake, CPLED will reduce Practice Readiness Education Program (PREP) tuition by \$1,100, from \$6,100 to \$5,000 per student, due to increased enrolment and economies of scale following the Law Society of British Columbia's adoption of the program. In light of this decrease, the Audit and Finance Committee (AFC) considered Management's recommendation to reduce the Law Society's subsidy.

Consistent with the approach of the other participating law societies, the recommendation is to split the \$1,100 tuition reduction evenly between articling students or firms and the Law Society. This would reduce the subsidy from \$2,600 to \$2,050 per articling student and is expected to generate annual savings of approximately \$315,000.

Mr. Evans joined the meeting by videoconference at 9:20 a.m.

The Benchers discussed whether the tuition decrease should be passed on entirely to students and firms rather than shared equally with the Law Society. Key points raised by Benchers, and staff responses, included:

- Applying the full tuition reduction to students, small firms, and sole practitioners would support access to justice.



- Maintaining consistency with the other participating law societies is important to avoid forum shopping across jurisdictions.
- Retaining half of the tuition savings is fiscally prudent, given ongoing infrastructure demands on the surplus and volatility in investment returns.
- Retaining the Law Society's 50% share of the \$1,100 tuition decrease could help limit future pressure on membership fees.

Motion: Sorokin/Neilson

That the Benchers approve the decrease in the Practice Readiness Education Program (PREP) bar admission subsidy from \$2,600 per articling student to \$2,050 per articling student, effective with the Fall 2026 Accelerated Intake commencing September 2026.

Carried

7. Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee Report

The Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee (PRRC) Report, circulated with the meeting materials, noted that the PRRC had met three times since the February 26, 2026, Bencher meeting. Recommendations arising from those meetings appear under public agenda items 8 and 10–14, and *in camera* agenda item 24.

Ms. Runnalls thanked the PRRC and staff for their efforts and commitment.

8. Reinstatement Rule Amendments and Guideline

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

Ms. Neuhart and Ms. Hansen provided a comprehensive presentation on proposed amendments to the reinstatement Rules, a new Rule and the introduction of a new Reinstatement Guideline (Guideline). The amendments establish a single Reinstatement Committee to streamline and clarify the process, dividing applications into two divisions: routine reinstatements and those involving disbarred or resigned members. The Executive Director is granted authority to approve Division One applications with conditions, while Division Two matters require a hearing and Bencher approval. The Guideline provides detailed procedures for assessing competence, imposing conditions, handling appeals, and publishing decisions, with enhanced transparency and efficiency.

Ms. Osler acknowledged this work was identified by the Board as a strategic priority on March 14, 2024, and the significant work was completed over the past two years by staff across multiple Law Society departments. She reminded the Benchers that the proposed Guideline is a living document that may be updated over time. She thanked the PRRC and staff for their efforts.

The Benchers asked staff to monitor whether Division One appeals could be streamlined to a hearing before a single Reinstatement Committee member. Staff

responded that this approach may raise procedural fairness concerns and indicated that the idea would be considered.

The following five motions were approved collectively.

Motion 1:Runnalls/Petersson

That the Benchers strike Part 4 of the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta* (Rules 107.2 through 118), including all headings, and insert a new Part 4 (Rules 108 through 114.3), including all headings, as proposed in Appendix A

Motion 2

That the Benchers adopt the *Reinstatement Guideline*, as proposed in Appendix B.

Motion 3

That the Benchers approve the consequential amendments to the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta*, as proposed in Appendix C.

Motion 4

That the Benchers approve the consequential amendments to the *Practice Review Committee Guideline* and the *Pre-Hearing and Hearing Guideline*, as proposed in Appendix D.

Motion 5

That the Benchers rescind the *Reinstatement of Disbarred Persons – Procedural Guide in Appendix E*.

Carried

9. Reinstatement Committee

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

Mr. Melnyk reported that, on staff's recommendation, the Nominating Committee proposed appointing an interim Reinstatement Committee so it could begin its work promptly. Ms. Moholityny added that establishing the Committee also requires amendments to the Committee Mandates and the General Terms of Reference for Regulatory Committees.

The following three motions were approved collectively.

Motion 1: Louie/Meyer

That the Benchers approve the Reinstatement Committee appointments as proposed in Appendix A.

Motion 2

That the Benchers approve the Committee Mandates amendments as proposed in Appendix B.

Motion 3

That the Benchers approve the General Terms of Reference for Regulatory Committees amendments as proposed in Appendix C.

Carried

10. Business Process Improvement Rules

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

Ms. Bailey presented the Business Process Improvement Rules, which propose amendments to streamline Law Society operations as part of the Transforming-Us program. A key change would align all Law Society membership and Alberta Lawyers Indemnity Association (ALIA) deadlines to a single annual date at the end of February. As a result, there would be no Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plan deadline in 2026, and the next plan would be due in February 2027. She also highlighted other changes, including the removal of installment payment options, the introduction of credit card payments, and updates to refund policies. In addition, the amendments would eliminate renewal requirements for limited liability partnerships (LLPs) and professional corporations (PCs), which are not required under the *Legal Profession Act*. The amendments would come into force in two phases to support a smooth transition and provide advance notice to the profession.

In response to Bencher questions, staff clarified that the Rule amendments were previously approved at the May 1, 2025, Bencher meeting in concept, citing accounting best practices and the Audit and Finance Committee's prior analysis in support of the amendments.

The following seven motions were approved collectively.

Motion 1: Runnalls/Petersson

That the Benchers amend the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta*, to implement the new membership dates to align Law Society membership processes, as follows:

- **amend clause 1(1)(k.1) to strike out “15” and insert “1” in its place and to strike out “March 14” and insert “the last day of February of the following year”;**
- **amend subrule 76(4), clause 79(1)(b) and subrule 164.1(2) to strike out “March 15” and insert “the last day of February” in its place,**

with these amendments coming into force January 1, 2027.

Motion 2

That the Benchers amend the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta*, to implement the new membership dates for Continuing Professional Development to align Law Society processes, as follows:



- amend subrule 67.2(1) clause (a) to strike out “October” and insert “March” in its place and clause (b) to strike out “October 1” and insert “the last day of February” in its place,

with these amendments coming into force August 1, 2026.

Motion 3

That the Benchers amend the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta*, to implement the new membership dates for Trust Accounting to align Law Society processes, as follows:

- amend Rule 119.38 clause (1)(a) and subrules (2) and (3) to strike out “March 31” and insert “the last day of February” in its place,

with these amendments coming into force January 1, 2027.

Motion 4

That the Benchers amend the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta*, to remove the late filing fee structure from the Trust Accounting Rules, as follows:

- amend subclause 75(3)(d)(i) to strike out “bb” and insert “aa” in its place and strike out “cc” and insert “bb” in its place.
- amend Rule 119 to strike out subrule (q) and re-letter subrules (r) to (cc) as subrules (q) to (bb);
- amend Rule 119.38 to strike out subrule (5),
- amend Rule 119.38 to renumber subrule (6) as (5) and, within that same subrule, insert “and” at the end of clause (a), strike out “, and” at the end of clause (b), strike out clause (c), and strike out “July 1, or, if June 30 in any year falls on a weekend day, July 3” and insert “the day immediately following the filing deadline” in its place;
- amend Rule 119.38 to renumber subrule (7) as (6) and, within that same subrule, strike “(6)” and insert “(5)” in its place;

with these amendments coming into force August 1, 2026.

Motion 5

That the Benchers amend the *Rules of the Law Society of Alberta* to discontinue the option to pay membership fees and indemnity levies by installment, as follows:

- amend subrules 79(2), 163(2), 147(1), 149.2(1) and 149.6(1) to insert “and” after clause (a), to strike out “; and” after clause (b) and to strike out clause (c); and
- amend Rule 165 by striking out subrule (3),

with these amendments coming into force January 1, 2027.

Motion 6

That the Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee recommend that the Benchers amend Rule 158 to rescind retrospective Professional Corporation renewals, by striking out subrule (7), with this amendment coming into force January 1, 2027.

Motion 7

That the Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee recommend that the Benchers strike out Rule 159.12 and its associated heading to rescind limited Liability Partnership renewals, with this amendment coming into force August 1, 2026.

Carried

11. Rule Amendments re Establishing the Office of the Practice and Equity Advisor

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

Ms. Chapman explained that the proposed Rule amendments will merge the roles of Practice Advisor and Equity Ombudsperson into a single office called Practice and Equity Advisor. The proposed amendments are to codify Practice Advisor and Equity Ombudsperson current practice and combine Rules to avoid duplication and reduce operational complexities.

Mr. Griffith added that it is ideal to combine into one role to reduce confusion. The Practice Advisors give advice and do not investigate, therefore, do not serve as ombudspersons.

Motion: Runnalls/Petersson

That the Benchers approve the Rules of the Law Society of Alberta (Rules) amendments proposed to Division 2A and 2B, to combine the Office of the Practice Advisor and Office of the Equity Ombudsperson, as follows:

- (a) in Division 2A, by amending the heading, subheadings and rule by striking the title “Practice Advisor” and inserting the title “Practice and Equity Advisor” wherever it appears;**
- (b) In Rule 31.1,**
 - (i) amend subrule (2) and insert new clause (a) and (b) to include the functions of the Equity Ombudsperson;**
 - (ii) add new subrule (3) to address the independence of the Practice and Equity Advisor;**



- (iii) **Renumber subrule (3) to new subrule (4) and amend for added clarity of confidentiality of Practice and Equity Advisor communications;**
- (iv) **renumber subrule (4) to new subrule (6) and amend for added clarity;**
- (v) **amend subrule (5) for added clarity;**

(c) strike out Division 2B in its entirety,

as proposed, and in Rule 2.3(3) after the words “Subject to” replace the word “Rules” with “Rule” and strike out “and 31.2” to correct cross-referencing.

Carried

12. Professional Development Profile Amendments

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

Ms. Bailey presented proposed amendments to the Professional Development Profile (PDP), noting that regular review is standard practice and that the amendments align with Benchers discussions since January 2026 on expanding substantive law competency. The amendments add a requirement for lawyers to maintain current knowledge and skills in their practice areas and include housekeeping updates related to the *Regulated Professions Neutrality Act* (RPNA). The revised PDP will be published and incorporated into the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) tool before the next cycle.

Motion: Runnalls/Petersson

That the Benchers approve the proposed amendments to the Legal Practice Domain and the Glossary of the Professional Development Profile as attached in Appendix A.

Carried

13. Code of Conduct Amendments for Legislative Compliance

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

Ms. Klein presented proposed amendments to the commentary on harassment and discrimination in the *Law Society of Alberta Code of Conduct* (Code of Conduct) to ensure compliance with the *Regulated Professions Neutrality Act* (RPNA). The amendments would take effect when the RPNA comes into force.

The Benchers discussed the RPNA's impact on the Code of Conduct, including concerns about expressive off-duty conduct and the need to preserve the harassment and discrimination provisions. The Benchers agreed to monitor the RPNA's practical effects, and Mr. Melnyk committed to adding ongoing review of those impacts as a

standing item on Executive Committee and Benchers agendas. In response to a question, Ms. Osler noted that she meets regularly with leaders of other major regulatory bodies and reports to the Benchers on any notable developments.

Motion: Runnalls/Petersson

That the Benchers approve the proposed changes to the Law Society of Alberta Code of Conduct, as attached in Appendix A, to ensure compliance with the Regulated Professions Neutrality Act (RPNA), effective when the RPNA comes into force.

Carried

14. Lawyer Competence and Ethics Committee Report

The Lawyer Competence and Ethics Committee (LCEC) Report, included with the materials circulated prior to the meeting, provided an update that the LCEC had one meeting since the February 26, 2026, Benchers meeting. The LCEC focused their discussion on the results of the Substantive Law Competency Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Survey that was distributed to the profession in November 2025. This information will inform the LCEC's work on substantive law competence this year.

15. Federation of Law Societies of Canada Report

Mr. Jensen submitted a Federation of Law Societies of Canada (Federation) report that was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting. Highlights included updates on the Federation's governance review, Federation Council meeting discussion items, Standing Committee on the Model Code meeting and the second consultation related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 27.

16. CONSENT AGENDA

Documentation for this item was circulated with the materials prior to the meeting. No requests were made to remove this from the consent agenda.

Motion: Bourgeois/Louie

That the Benchers approve the February 26, 2026, Public Benchers Meeting minutes as circulated.

Carried

17. EXTERNAL REPORTS

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

17.1 Alberta Law Foundation (ALF) Report

Mr. Sorokin provided a funding application status update, since his report was prepared on April 14, 2026.

17.2 Alberta Law Reform Institute (ALRI) Report

Ms. Petersson invited submissions for Alberta law reform projects for ALRI's consideration.

17.3 Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society (Assist) Report**17.4 Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Report**

Ms. Coderre invited Alberta lawyers to vote in the CBA Alberta Board of Directors election by May 24, 2026.

17.5 Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED) Report**17.6 Legal Education of Society of Alberta Report****17.7 Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA) Report****18. Other Business**

A Bencher requested that an agenda item be added to address the process for adding agenda items.

19. Adjournment

The public meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.