



2017 Bencher election

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 4 – County of Westminster

- RIDDELL, Phil
- HOLLAND, Laura
- FINCH, Martin, QC
- MCPHERSON, Christopher



RIDDELL, Phil

Called to the Bar: 1989

Philip A. Riddell Law Corporation

Email: par@riddell.bc.ca

Website: www.riddell.bc.ca

Practice: 100% barrister

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Phil Riddell has been a Bencher for Westminster County since 2011. He is a criminal defence counsel who practices in a small firm in Port Coquitlam. He was called in 1989.

He is currently a member of the following Law Society committees: Discipline, Rule of Law and Lawyer Independence, the Legal Aid, and the Lawyer Education. He has previously been a member of the following committees: Credentials, Access to Legal Services, and Unauthorized Practice.

In May 2017 he was a Law Society appointment to the Legal Services Society board and is on the Finance and Stakeholders Engagement committees.

He has been the President of New Westminster Bar Association, an elected member of the Provincial Council of the Canadian Bar Association B.C., a member of the Canadian Bar Association's Advisory Committee to Judicial Council, Co-chair of the Canadian Bar Association's New Westminster Criminal Subsection. He is a member of the Canadian Bar Association and the Trial Lawyers Association of B.C.

He has been a presenter for the Trial Lawyers Association of BC, the Canadian Bar Association, the R.C.M.P., P.L.T.C. and B.C.I.T.

He has been active in the community: currently volunteering with a local soccer club, and previously with a local community centre.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I have had the privilege as serving as a Bencher for Westminster County since I was first elected in 2011. Your Bencher should be able to take the concerns of the legal profession of the Westminster County and communicate them to the Law Society. That is why I believe that one of the primary obligations of a Bencher is to be available to the members of the profession. I have tried to do this since being elected as a Bencher in 2011, by

attending bar functions in order that I can be asked the hard questions that members of the profession wish to have addressed. I believe that it is only by being active with the local bar that a Bencher is able to build the channels of communication which enable local members to feel comfortable to contact me to discuss issues involving the Law Society. These issues include not only the broader based issues that the Law Society deals with, but on many occasions to provide advice on ethical issues. I believe that the role of the Bencher as a trusted advisor serves not only the profession but also the public. Being able to help members who have ethical questions allows them to provide a high quality of legal services which benefits the public.

There have been changes in the regulation of the profession in the last number of years including: mandatory continued professional development, and trust compliance audits. The next change to affect the practice of law, with an effect upon the business of law will be the regulation of not only lawyers, but also law firms, and updating the rules regarding the electronic transfer of funds. I have in the past and will in the future bring the perspective of the sole and small firm practitioner to the Law Society.

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HOLLAND, Laura

Called to the Bar: 1995

Retired, Formerly of Drysdale Bacon McStravick LLP

Email: leh41@live.com

Practice: 100% solicitor

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ms. Holland has over 20 years of experience as a solicitor focused on residential real estate. She is well-respected by her peers and community for her professionalism, clarity and good humour in this often demanding field.

Ms. Holland has a combined B. Comm./LL.B. from the University of British Columbia. Called to the BC Bar in 1995, Ms. Holland articulated with Edwards, Kenny & Bray before working for two of the largest real estate firms in the Lower Mainland. Subsequently, Ms. Holland started her own firm, the Holland Law Group, specializing in residential real estate. From 2010 to 2016, Ms. Holland managed the busy residential real estate department of Drysdale Bacon McStravick LLP in Coquitlam, averaging 100 transactions per month. She most recently spent a year working as an underwriter at Stewart Title Guaranty. Newly retired from full-time practice, Ms. Holland divides her time between yoga, hiking and pondering the plight of the Real Estate Bar in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Ms. Holland has been a guest instructor for the Law Society's Professional Legal Training Course. She has also led regular seminars on various topics related to conveyancing and investment in the Lower Mainland for industry professionals and the general public.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I would be honoured to represent my peers in the position of Benchler.

For many years, I have felt that solicitors, and especially the real estate bar, are under-represented in the ranks of the Benchers. Unfortunately, as a successful full-time practitioner and single mother, it was impossible to imagine a way to meaningfully contribute in this arena. I have recently retired, and I am very hopeful that I will be able to offer a new voice in the role of Benchler.

I believe lawyers generally respect the trust obtained from the public and wish to excel in their chosen areas of expertise. The Benchers have the daunting task of balancing public interest with a nuanced and principled approach to the business of running a legal practice.

I have worked in large firms and was also a sole practitioner for over 5 years. My practice was based on exceeding client expectations and responding nimbly to the changing landscape of technology and consumer demand.

When I began practice 20 years ago, cell phones were the size of Kleenex boxes and it was unheard of to receive instructions by text message punctuated by a smiley-face. Our clients now expect us to be available at the touch of a button, 365 days a year. The demands on legal professionals are not going to decrease. We need the Benchers to provide practical guidance and clarity for lawyers as a self-regulated profession. I would like to be a part of this dynamic undertaking.

I am a keen applicant for the position of Bencher, and it would be a privilege to represent our profession in this role.

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FINCH, Martin, QC

Called to the Bar: 1981

Baker Newby LLP

Email: mfinch@bakernerby.com

Website: www.bakernewby.com

Practice: 5% solicitor, 95% barrister

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Martin Finch is married with three adult children. He holds a B.A. (Honors), LLB and LL.M. He has practiced as a trial lawyer since 1981.

He articulated in Vancouver and acted as Crown Counsel there and in the Interior. He joined Baker Newby LLP in 1991. He practices criminal and civil litigation, including commercial and personal injury. He practiced family law. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2010.

Martin held lecturing positions with Victoria College, the Law schools at Monash University, Queensland University of Technology, Criminology Departments of S.F.U. and U.F.V.

Martin was a Director of the Chilliwack and Vancouver YMCA Foundations, Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce and Arts Council. He was the CBA Representative to Chilliwack School District and the Secretary of the Cariboo Bar Association. He is a member of CBA and TLABC. He was a member of the CBA Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee. He is a Director of CLEBC.

As a Bencher, Martin has been on the following committees: Credentials, Act and Rules, Lawyer Education Advisory and Practice Standards. He is the chair of the Access to Legal Services Advisory Committee. He also participates in the Law Firm Regulation Task Force and has acted on discipline hearings.

ELECTION STATEMENT

The contemporary practice of law places great demand on lawyers' expertise, time and commitment. With increasingly sophisticated communication systems, lawyers face new challenges from ever more demanding clients. The Law Society should support lawyers in this difficult practice environment. To do so protects the public

interest. Client focus on economic legal services has never been more pressing. Many of us practice in small firms or as sole practitioners. Government lawyers face increasingly stressful expectations. The Law Society must support and understand the economic and administrative realities this entails. Members and the general public expect the Law Society to provide support and understanding to lawyers while protecting the interests of the public.

Lawyers seek interesting, challenging careers that contribute to society. We also expect reasonable opportunity for leisure, a balanced family life and appropriate compensation. A background of ever increasing societal and governmental demand and scrutiny makes such expectations hard to realize and stressful.

I believe the role of Bencher is to ensure that the public are properly and fully protected from misconduct of lawyers and served by competent lawyers. This is best done by supporting lawyers in their challenging work.

In my view the important contemporary issues for our profession include, among others, the continuation of our role as the primary provider of legal services in British Columbia, the encouragement of appropriate legal aid, continued reconciliation with our aboriginal communities and increased public access to justice.

As a Bencher, I have had the opportunity to speak confidentially with members on a variety of personal and professional conduct issues. My 37 years as a lawyer informs those conversations and assists me in advising members. I will advocate for lawyers and act fairly in the important role of protecting the public.

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MCPHERSON, Christopher A.

Called to the Bar: 1987

B.C. Prosecution Service

Email: chris.mcpherson@gov.bc.ca

Practice: 100% barrister

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Christopher McPherson was elected a Bencher in 2016, and is a member of the Discipline Committee and the Access to Legal Services, Equity and Diversity and Legal Aid Advisory Committees. Since being called to the bar in 1987, he has worked at medium and large sized firms in Vancouver and spent nine years as a sole practitioner. Currently he is a senior Crown Counsel responsible for prosecuting challenging, high-profile homicide cases. He has prosecuted over 30 homicides.

Christopher is a former director of the BC Crown Counsel Association. He was formerly President of the New Westminster Bar Association, and Co-chair of the CBA Westminster Criminal Subsection.

His teaching and lecturing experience includes coaching the Western Canadian Criminal Moot Competition, instructor of CLEBC's Winning Advocacy, lecturer with the National Judicial Institute, ongoing training with the Ministry of Justice, and presenter at the International Association of Prosecutors Conference. He has also spoken on various topics at Bar Association Meetings throughout Westminster County.

In the community, Christopher is a member of the East Vancouver Port Lands Liaison Committee, and was formerly an official with Biathlon Canada, Captain at the Vancouver Rowing Club and president of the Vancouver Skiers Cross-Country Club.

ELECTION STATEMENT

It has been a privilege to represent Westminster County as one of your Benchers for the last two years. As a member of a number of committees, and through discussions with our members, I have gained considerable insight into the issues affecting our profession

For me, the two most pressing issues facing our profession are the continuing problem of access to justice and the requirement to take positive steps to address the pressing need for action concerning the often ignored issues surrounding the mental health of our fellow members.

Access to justice is about far more than the cost of legal services. Delays in our courts are perhaps the single greatest impediment to access to justice. We must, as a profession, take all the steps we can to reduce these delays. We must ensure that Legal Aid is properly funded. Further, it is time for the Law Society itself to look at our own regulations and ask if they impart unnecessary costs to both the profession and the public.

During my work as a Bencher the breathtaking toll of our profession's difficulty with mental health has been brought home to me. The numbers are staggering. Our profession has a higher rate of mental health problems than any other. A significant portion of matters before the Discipline Committee have underlying issues of mental health and addiction. Sadly, our rules do not permit any form of "diversion" or similar programs to address such issues. I feel it is a priority for the Law Society to address this pressing issue. Our members and the public will both benefit.

If you see fit to re-elect me, I will continue to do my best to represent the members of our county, and to address these and other issues.

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