



The Pro Bono Profile

PRO BONO LAW OF BC'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Ryan Parsons (right) receives the Court of Appeal Program award from Attorney General Wally Oppal and Jamie Maclaren.

Roster Program Lawyers of the Year Announced

Attorney General Wally Oppal and PBLBC Executive Director Jamie Maclaren were pleased to announce the 2007 Roster Program Lawyers of the Year at PBLBC's Second Annual Appreciation Breakfast on February 22 in Vancouver. For each of PBLBC's five Roster Programs, one volunteer lawyer was honoured for his or her distinguished service in providing pro bono representation and assistance to British Columbian individuals and organizations of limited means.

Ryan Parsons of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP won the Court of Appeal Program award for his assistance in co-administering the Program with colleague Angus M. Gunn Jr., and for his eleventh-hour heroics in successfully appealing an order for eviction of a social housing tenant. **Michael Steven** of Kerfoot & Company won the Family Law Program award for providing pro bono assistance to several different clients in difficult circumstances. **Josh Paterson** of Fiorillo Glavin Gordon earned the Federal Court of Appeal Program award for his tireless representation of a low-income person who was denied CPP disability benefits. **Louise Kim** of Edwards Kenny & Bray, a veritable wunderkind in the pro bono world, won the Judicial Review Program award for successfully representing dozens of low-income tenants up and through the Court of Appeal. Last but not least, **Jaime Mellott**, a Vancouver sole practitioner, took home the Solicitors' Program award for providing pro bono assistance to three different non-profit organizations, and for speaking at a legal seminar in Kelowna.

The five award-winners are only a tiny sample of the many roster lawyers that provided pro bono services through PBLBC, and so we tip our hat to all of them.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 16 – 22, 2007: Law Week, BC-wide
April 27, 2007: Pro Bono Practice CLE, Vancouver
June 1, 2007: Release of 2007 PBLBC Survey Results
September 4, 2007: Publication of PBLBC Law Firm Pro Bono Guide for Students

The First National Pro Bono Conference: Pro Bono Sweeps the Nation

Over two rainy days in November, pro bono stakeholders from across Canada convened upon Toronto for the first-ever national pro bono conference co-hosted by Pro Bono Law of BC and Pro Bono Law Ontario. Hailing from communities large and small, over 200 representatives of community groups, law firms, law associations, foundations, government agencies, courts and the judiciary attended from every province except Newfoundland. A broad base of pro bono stakeholders discussed the effective provision of pro bono legal services to low- and modest-income Canadians, and together developed a fuller picture of the roles that pro bono can play in improving access to justice.

Plenary sessions and workshops generated strong enthusiasm among participants for finding creative ways of providing pro bono legal services to people and community groups who cannot otherwise afford them. In particular, participants discussed how to improve the coordination of pro bono services with legal aid programs, how to increase involvement of the private bar, how to develop and maintain programs for assisting unrepresented litigants, and various ways of leveraging corporate law departments to contribute to local community development initiatives.

On the first night of the conference, the Honourable Roy McMurtry, Chief Justice of Ontario, presented the first National Pro Bono awards at a special dinner and awards event in Toronto's distillery district. Over 250 guests applauded the pro bono efforts of Vancouver lawyer John-Paul Boyd, the Calgary Legal Guidance program, and McCarthy Tétrault LLP;

three award recipients honoured for their distinguished service in the provision of pro bono legal services to the poor and disadvantaged.

John-Paul Boyd took home the Distinguished Service Award for an Individual. A family law litigator and mediator with Aaron, Gordon & Daykin in Vancouver, Boyd boasts an impressive list of volunteer and public education efforts. He presents public legal seminars on family law topics through the Mission Public Library and such organizations as the Battered Women's Services Society and the People's Law School. He also serves as a clinic lawyer for the Salvation Army Pro Bono Program, a supervising lawyer for the UBC Law Students' Legal Advice Program, and a Family Law Program Coordinator for Pro Bono Law of BC.

The conference ended with a luncheon event called the Pro Bono Marketplace where representatives from a number of local community groups joined conference participants over lunch to discuss potential new pro bono partnerships.

The conference was made possible by generous grants from the Law Foundation of Ontario, the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and the Alberta Law Foundation. In addition, law firms Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP and McCarthy Tétrault sponsored special events. Pro Bono Law of BC and Pro Bono Law Ontario intend to build upon the success of this first conference in order to co-host a second national pro bono conference in Vancouver in the summer of 2008. Mark your calendars—we guarantee it won't rain (well, maybe not).

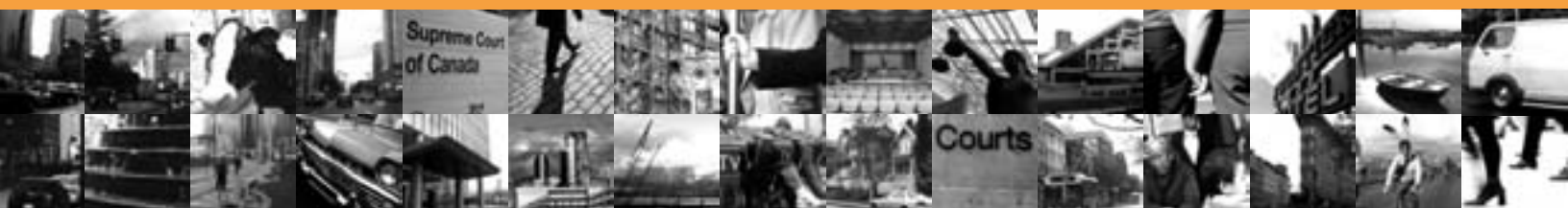


L-R: Iain Scott, McCarthy Tétrault; John-Paul Boyd; Chief Justice McMurtry; Mary Lynn Dorsey, Calgary Legal Guidance; James Peacock QC, Gowlings LLP

Another First: A CLE on Pro Bono Practice

On April 27 in Vancouver, the Continuing Legal Education Society of BC, in association with Pro Bono Law of BC, is holding a full-credit CLE course on pro bono practice skills and resources. Entitled Pro Bono Practice 2007, it is particularly relevant to pro bono lawyers and poverty law practitioners. It will look at soft skills such as interviewing and problem solving for clients, as well as “nuts and bolts” law and practice in traditional poverty law areas such as debtor/creditor law and landlord/tenant law.

The course has a reduced price of \$100 for registrations made prior to March 30th, 2007, and a price of \$125 thereafter. For those who cannot afford the registration price, Pro Bono Law of BC is pleased to provide a limited number of full bursaries to its volunteer lawyers and to other interested lawyers, law students and advocates. Please contact Jamie Maclaren, PBLBC's Executive Director, at 604-893-8932 or jmaclaren@probononet.bc.ca for further information regarding the course and/or the bursaries.



VOLUNTEER PROFILE GLEN EWAN, QC

If you look closely on Google Earth at the valley nestled between the Selkirk, Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges in southeastern British Columbia, you will see the town of Golden. If you look even closer, you may discern a golden light emanating from the small law firm of Ewan & McKenzie. The golden light (though strictly metaphorical) shines from the generous heart of Glen Ewan, QC—a lawyer dedicated to mountain life and the true spirit of pro bono.

Glen has operated a general practice in Golden since his call to the bar in 1978. A quintessential small-town, do-everything practitioner, he is counsel to local residents, businesses and organizations in real estate, wills, estates, corporate and criminal matters. He works alongside Bruce McKenzie, his law partner of twenty years. He lives alongside Bev, his marital partner of nearly thirty-three years. They are the proud parents of three sons.

Like most small town lawyers, Glen takes on his fair share of pro bono files. But his commitment to pro bono far exceeds the odd walk-in file. He is a frequent lecturer on legal issues for lay people and college students. He is also a former Governor of the Law Foundation of BC. Glen prides himself on acting as an *amicus curiae* in Provincial Court, and it is his firm's policy to provide pro bono summary advice to clients who cannot afford to pay. Last October, Glen and Bev cut their vacation short so that Glen could speak at a PBLBC Non-Profit Seminar in Kelowna. We at PBLBC are extremely grateful for Glen's golden devotion to pro bono.



LAW FIRM PROFILE BLAKE, CASSELS & GRAYDON LLP

Until recently, the national slogan for Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP was “Blakes Means Business” [it is now “Our Signature is Business”]. And with more than 500 lawyers in offices in Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and all over the world, there is no question that Blakes is dedicated to doing good business by providing high-quality counsel on business law. Blakes also sees the business case for providing pro bono services, and as a firm with a conscience, has taken a leadership role in supporting pro bono initiatives in Canada.

Many of Blakes' Vancouver lawyers volunteer through pro bono programs like the Western Society to Access Justice, the Salvation Army Pro Bono Program and PBLBC's Roster Programs. Blakes also provides pro bono legal advice and assistance to many worthy non-profit organizations on issues including charitable activities, child advocacy, employment, litigation and corporate law. In order to enable and encourage its associates and partners to engage in such pro bono services, the firm has adopted one of the strongest formal pro bono policies among all national firms. The policy attributes a very generous number of yearly billable hours to pro bono work.

In a recent manifestation of its dedication to pro bono service, Blakes has entered into a pro bono partnership with the Parkinson Society of British Columbia. Brokered by PBLBC, the partnership allows for the provision of corporate legal services to the Society, as well as the provision of litigation services to people with Parkinson's who face legal issues tied to their disease. If you know of someone with a legal problem relating to Parkinson's disease, you may contact Diane Robinson, the Society's Executive Director, at drobinson@parkinson.bc.ca for referral information.

With its extraordinary dedication to pro bono, Blakes proves once again that doing good means doing good business.

COMMUNITY GROUP PROFILE SOUTH FRASER WOMEN'S SERVICES SOCIETY

For low-income women who cannot afford a lawyer and do not qualify for legal aid, dealing with family law issues like divorce, child custody and access, child support and spousal maintenance can be overwhelming. Many women encounter additional difficulties in the form of language barriers, cultural differences and little to no knowledge about the Canadian justice system.

Fortunately for those women residing in the South Fraser region, South Fraser Women's Services Society (SFWSS) provides much needed support and legal assistance through the Legal Information and Advocacy Program. Legal advocates Ram Sidhu and Rupinder Sahota are kept busy serving women in English, Punjabi and Hindi as they help them to resolve their family law issues. Where necessary, clients are referred to pro bono legal representation services, including those provided through PBLBC's Family Law Program.



The Society provides additional services to women, including peer support groups, trauma counselling, clothing exchange, free shower and laundry facilities and a hot lunch program. Staff and volunteers with the Society are able to communicate with clients in a variety of other languages, including Chinese, Polish, French, and Vietnamese.

If you are able to assist low-income women to resolve their family law issues on a pro bono basis, contact Ram Sidhu at advocate@sfwomensservices.com or register through the PBLBC website at www.probononet.bc.ca and join the Family Law Program to receive screened pro bono opportunities.



ABOUT PBLBC

VISION STATEMENT

An innovative, collaborative pro bono system advancing access to justice and serving the legal needs of people and non-profit organizations of limited means throughout British Columbia.

MISSION STATEMENT

To advance access to justice by developing and facilitating opportunities for the effective provision of high-quality pro bono legal services to people and non-profit organizations of limited means throughout British Columbia, and by supporting potential and existing pro bono legal service providers in British Columbia.

THE “WHERE IN BC” CONTEST

How well do you know the province in which you work? In this space of each issue of the Pro Bono Profile, we feature a photograph of a famous or not-so-famous BC landmark. If you send us a correct guess of the specific location of the landmark, your name will be entered into a draw for quarterly prizes. First prize is a \$50 Earls Gift Card valid at any Earls Restaurant in BC. Second prize is a coveted Pro Bono Law of BC umbrella.

Last issue, Steven Abramson, associate at Watson Goepel Maledy in Vancouver, won first prize and Tannis Boxer, paralegal at Legal Services Society in Vancouver, won second prize for correctly identifying the Peace Arch in South Surrey.

Send your answer by e-mail to contest@probononet.bc.ca, by fax or by mail at the address below. Be sure to include your name and contact information. And guess as many times as you like!



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