

November 15, 2023 Bencher Election – County of Victoria

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 2 – County of Victoria

- AMEERALI, Peter D.
- BOOKMAN, Aron
- LEGH, James A.S.



AMEERALI, Peter D.

Called to the Bar: 2005

Ministry of Attorney General, Legal Services Branch

Email: peter.ameerali@gov.bc.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Peter has been a leading practitioner of civil and constitutional litigation at the AG’s Legal Services Branch (“LSB”) for 18 years, where he is now one of the supervisors of litigation. As senior counsel and as a supervisor Peter advises his peers almost daily on practice standards. Peter also has extensive experience considering and advising on ethics, promoting access to justice and welcoming diversity and inclusivity in the practice of law.

Throughout his career, Peter has mentored lawyers and students, the latter as a principal and in the mentorship programs of the CBA and Canadian Association of Black Lawyers. He has lectured at CLEBC and the law schools at both UVic and Thompson Rivers University.

As a member of the local bar, he has been an active member of the CBA, participating in local CLEs and social events, and twice co-chairing the Young Lawyers’ subsection in the early years of his practice. Peter is also active in the broader Victoria community. He has served for several years as a youth soccer coach, scouting parent, charity volunteer and member of the board of governors for a local school.

ELECTION STATEMENT

As elected representatives, benchers should reflect the diversity of the bar and the public we serve. I can uniquely contribute to that in at least two ways. First, as a first generation Canadian and visible minority, I can provide a perspective that has traditionally been underrepresented at our governance table. I would champion efforts to expand awareness of visible and invisible barriers to practitioners and clients alike. While I do not personify all the diverse voices that need to be heard, I would provide a visible conduit for the contributions of members of our profession and community who have not always seen themselves in the room where it happens. Second, I am one of hundreds of public servant members of the bar. As the Law Society faces proposed changes that will affect all of our

practices, it must be vigilant to exemplify the principles of the democracy we are key to protecting. While it is important to attend to potential conflicts, it is critical that the experiences of such a large segment of our membership not be unrepresented or silenced in the process.

While the Law Society faces the prospect of change, it must not neglect its ongoing primary responsibilities to monitor practice standards. I pledge to maintaining high standards on admission to the bar, and to promoting and providing supportive mentorship and feedback for students and young lawyers in our community.

My career has provided me with the opportunity to participate and observe the best traditions and practices of the bar at every level of court in the Province. It has also provided me to see first hand the need for access to justice and for active oversight of some members of the bar who may be struggling. As a bencher, I would challenge and empower the Law Society to be innovative in supporting a strong bar and ensuring the public can access the legal system. One of the most important ways of doing this is supporting articulated students and young lawyers as they enter the practice, ensuring they have a strong foundation on which to build their futures.

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BOOKMAN, Aron

Called to the Bar: 2003

Carfra Lawton LLP

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Website: www.carlaw.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

My past experiences, as with anyone, plays a role in how I view the work that I do. I am a dual US and Canadian citizen who graduated from UCLA in 1999. I worked thereafter at Fulbright & Jaworski (now Norton Rose Fulbright) in Los Angeles before immigrating to Canada. I have worked at Carfra Lawton LLP since 2002. I have volunteered time with Congregation Emanuel and the BC Water Polo Association. I have also coached basketball in our community. I am the father of four wonderful daughters who are nearing University age. I am devoted to our community.

You can typically find me enjoying the outdoors every morning and on weekends. My work takes me throughout the Province of BC and I am licensed in Yukon where I handle claims for insurers. I have also appeared as counsel in the Alberta Superior Court and Court of Appeal. Though most of the cases I handle settle, I am a trial lawyer and have a depth of experience.

ELECTION STATEMENT

After much reflection, and upon hearing that my colleague Paul Pearson expressed the concerns of continuing his role as our local bench representative, I made the decision that it was time for me to put my name forward.

I have dedicated my career to civil litigation. I am a believer in the Rule of Law as a foundational principle for any democratic country and its institutions. Though our litigation system is adversarial, our local bar reflects our community values in my view. We are a group that requires and seeks to maintain civility and understanding towards one another, our respective clients and our community as a whole. We support one another. We form relationships that in my view assist us in adhering to our principles and, at the same time, strive to achieve practical and beneficial outcomes for our clients. We still "pick up the phone" rather than email or even have lunch to address the business side of our work. We shake hands after a tough trial or hearing. I hope to reflect and bring that local spirit to our

Law Society as a whole.

I will continue the work of our Law Society and fellow bencher, Lindsay LeBlanc, in striving for Truth and Reconciliation with our First Nations communities. Self-regulation is paramount to the Rule of Law and it must be defended. The starting point is to work to better understand the concerns raised by government as to the regulation of the legal profession and if necessary take the necessary steps to ensure that self-regulation and independence are not interfered with.

I intend to address disputes amongst lawyers and disciplinary issues which may arise with an open mind and the same civility and understanding that I apply to my role as an advocate for my clients. To the extent my personal perspective and experiences will be helpful to our Law Society, I intend to share them as a means of understanding. I also look forward to the opportunity to learn from colleagues within the District and the Province.

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LEGH, James A.S.

Called to the Bar: 1988

Stevenson Luchies & Legh

Email: legh@sll.ca

Website: www.sll.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Called 1986 Manitoba and 1988 British Columbia

Stevenson Luchies & Legh partner 1997

Litigation and solicitors' practice, including work place investigations.

University of Victoria professor Civil Procedure 2019 -2022

BC Law Schools Moot UVic Coach for 4 years

Federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes - Dispute Advisory Panel – Adjudicator 2013 – 2019

VBA Executive since 2000

VBA President (2016) and (2006)

Editor of the VBA newsletter The Praeipce 2006 to present

Canadian Bar Association - Member

CBA(BC) Automobile Insurance Working Group 2020 - 2021

CBA(BC) Judicial Advisory Committee 2021 - present

Trial Lawyer's Association - Member

Pro Bono Legal services - Volunteer

Scouts Canada - Leader for over 40 years at the National, Provincial and local levels.

Saanich Police Board - 1995-2000

Victoria Foundation – Past committee member

Children's Museum of Victoria Association - Former Vice President

Learning Disabilities Association - Former Director

Stages Dance Theatre Society - Former Director

Kaleidoscope Theatre - Former Director

Awards:

Pamela Murray Award - VBA (2021)

Volunteer Award - VBA (2013)

CBA (B.C.) Community Service Award (2008)

Certificate Of Commendation for Scouting (2016)

Medal of Merit for Scouting (2005)

Bar to the Medal of Merit for Scouting (2011)

Saanich Volunteer Award (2001)

ELECTION STATEMENT

There is a foundational issue at stake today for all lawyers. Any infringement of our independence from third party control (government in particular) eats away at our ability to advocate and protect those who cannot on their own. We must be able to act without fear of control by government.

“The first thing we do is, let’s kill all the lawyers.” was written by Shakespeare because restricting lawyers is a step in the direction of a totalitarian form of government. Lawyers hold a unique position in society. We help protect the very fabric of society, including ensuring that the government of the day, does not improperly affect the rights of any citizens.

The Government’s intention to unilaterally change our Law Society creates the most significant issue to be addressed by lawyers in our lifetimes. We must take an effective and proactive position to protect the independence of the bar.

My intention as Benchers, will be to ensure that we actively fight to protect lawyer independence and in turn, the administration of justice. As noted by the SCC, lawyers must be free of influence by government and take steps to ensure we regulate ourselves, protect our independence and defend our autonomy.

The Law Society must take a clear and effective stand on any government proposals.

While change is possible, the major restructuring contemplated must not be allowed to proceed without significant challenge.

The unilateral proposal to significantly reduce the number of benchers is a direct challenge to an independent bar.

The proposal to merge Notaries with Lawyers and increase the ability of non-lawyers to practice law, comes with a high risk to both the public and our independence. We must ensure any path towards this is only implemented if lawyers remain free of third party control and there is a clear benefit to the public. The liability risks to lawyers and to the public cannot be ignored. Having lawyers regulated by Notaries, paralegals and others, leaving only a bare majority of lawyers is not acceptable.

I hope you will support me in advocating for the preservation of an independent Society.

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