

November 15, 2023 Bencher Election – County of Cariboo

Candidate biographies and statements

The candidates were invited to submit biographical information and an election statement. The views expressed are those of the candidates and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Law Society.

Candidates are listed in order of their appearance on the ballot, as determined by drawing of lots, pursuant to Rule 1-28.

Candidate information for District 7 – County of Cariboo

- MCDONALD, Geoffrey
- RIVARD, Georges
- LEVINE, Benjamin



MCDONALD, Geoffrey

Called to the Bar: 2006

Attorney General British Columbia

Email: geoffrey.mcdonald@gov.bc.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I am a northern lawyer and have spent my entire career (nearly two decades) in the north. My practice takes me regularly throughout our district. I am the creator of the Prince George Law Talks – a yearly law conference that provides the northern bar with an economical access to required legal education and most importantly an opportunity for us to interact with our colleagues. The next Law Talks is scheduled for May 24, 2024, in the Prince George courthouse. I am also a former President of the Prince George Bar Association.

I am a barrister. I was trained by Richard Gibbs, KC, and worked in private practice as his associate. I joined the Crown in 2007. I litigate a mix of criminal and regulatory matters. I have had the privilege of being your Bencher for six years and hope you will support me for two more.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I hope you will support me in continuing as your Bencher for a fourth term. I have a history of service to the northern bar. I created and continue to run the Prince George Law Talks. I have served as President of the Prince George Bar Association. I have also had the honour of being your Bencher for six years.

I am a strong advocate at the Bencher table for the northern bar. As Bencher I continue to raise issues that affect the practice of law in our region and bring a northern view. I am especially passionate about access to justice and legal resources issues in the north. Seeking additional Law Society support for our northern lawyers and firms is key to enabling our bar to continue to serve our communities well.

I am a staunch defender of the need for our profession to remain independent and self-regulating. It is lawyers who must regulate the practice of law. The government says that it still intends to create a single regulator. They haven't yet released their specifics of what that will look like, but it is a major threat to lawyer independence and our lawyers' ability

to give the public independent legal advice. I am opposed to any regulator model that eliminates lawyer independence. The public we serve needs and deserves our independent services and advice. I have been fighting to preserve an independent bar and hope you will support me to continue that crucial work.

I have a proven record of leadership and service. I am always available to you - just call (7783495451). I hope I can count on your support.

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RIVARD, Georges

Called to the Bar: 1992

Georges Rivard Law Office

Email: gr@onefglaw.com

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I have lived in the North since 2001, first in Prince Rupert and surrounding areas, then in Fort St John for the past 16 years. I am a proud member of the Northern Bar. I am familiar with issues affecting the northern area, including diversity and access to continuing education for counsel.

I am a French Canadian lawyer, member of the Nation Métisse Autochtone Gaspésie, Bas St-Laurent. I have been practicing criminal law for 31 years, as Crown and Defence, conducting trials in English and French throughout the Province. I have done presentations to the RCMP and lawyers on legal issues, and have been a past representative of the TLABC. I have also represented members on Law Society issues.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I wish to express my most heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the continued support and encouragement from members of the Cariboo County since the Bencher election of 2021. I seek re-election for the upcoming 2023 election.

I am proud of the work accomplished as your Bencher for the past two years. Promoting specific issues related to our region in northern BC and protection of the public are of utmost importance. The single regulator and independence of the Bar issues have been time consuming. The single regulator idea is a government initiative. As I mentioned earlier this year, the proposed composition of the Board is but one concern. The government intends to make appointments to the Board instead of having elected Benchers, which could impact the independence of the Bar. Bottom line, changes are coming. In order to make sure changes are heading in the right direction, I want to ensure our voices continue being heard.

It would be my honour to return to serve as Bencher for our county.

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LEVINE, Benjamin

Called to the Bar: 2002

Levine & Company

Email: levine@levineandco.ca

Website: www.levineandco.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I run my own law practice as a sole practitioner, in Prince George, BC. I have a general litigation practice, and have had since 2002. I have acted for private clients, government, and non-governmental entities, at all levels of the British Columbia Courts. I have represented well over 2500 clients. I am 53 years old.

I have volunteered my legal skills extensively, including for the Canadian Bar Association, the Native Friendship Centre, Prince George Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society, Activators Prince George (a federal "half-way house"), St. Patrick's House Society in Prince George, and many other more limited engagements. I was the recipient of the CBA's Equality and Diversity Award in 2013, and will continue that work if elected.

I am married to my spouse Lily, and have a large family that lives all over the Province.

ELECTION STATEMENT

The end of self-regulation is imminent. How it happens (or if), will be the most consequential development in the Law Society's history.

Lawyers' independence is essential to our democracy and to the public's confidence in the administration of justice. The Government's bare promise to maintain lawyers' independence is unconvincing, especially given their proposals suggest a regulatory structure that will significantly dilute our right to self-regulate. These proposals raise legitimate concerns that have not clearly been addressed by the Government.

The end of self-regulation will disproportionately affect the North, as there will be far fewer elected Benchers on the Board, and fewer still from our District. The current electoral district system ensures the public is represented from all areas of the Province. The North is a unique District and its lawyers are best suited to ensure its needs are met.

At this critical time it is important for the Benchers to be independent of government. If elected I will strongly advocate for the protection of lawyer independence and to ensure there are no structural changes to our governance that could threaten that bedrock principle or the essential role lawyers play in maintaining the rule of law.

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