

The Law Society of British Columbia 2021 Bencher Election

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

1. Election date

An election will be held in November 2021 for Benchers of the Law Society of British Columbia in all districts for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2022 and ending December 31, 2023.

Nominations of candidates for election must be received by the Law Society by **5:00pm on Monday, October 18, 2021**. Please send nomination forms by email to BencherRelations@lsbc.org. Voting will take place from **Monday, November 1 to 5:00pm on Monday, November 15**, and votes will be counted on **Tuesday, November 16, 2021**.

The 2021 Bencher election will be conducted in accordance with the [Legal Profession Act](#), [Law Society Rules 1-20 to 1-44](#), and the [Code of Professional Conduct](#). There is an expectation that candidates will conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner.

Benchers encourage diversity in candidates seeking office

The Benchers believe that the Law Society's mandate to protect the public interest in the administration of justice is best served by leadership from diverse backgrounds and experience. Diversity that brings the skill and richness of talent reflected in the peoples of British Columbia strengthens our legal community and the community at large. All lawyers who meet the qualifications for Bencher and want to contribute to the governance of the profession are encouraged to stand for election. We particularly encourage Indigenous lawyers, racialized lawyers, LGBTQ2+ lawyers, lawyers with disabilities, young lawyers, and those practising predominantly in solicitors' fields to stand for election, as these groups continue to be underrepresented among elected Benchers. Although the Law Society has achieved, and been enriched by, gender parity among its elected Benchers, it continues to encourage women to stand for election as part of its commitment to achieve leadership that is reflective of the talents and strengths of all British Columbians.

2. Candidate eligibility

[Law Society Rules 1-22 and 1-23](#) outline the qualifications required of a candidate for election as a Bencher and the nomination process.

Members of the Law Society are eligible to be a candidate for election as Bencher provided the following applies:

- in good standing at the time of nomination,
- if a practising lawyer, maintain their chief place of practice or employment in the district in which they seek to be a candidate, and
- if a retired or non-practicing member, reside in the district in which they seek to be a candidate.

A Bencher is eligible for re-election at the conclusion of the Bencher's term of office if they have not served as a Bencher for more than seven years, or been elected Second Vice-President-elect.

3. Nominations

Nominations must meet the following requirements:

- nominations must be in writing, signed by at least two members of the Law Society in good standing who are eligible to vote in the district in which the nominee seeks to be a candidate,
- the nominee must consent in writing to the nomination, and
- the nomination and consent must be received by the Executive Director on or before **5:00pm on Monday, October 18, 2021**.

Please send nomination forms by email to BencherRelations@lsbc.org.

4. Electoral districts

[Law Society Rule 1-21\(1\)](#) lists the nine Bencher electoral districts into which the province is divided. This election will be for Benchers in all nine districts.

Pursuant to [Rule 1-21\(2\)](#), the number of Benchers to be elected from each district must be reduced by one for each Bencher from that district who holds office as First Vice-President, Second Vice-President or Second Vice-President-elect.

For the two-year term beginning January 1, 2022 and ending December 31, 2023, the number of Benchers to be elected from the County of Vancouver (District No. 1) has been reduced from thirteen to eleven, because First Vice-President Lisa Hamilton, QC and Second Vice-President-elect Jeevyn Dhaliwal, QC are from Vancouver County. The number of Benchers to be elected from the County of Westminster (District No. 4) has been reduced from three to two, because Second Vice-President Christopher McPherson, QC is from Westminster County. Under [Rule 1-5\(4\)](#), these three individuals automatically continue as Benchers until they complete their terms as President.

[Rule 1-24](#) provides that, if the number of candidates nominated does not exceed the number to be elected in a district, the Executive Director must declare that those nominated are elected as Benchers for that district. Notice of any Benchers declared elected by acclamation will be provided to all members after the close of nominations on October 18 and before online voting commences on November 1, 2021.

5. Roles and duties of the Benchers

The Benchers are the Law Society's volunteer board of governors. They govern and administer the affairs of the Law Society in accordance with the *Legal Profession Act*, set and enforce standards of professional responsibility for lawyers, and preside at discipline and credentials hearings.

Benchers can expect their duties to consume approximately seven or eight hours per week, four or five full days a month, or 200 hours per year. This is made up of preparation for and attendance at Bencher meetings, committee, task force or working group meetings, and sitting on hearing panels.

There are usually eight or nine Bencher meetings each year. Meetings take place in Vancouver, with the exception of one meeting each year, which is held in conjunction with a weekend retreat at a different location in the province. Bencher meetings are held on Fridays and generally run from 9:00 am to around midday. In light of the current provincial health directives, it is anticipated that Bencher meetings will take place virtually via Zoom until restrictions on gatherings and events have been lifted.

In addition to Bencher meetings, all Benchers generally serve on at least two Bencher committees, task forces or working groups. Most committees and task forces meet monthly for 1.5 to 2 hours (generally the day before the Bencher meeting).

For more information on the role of the Benchers, see the [Bencher Election page](#) on the Law Society website. Videos of Benchers discussing their role as a Bencher and what to expect are available on this webpage.

At the first Bencher meeting after being elected as a Bencher, the Bencher must take an oath of office in the required form set out in [Rule 1-3](#).

6. Candidates' biographies and election statements on Law Society website

Candidates' biographical summaries and election statements will be available on the Bencher election page of the Law Society website and on the Simply Voting site after the close of nominations on October 18, 2021 and by the start of voting on November 1, 2021.

7. Voting

The Law Society will use a third party company, Simply Voting, to provide online voting for the 2021 Bencher election, and the election will be conducted entirely electronically. An email communication will be sent to all eligible voters on November 1, 2021 which will include voting instructions, a randomly generated password, and a link to the voting site.

8. Important dates

Event	Time/Date
Nominations for candidacy in the 2021 Bencher General Election close	5:00pm on October 18, 2021
Voting instructions are provided to eligible voters and online voting begins	November 1, 2021
Online voting closes	5:00pm on November 15, 2021
Votes are counted and results are announced	November 16, 2021
Last Bencher meeting of 2021 (Bencher elected for 2022-2023 are invited to attend as guests)	December 3, 2021
First Bencher meeting of new term where Benchers take the Oath of office in Rule 1-3	January 28, 2022

9. Further information

If you have questions about the election process, please contact Avalon Bourne, Manager of Governance & Board Relations, at 604.443.5706 (toll-free 1.800.903.5300) or ABourne@lsbc.org.

October 7, 2021