



# Pro Bono NETWORK NEWS

The Newsletter of Pro Bono Law Alberta

FALL/WINTER 2009

## Raising the Pro Bono Bar in Alberta

Events in Edmonton and Calgary highlight pro bono volunteer opportunities



Calgary Event: Rod Jerke, QC; Lawna Hurl; Gillian Marriott; The Honourable A. Gail Vickery, Chief Judge; Bruce Churchill-Smith, QC

National Pro Bono Week ran from October 25 through 31, 2009, and Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA) and the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Alberta Branch collaborated to co-host volunteer lawyer recruitment events in both Edmonton and Calgary. Receptions were held at the CBA offices and invitations were extended to newly admitted and young lawyers. Gillian Marriott, President of CBA Alberta Branch and Executive Director of PBLA, hosted the events which were aimed at providing information to new lawyers about the opportunities available to them to provide pro bono legal services at legal clinics and organizations across the province.

The Edmonton event held on October 27, 2009, featured



Edmonton Event: Donald Cranston, QC, and The Honourable Mr Justice Allan H. Wachowich, former Chief Justice of the Court of Queens Bench

keynote speakers The Honourable Mr Justice Allan H. Wachowich, former Chief Justice of the Court of Queens Bench, and Ms Sarah Eadie, Staff Lawyer with Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC). Representatives from ECLC, Pro Bono Students Canada (University of Alberta) and Student Legal Services had the opportunity to network with new lawyers and articling students and speak to them about the benefits of volunteering within the legal community.

The Calgary event, held on October 28, 2009, featured keynote speakers Mr Bruce Churchill-Smith, QC, President of PBLA, and Ms Lawna Hurl, Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG) Board Member and 2007 Volunteer of the Year. Mr Rod Jerke, QC, President Elect, Law Society of Alberta and Past President of PBLA, and The Honourable A. Gail Vickery, Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta also spoke about their passion for pro bono. The Honourable John D. Rooke, recently appointed Associate Chief Justice, was also in attendance. The Calgary event highlighted the

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## Pro Bono: For the public good

Excerpted from Ms Lawna Hurl's address to new lawyers at the Calgary event, October 28, 2009.

If you have recently been called to the Bar, this is no small feat and you should be very proud of your accomplishment. With your success comes great privilege and great knowledge, but it also comes with an obligation to our community to uphold the principles and ideals of our justice system.

Even if you are about to embark on a career in tax or commercial real estate or mergers and acquisitions, there are still many excellent pro bono opportunities out there. Pro bono can take many forms – advising not for profit corporations in tax planning, guiding young entrepreneurs on business deals or informing low income tenants about their legal rights are all great pro bono opportunities.

The term “pro bono” is derived from Latin and means “for the public good,” in other words, doing something for a better society. Lawyers have a special responsibility to perform pro bono work because of their unique ability to ensure that everyone in our community – regardless of income – has meaningful access to the justice system. ■

*Ms Hurl is the recipient of the 2007 Volunteer of the Year Award and currently serves on the Calgary Legal Guidance Board of Directors.*

## Encouraging pro bono – one cup at a time



PBLA Executive Assistant Myra Skerrett and Project Manager Cecelia Frohlick

PBLA partnered with the Career Services Office at the University of Calgary Faculty of Law and Pro Bono Students Canada to host the Pro Bono/Public Interest Career Forum – Remember Your Personal Statements in September 2009. The objective of this forum was to provide students with examples of public interest career paths or how pro bono work can be incorporated into a career path. Students were encouraged to give back to community by providing a donation in exchange for soup served in a PBLA mug. This is the second year in a row that PBLA has partnered with the U of C Faculty of Law to address law students and encourage them to consider pro bono service as part of their legal careers. ■

## Lawyer roster program

PBLA is examining lawyer roster programs in other jurisdictions further to a grant provided by Alberta Justice. Recommendations will be made on program parameters and mechanics involved in establishing a lawyer roster in Alberta. A roster program that facilitates pro bono and limited scope retainer work is being studied with a view to address the need of indigent candidates who are ineligible for Legal Aid and who require legal services outside the scope of existing legal services.

Work completed to date includes a comparative study of roster programs across Canada (BC, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec). Developments in the United States relating to limited scope retainer programs are being monitored closely. Stakeholder feedback from legal clinics in Alberta has been received and shows considerable consensus around a roster program expanding the scope of community legal services.

This project meets an objective of PBLA to work collaboratively with existing legal services and foster the development of new programs to further its mission: to improve access to justice by increasing the scope and availability of pro bono legal services to Albertans of limited means. ■

## Pro bono Volunteer in Profile

Visit our website at [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca) to view our new Volunteer in Profile (VIP) Mr Christopher Holmes. Admitted to the Law Society of Alberta in 1979, Mr Holmes has been volunteering since the early 1980s for many different organizations. Mr Holmes has provided free legal consultations to clients of the Edmonton Women's Shelter and the SAIF Society in St. Albert and has been involved with the St. Albert Breakfast Lions Club, St. Stephens College and the development and construction of seniors' housing. Most recently, Mr Holmes has volunteered for over seven years with the Edmonton Community Legal Centre.



Christopher D. Holmes

PBLA is pleased to recognize Mr Holmes as a Pro Bono VIP. If you know of a lawyer who should be recognized for pro bono service to low income Albertans, contact PBLA. ■

## National pro bono conference highlights access to justice

Save the date for the third national pro bono conference to take place in Calgary on September 15 to 17, 2010.

The conference will bring stakeholders from across Canada to discuss issues around access to justice and the role that pro bono organizations play in addressing these issues. As well, the conference will create a forum for organizations to share program information, project ideas and initiatives.

Within the national spotlight, Alberta pro bono activities and projects will be highlighted among media and within the profession. By drawing attention to the pro bono movement and to the clinics and organizations involved in pro bono service delivery, the conference is viewed as a means to promote volunteerism and to engage managing partners and other law firm professional leaders. For information, contact [info@pbla.ca](mailto:info@pbla.ca). ■

# Save the date

## The 3<sup>RD</sup> National Pro Bono Conference

September 15 to 17, 2010 • Calgary, Alberta

For information contact Pro Bono Law Alberta: [info@pbla.ca](mailto:info@pbla.ca)



## Grande Prairie Legal Guidance celebrates first anniversary!

In November 2009, Grande Prairie Legal Guidance (GPLG) celebrates its first full year of providing access to justice to those in the Grande Prairie area. GPLG continues to grow to meet the needs of the community. In September 2009, lunch time clinics were a solution to the busy schedule of lawyers who want to volunteer but found it difficult to fit evening clinics into their schedules. The lunch time clinics are offered during the weeks when no evening clinic is being held. In addition, at the suggestion of the volunteer lawyers, GPLG implemented a “forms assistance program” whereby clients will get assistance in filling out forms that they will require. This process is administered by an office volunteer at the clinic. GPLG staff/volunteer complement currently consists of a part-time program coordinator and two volunteers (non-lawyer).

Volunteer recruitment, clinic outreach and community agency collaboration remain high priorities for GPLG. Through the program coordinator’s volunteer recruitment efforts, a total of 18 lawyers are now actively involved at the clinic. ■

## Volunteer appreciation in Central Alberta

The Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic (CACLC) celebrated National Pro Bono Week by bringing their volunteers together at a luncheon on October 28, 2009. The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Ms Paulette Gelinas for her dedication as a volunteer receptionist at evening clinics since the clinic started. “Paulette is one of those volunteers that you can rely on time and time again. She is so dependable and always so cheerful when she comes to the clinic,” commented Executive Director Kathy Parsons.



*Luke Kurata, 2009 Prism Award recipient, with Paulette Gelinas, Volunteer of the Year*

The CACLC and the Central Alberta Bar Association team up each year to give out the Prism Award to recognize a volunteer lawyer for outstanding commitment to pro bono legal services in Central Alberta. Mr Luke Karata was honoured this year for his many years of pro bono service within the community including volunteering with CACLC.

“Luke has been supportive of the clinic since the beginning and has provided pro bono assistance to people who need legal help, long before we even existed,” says Suzanne Alexander-Smith, CACLC Board Chair. “We are excited to be recognizing the tremendous service that our volunteers contribute to the community by providing free legal service to people who often have nowhere else to turn.” ■

## Brokering of new partnership

### Davis LLP and The Alex Pathways to Housing Program



*Gillian Marriott, Dr Pam Thompson, Bruce Churchill-Smith, QC, and Kate Saunders, Davis LLP, celebrate the launch of The Alex Pathways to Housing Pro Bono Project*

At the Annual General Meeting in June 2009, PBLA announced a new law firm pro bono project brokered between Davis LLP and The Alex Pathways to Housing Program. This new pro bono project entitled The Alex Pathways to Housing Pro Bono Project brings together The Alex – an organization that has for the past 35 years been the leader in health care delivery to at-risk, low income, homeless and immigrant Calgarians – and Davis LLP, which will provide legal support and services for the project. A Lunch and Learn workshop was presented to Davis LLP to inform lawyers within the firm of the opportunities that are available to them through involvement in the project. Davis LLP also presented a privacy workshop for 35 staff members of The Alex. Davis LLP is also providing support in the area of wills and estates for The Alex Pathways to Housing clients as well as additional support in other areas of law. ■

## Volunteer Lawyers Service now operated by PBLA

Volunteer Lawyers Service (VLS) is a pro bono program initiated by the United Way of Calgary and Area, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Alberta Branch, the Law Society of Alberta and the Association of General Counsel of Alberta. VLS assists eligible non-partisan charitable organizations in obtaining pro bono legal services that would otherwise be unavailable to them due to a lack of financial resources. As of August 2009 the administration of VLS was assumed by PBLA. In-kind services previously provided by CBA Alberta are now being provided PBLA. As of November 2009, 80 volunteer lawyers are registered on the VLS roster. ■

organizations and legal clinics that offer volunteer opportunities in Calgary for lawyers. Representatives from Calgary Legal Guidance, Children's Legal and Educational Resource Centre, The Women's Centre Legal Advice Clinic, Student Legal Assistance and Pro Bono Students Canada (University of Calgary) were in attendance. Lawyers had the opportunity to hear first-hand how providing pro bono volunteer services in the legal community assists in increasing access to justice for Albertans.

PBLA would like to thank Mr Justice Allan H. Wachowich and Mr Justice N.C. Wittmann, Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta for personally signing all the letters that were sent out to new lawyers in Calgary and Edmonton. New lawyer recruitment events will be taking place in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Grande Prairie in the spring of 2010. ■

## Art auction a success for kids

October 14, 2009 marked another successful fund-raising event for the Children's Legal and Educational Resource Centre (CLERC). The Fourth Annual Artful Bench and Bar event was attended by more than 200 of Alberta's finest lawyers, judges and friends of the legal community. Patrons viewed and bid on 26 original paintings, photographs and crafts donated by judges, lawyers and friends of the organization. Auction items included works by local up-and-coming artists and seasoned professionals including a signed Picasso print. The event featured both live and silent auctions.



CLERC raised \$32,000 to support the organization's mandate to provide legal advice, education and representation to children and youth who otherwise would not have access to legal support. CLERC would like to thank event sponsors Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, Campbell O'Hara, Felesky Flynn LLP and Pipella Law, as well as those who donated work to the auction and event participants.

For more information on the Artful Bench and Bar or CLERC, visit [www.clerc-calgary.ca](http://www.clerc-calgary.ca), call 403-207-9029 or email [clerc@clerc-calgary.ca](mailto:clerc@clerc-calgary.ca). ■

## Community Spirit funding helps build awareness

The Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Donation Grant enabled PBLA to create tools to build awareness about both PBLA and the pro bono clinics that offer pro bono service delivery in Alberta. The grant assisted in the creation of communication pieces including clinic brochures, info cards, the newsletter, the PBLA annual report, the development of an online database for clinic data collection and the creation of banner stands, pens and mugs. ■



## News from the network

**Pro Bono Law Alberta:** On November 5 and 6, 2009, PBLA hosted the fourth annual Pro Bono Stakeholders' Round Table entitled Strengthening the Ties. Workshops included new conflicts rules amendments, insurance for pro bono service delivery, new developments in technology for rural service delivery and updates on planning for the national pro bono conference. The Round Table meeting continues to be an important venue for collaboration and information sharing around pro bono service delivery. The full report will be available at [www.pbla.ca](http://www.pbla.ca).

**New web sites for clinics:** Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic ([communitylegalclinic.net](http://communitylegalclinic.net)) and Lethbridge Legal Guidance ([lethbridgelegalguidance.com](http://lethbridgelegalguidance.com)) have newly designed web sites. The sites, developed by PBLA, are linked to the PBLA web site and reflect a more consistent, professional brand for both clinics. A web site was also developed for Grande Prairie Legal Guidance ([gplg.ca](http://gplg.ca)). The web sites are user friendly for the public, provide external links to other organizations and have the ability to expand to incorporate a full range of resources that will be helpful to both the lawyers who volunteer in those communities and the potential clients who are seeking pro bono legal services.

**Grande Prairie Legal Guidance (GPLG):** As of September 2009, lunch time clinics are now offered as a solution for lawyers who want to volunteer but may find it difficult to fit evening clinics into their schedules. The lunch time clinics are offered during the weeks when no evening clinic is being held. Contact GPLG at 780-882-0036 to volunteer.

**Volunteer Lawyers Service:** PBLA is pleased to welcome Program Coordinator Selena Gignac as of December 1, 2009. Selena has an extensive background in program development for adults and youth, event and office coordination and is working towards certification as an immigration consultant. The VLS program will operate Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 7:30 am to 12:30 pm. If you are a lawyer and wish to volunteer, call Selena at 403-541-4803 or email [vls@pbla.ca](mailto:vls@pbla.ca).



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Pro Bono Network News is published by Pro Bono Law Alberta, 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.

PBLA is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation and the Law Society of Alberta.



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