

## Building the network

### Pro Bono Stakeholders' Round Table



President Rod Jerke, QC, welcomes delegates to the third annual Pro Bono Stakeholders' Round Table

Pro bono stakeholders from across Alberta came together on October 23 and 24, 2008, to share information and resources and to develop new ideas that will enhance pro bono delivery to the community. Building the Network: The Third Annual Stakeholders' Round Table on Pro Bono Legal Services in Alberta is the third consecutive conference of the pro bono stakeholders in Alberta. Our pro bono network is growing and the demographic trends indicate that the need and

demand for the organized delivery of pro bono legal services for low income Albertans is also increasing. There were some new faces around the table this year and what a great opportunity to

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meet each other, share ideas and to build the relationships that will enhance the network of pro bono service delivery in Alberta.

The discussions for each session and the outcomes reached are reported in the *Outcomes Report: Third Annual Stakeholders' Round Table*, now available in hard copy from PBLA or at [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca). The Stakeholders' Round Table is a worthwhile experience for those in the pro bono community so plans are already underway for next year's Round Table to be held on October 22 and 23, 2009. ■

## Best practice guide for law firm pro bono

### PBLA develops pro bono guide

The PBLA pro bono best practice guide for law firms entitled *Investing in Pro Bono: A Best Practice Guide for Pro Bono Legal Services by Law Firms* is now available on the PBLA website. The best practice guide provides practical information and a policy template for creating a successful pro bono legal services program. *Investing in Pro Bono* is a result of the managing partners' meeting hosted by PBLA in Calgary in May 2008. A key message arising from these meetings was to develop and provide a best practice guide with model pro bono policies for law firms. The development of this guide is part of PBLA's outreach to law firms and managing partners to develop pro bono programs and policies for their law firms.

The guide outlines why a pro bono program is important, advantages of having a pro bono program and how to formalize a pro bono program (see listed advantages, page 3). Sample pro bono policies for law firms have been developed that can be adapted by each law firm depending on its needs. It is anticipated that law firms will use this guide as a valuable resource in establishing a pro bono program and creating opportunities for their lawyers to become involved in pro bono service. If you or your law firm are interested in developing a law firm pro bono policy, contact the PBLA office.

### Pro bono lawyer provides service to PBLA

PBLA welcomes Janice Pasay as its first "pro bono lawyer." Janice has been practicing as a pro bono lawyer with the Volunteer Lawyers Service since 2006 when she moved from active status into the "active for pro bono service" category of membership with the Law Society. Janice was called to the Alberta bar in 2003, having articulated with Bennett Jones and practiced in the area of corporate securities with the firm of Burstall Ward before becoming a pro bono lawyer. Janice is providing her time and expertise to PBLA on a pro bono basis through a project with the Volunteer Lawyers Service and developed *Investing in Pro Bono: A Best Practice Guide* with assistance from summer students Adolfo Peters and Aidan Henderson. Janice will continue her pro bono service to PBLA by assisting in the outreach to law firms to develop pro bono best practices. ■

# Pro Bono: Spanning the Nation

## Alberta delegates attend national pro bono conference



*Executive Directors Judy Godlonton (Lethbridge Legal Guidance) and Kathy Parsons (Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic) enjoy networking at the national pro bono conference*

The second national pro bono conference entitled Pro Bono: Spanning the Nation held in Vancouver on September 17 to 19, 2008, was a well attended event and a credit to the growing pro bono movement across the country. Delegates, including a very strong contingent from Alberta, came from every province across Canada. Many Alberta delegates were sponsored by PBLA.

In total, over 200 delegates including lawyers, program coordinators, project managers, legal advocates, executive directors, consultants, board members and others came to attend featured workshops and plenary sessions on a wide variety of pro bono issues. The conference was officially opened by The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada. Other guest speakers included Lesra Martin, Dennis Edney and The Honourable Louise Arbour, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Pro Bono: Spanning the Nation was a worthwhile and valuable experience to network, share ideas and gain momentum for delivery of pro bono legal services across Canada. Alberta delegates appreciated the affirmation that other Canadian jurisdictions are facing many of the same opportunities and challenges that we are in Alberta and that we are all not alone in the work that is being done to provide access to justice for low income people.

The conference was co-hosted by Pro Bono Law Alberta, Pro Bono Law Ontario and Pro Bono Law of BC. A big thank you goes to Pro Bono Law of BC Executive Director Jamie Maclaren and his staff for their tremendous efforts as the hometown hosts for the conference. PBLA is slated to host the third national pro bono conference in the fall of 2010 so look for more information over the coming months.

## National Pro Bono Awards

The National Pro Bono Awards were presented at a gala dinner during the national pro bono conference in Vancouver. Edmonton lawyers Dennis Edney and Nathan Whitling, nominated by PBLA Vice-President John Henderson, QC, received the prestigious national award in the Lawyer category for their pro bono work in representing Omar Khadr. Khadr was 15 years old when



*Nathan Whitling and Dennis Edney accept their award at the national pro bono conference in Vancouver*

captured by American forces following a firefight in Afghanistan and has spent the last six years in detention camps at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Mr Edney and Mr Whitling have argued Khadr's case before Canadian and US courts and military tribunals, and have both contributed hundreds, if not thousands, of pro bono hours to this case.

Also receiving national pro bono awards were Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP in the Law Firm category and Community Legal Services for Saskatoon Inner City, Inc. (CLASSIC) in the Pro Bono Program category. Congratulations to all award winners for your outstanding achievements and contributions in the provision of pro bono legal services. ■

## Pro Bono Volunteer in Profile (VIP)

Visit our website at [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca) to view two new VIPs – Lonny Balbi, QC, and Jennifer Lepp. Lonny Balbi is a pro bono leader in the Calgary community and is one of the founding members of the Dispute Resolution Officer Project in Calgary. Jennifer Lepp volunteers her time extensively to a number of legal and non-legal related causes, a dedication that has made her a rising star in the pro bono community.

If you know of a lawyer who should be recognized for his/her pro bono service to low income Albertans, contact PBLA. ■



*Lonny Balbi, QC*



*Jennifer Lepp*

# Open for business

## Grande Prairie Legal Guidance



Susan Billington, QC, and Ruth Hamm outside the new space for GPLG

Grande Prairie Legal Guidance (GPLG), a not-for-profit joint initiative between Pro Bono Law Alberta, the Community Village and Grande Prairie lawyers is now open for business. GPLG joins other successful pro bono legal clinics operating across Alberta including in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge. The clinic will offer free legal guidance to low income individuals who have a legal concern and do not qualify for Legal Aid.

PBLA is pleased to be working collaboratively with local Grande Prairie lawyer Derek Van Tassell, who has been instrumental in working with PBLA to spearhead this exciting new project. Through the pro bono clinic, volunteer lawyers from the Grande Prairie community will donate their professional time to meet with clients and provide legal guidance and information. Legal clinics will be offered twice per month on Saturday afternoons and Tuesday evenings.

The establishment of a clinic in Grande Prairie has been a key goal in PBLA's strategic planning for ensuring low income Albertans have access to justice throughout the province. It was identified during the initial pro bono stakeholder meetings in 2006 and 2007 that there is a great need for pro bono legal services in the Grande Prairie community.

We are pleased to welcome Bianca Cooper in the role of Program Coordinator of GPLG. She has been working with PBLA staff to set up the office in Grande Prairie. Bianca has recently moved from South Africa to Grande Prairie and brings a solid background in office administration. She has made several contacts in the community and will manage the office on a part-time basis.

PBLA is grateful to Derek Van Tassell for his dedication to this project and to Ruth Hamm of the Community Village, who has made it possible for us to move into their facility. We invite all members of the Grande Prairie Bar and others with an interest in this new clinic to contact GPLG at 780-882-0036 and to visit the GPLG website at [www.gplg.ca](http://www.gplg.ca) ■

# CLERC: On the move

Children's Legal and Educational Resource Centre (CLERC) is moving to its own building. Built in 1910, this building originally housed the Calgary West Alberta Government Telephone Exchange. From 1939 to 2007 the building was owned by the American Women's Club who sold it to CLERC in 2007. Renovations are underway with a target of occupancy later this winter. Watch for more information about an official open house to celebrate CLERC's new space in the new year.



In the past year, CLERC has completed and published comprehensive volunteer training materials for family law lawyers to represent young people in custody and access disputes. In June of 2008, five experienced family law lawyers participated in CLERC's first training sessions and have since taken on case files from CLERC's waiting list.

CLERC will soon launch a new website that will provide information about civil law matters to young Albertans. The website will also allow young people to submit questions directly to volunteer lawyers online. CLERC will be looking for lawyers to who wish to interact with young people online and engage in related research. Please call 403-207-9029 if you are interested in volunteering. ■

## Advantages of having a law firm pro bono policy

There are many reasons why law firms adopt pro bono programs:

- Helps recruit talented law students and new lawyers by differentiating the firm by its commitment to pro bono legal work.
- Increases job satisfaction of the firm's lawyers by encouraging personally rewarding work and providing a challenge that may not otherwise be available.
- Creates opportunities for lawyers to develop skills and enhance training.
- Creates a culture of goodwill within the law firm.
- Enables the firm to provide its lawyers with an opportunity to give back to society.
- Provides for better supervision, quality control and tracking of pro bono work done by the firm.
- Promotes a positive profile for the firm in the community.
- Strengthens relationships within the firm by encouraging senior lawyers to work with junior lawyers.
- Builds public confidence in lawyers and the justice system.

## PBLA welcomes new project manager



Cecelia Frohlick

Welcome to Cecelia Frohlick, our new project manager who started with PBLA on September 2, 2008. Cecelia comes to PBLA from Junior Achievement where she has worked for the past four years, most recently in the role of Director of Programs. Cecelia is an energetic not-for-profit manager who has a highly skilled background in building consensus with community partners. Cecelia is thrilled at the opportunity to work with the legal profession in developing and implementing pro bono programs to assist low income Albertans. ■

## PBLA thanks Susan Billington and welcomes Gillian Marriott



Susan Billington, QC, Rod Jerke, QC, Gillian Marriott, incoming PBLA executive director

PBLA will experience a change in leadership in 2009. Susan Billington, QC, has been on secondment from the Law Society for the past two years, as executive director, to launch PBLA as the Legacy Project in celebration of LSA's 100th anniversary. Susan will be returning to her position as Policy and Program Counsel at the Law Society.

Susan has been instrumental in the formation of PBLA and has worked toward this end for several years. Her vision, commitment and strong managerial ability has enabled PBLA to successfully complete its first year of operations in March 2008 as a viable not-for-profit provincial organization working to create opportunities for Alberta lawyers to provide pro bono legal services to low income people.

PBLA welcomes Gillian Marriott to the position of executive director. Gillian, managing partner and family law lawyer at Dunphy Best Blocksom LLP, served on the PBLA Board of Directors as treasurer. As well, she served as president on the board of the Children's Legal and Educational Resource Centre (CLERC), a charitable organization committed to providing legal advice, education and representation to children and youth. Gillian looks forward to working with the board and staff of PBLA in her new capacity as executive director and will be starting her position on January 5, 2009. ■

## News from the network

**Edmonton Community Legal Centre** – Debbie Klein is the new executive director of the Edmonton Community Legal Centre. Debbie has over 24 years experience in the not-for-profit sector, the past 16 in the provision of community-based legal services. Sarah Eadie, staff lawyer, is also new to Edmonton Community Legal Centre. Welcome Debbie and Sarah!

The Edmonton Community Legal Centre has been in operation since 2002, providing free legal services in the areas of civil and administrative law to people living with low income in the Edmonton area. For information visit [www.eclc.ca](http://www.eclc.ca)

**Pro Bono Law Alberta** - At their November meeting, the PBLA Board of Directors and staff reviewed and updated the *PBLA Strategic Plan* adopted in September 2007. During the session, the board reflected on the accomplishments over the past year, reviewed the key priorities in the *2007 Strategic Plan* and identified priorities for the next one to two years.

To review the *PBLA Strategic Plan Update – November 2008* and the *Strategic Plan September 2007* please visit the PBLA website at [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca) under the Library tab: PBLA Reports.

**Volunteer Lawyers Service** has launched a new website: [www.volunteerlawyersalberta.com](http://www.volunteerlawyersalberta.com). For information on projects and services, contact Amy Cooper, project coordinator, at 403-218-4317 or [vls@cba-alberta.org](mailto:vls@cba-alberta.org)

**The Women's Centre of Calgary** Legal Advice Clinic provides legal services to women in need. PBLA is pleased to have worked collaboratively with the Association of Women Lawyers and the Women's Centre over the past year to enhance access to justice for women in Calgary.

For information regarding the Women's Centre Legal Advice Clinic, contact Cecelia Frohlick, PBLA project manager, at [Cecelia.frohlick@pbla.ca](mailto:Cecelia.frohlick@pbla.ca) or 403-541-4816; or Carrie Blaug, program coordinator at [womens-centre@shaw.ca](mailto:womens-centre@shaw.ca) or 403-264-1155.



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Pro Bono Network News is published by Pro Bono Law Alberta Society, a not-for-profit charitable organization.

PBLA's mission is to improve access to justice by increasing the scope and availability of pro bono legal services for Albertans of limited means. Pro bono legal services are intended to complement, not to replace, a properly funded legal aid system.

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