



November 16, 2021 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
- DUNCAN, Jon M.
- RIVARD, Georges



MCDONALD, Geoffrey

Called to the Bar: 2006

BC Prosecution Service

Email: geoffrey.mcdonald@gov.bc.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I am a barrister based in Prince George, BC. After articling with and was the associate of Richard Gibbs, QC before joining the Prince George Crown Counsel office 2007. My practice is a mix of trial and appellate work in criminal and regulatory matters. I have had the honour of being your bencher for the past four years. I am a proud member of the Canadian Bar Association.

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 (more importantly) an opportunity to interact with the colleagues.

I am a former president of the Prince George Bar Association.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I hope you will support me in continuing as your Bencher. 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 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 strong defender of the need for our profession to remain independent and self-regulating. It is lawyers who must regulate the practice of law.

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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DUNCAN, Jon M.

Called to the Bar: 2002

Jon M. Duncan Law Corporation

Email: jonduncan@jmd-law.ca

Website: www.jmd-law.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jon Duncan was born and raised in Stirling, Alberta, a small farming community south of Lethbridge. After graduating from the University of Victoria in December 2000, he articulated in Prince George and began practicing law in Prince George in February 2002. He has practiced in and around Prince George ever since.

He currently practices civil and criminal litigation at Jon M. Duncan Law Corporation, a general service law firm with five other associates.

Jon has been married for 20 years and has 3 teenage children.

When not at work, his hobbies include fishing, woodworking and politics. He is actively involved in both the community and his church.

Jon is a member of the Prince George Bar Association, the Canadian Bar Association, the Trial Lawyers Association of British Columbia and has served multiple terms as Treasurer of the Prince George Bar Association and two terms as a Governor of the Trial Lawyers Association Board of Governors.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I practice almost exclusively in civil and criminal litigation. For the most part, I work in and around Prince George. As a result, I understand the needs of judicial system participants in smaller regional centers and in rural northern BC.

Many of these participants lack easy or effective access to the judicial system. A growing number cannot afford legal representation. Or they simply live too far away from a courthouse or a law office capable of assisting them.

Some of this can be easily addressed by permanently adopting new technologies such as video conferencing and e-filing. Microsoft Teams and Zoom are not the only

technologies available to improve access. There are also secure signing tools to allow remote signing of legal documents. There are also better technologies for filing of court documents. Convincing lawyers to adopt these technologies is not enough. We also need to persuade the judiciary. We also need to work together to carefully craft new court rules that make permanent the ability to work remotely, to take affidavits from clients who live long distances from us, and to clarify and expand use of video conferencing in court rooms and discovery.

Another important solution is the creation of a comprehensive legal aid system available for low-income earners. Our current system is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of most people who need legal assistance. It needs to be fixed. The approach many have suggested is a requirement to offer more pro-bono or take on more legal aid files. This solution fails to account for the significant pro bono services we already provide. More importantly, it fails to recognize the growing number of consumers in the north who can't even find a lawyer, pro bono or otherwise. We need to come up with a more comprehensive solution.

As our most recent AGM illustrates, there appears to be little understanding of the unique issues faced by legal practitioners outside the lower mainland. While ensuring proper pronouns are used in courts is an important goal, the suggestion that a future resolution requires 50 or more signatures before it can be debated shows how out of touch our benchers have become with the real issues faced in regional centers and rural BC.

The real issue faced in northern BC is access, plain and simple. The courts are becoming more centralized not less. We have less and less sitting judges throughout the north. We have endured a litany of court closures in rural areas. Many of our current court registries in northern BC are extremely limited in the amount of sitting time available to litigants. Trials are routinely cancelled as a result. We are also seeing a significant decline of new recruits wanting to work in the north.

These are the real issues I hope to address one way or another if elected as a bencher on behalf of my fellow colleagues in the Cariboo District.

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RIVARD, Georges

Called to the Bar: 1992

Georges Rivard Law Office

Email: grivard@rivardlaw.com

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Originally from Québec City, I headed west for skiing and a short stay. The rest is history. I have now been practicing criminal law for 27 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, I have been a past representative of the TLABC and was a regular guest on Radio Canada to discuss current legal issues and cases. I have also represented members on Law Society issues. I have lived in Fort St John for the past 14 years and I am a proud member of the Northern Bar.

ELECTION STATEMENT

I have resided in the North since 2001, starting in Prince Rupert and surrounding areas and now making my home in Fort St John. I am familiar with issues affecting the northern area, including being away from the Lower Mainland and the access to continuing education for counsel. I am Métis with recorded roots back to the 1500's. I am aware of issues affecting First Nations Communities and I have represented First Nations before the Federal Court in Ottawa. I will be a strong voice for northern lawyers and in particular the concerns of our practices.

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