

Law Society *of British Columbia*

Bencher Meeting: Minutes

To: Benchers

Purpose: Approval (Consent Agenda)

Date: Friday, February 6, 2026

Present: Thomas L. Spraggs, KC, President
Michael Welsh, KC, 1st Vice-President
Katrina Harry, KC, 2nd Vice-President
Simran Bains
Nazanin Aram
Aleem Bharmal, KC
Tanya Chamberlain, KC
Christina J. Cook, KC
Cheryl D'Sa, KC
Tim Delaney, KC
John Greschner
Tanya Heuchert
Ravi R. Hira, KC
Sara K. Hopkins
James A. S. Legh
Benjamin D. Levine
Jaspreet Singh Malik
Marcia McNeil
Jay Michi
Arun Mohan
David Perry
Michèle Ross
Gurminder Sandhu, KC
Nicole E. Smith
Karen K.L. Tse, KC
James Struthers
Natasha Tony
Kevin B. Westell

Absent: Georges Rivard, KC
Kathleen Wittenberg
Michael Zimmerman

Senior and Meeting Support Staff

Gigi Chen-Kuo, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director (CEO/ED)
 Kerryn Holt, Chief Operation Officer
 Tara McPhail, Chief Legal Officer
 Jeanette McPhee, Chief Financial Officer & Senior Director, Trust Reg.
 Su Forbes, KC, Chief Operating Officer, Lawyers Indemnity Fund
 Lesley Small, Senior Director, Credentials, Prof. Dev. & Practice Supp.

Michael Lucas, KC, General Counsel and Senior Policy Counsel
 Sherry Small, Director, Indigenous Initiatives
 Christine Tam, Director, Communications
 Adam Whitcombe, KC, Senior Advisor
 Avalon Bourne, Manager, Governance & Board Relations
 Rebecca Neal, Senior Administrator, Governance & Board Relations
 Volodymyr Burlachenko, Administrator, Governance & Board Relations
 Deborah Mah, Administrator, Governance & Board Relations

Staff present:

Bonnie Bernal	Janet Nacario
Kim de Bruijn	Rashmi Nair
Michaela David	Surindar Nijjar
Jackie Drozdowski	Sara Pavan
Jeffrey Hoskins, KC	Maryanne Prohl
Hoon Kim	Andrea Rayment
Sherry Kooner	Michelle Robertson
Alannah Korf	Carrie Robinson
Jane Ladesma	Gregory Sexton
Nicolette Lang-Andersen	Marlon Song
Kaflin Lee	Arrie Sturdivant
Mary Anne Mackenzie	Colton Tremmel
Michael Mulhern	Leanne Wood
Doug Munro	Vinnie Yen
Amanda Murphy	

Guests:

Karen St. Aubin, Director, Membership & Education, Trial Lawyers Association BC
 Dom Bautista, ED, Courts Center & ED, Amici Curiae Friendship Society
 Conor Bildfell, First Vice-President, Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch
 Ian Burns, Digital Reporter, The Lawyer's Daily
 Derek LaCroix, KC, ED, Lawyers Assistance Program of BC
 Desmond MacMillan, Assistant Dean of Law, Thompson Rivers University
 Claire Marchant, ED, Lawyers Assistance Program of BC
 Rebecca McConchie, President, Trial Lawyers Association of BC
 Mark Meredith, Board Member, Mediate BC
 Caroline Nevin, CEO, Courthouse Libraries BC
 Graeme Nunn, Guest
 Ngai Pindell, Dean of Law, Peter A. Allard School of Law
 Linda Russell, CEO, Continuing Legal Education Society of BC
 Kerry Simmons, KC, ED, Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch

Oath Of Office

1. Administer Oaths of Office

The Honourable Justice Nitya Iyer administered oaths of office (in the form set out in Rule 1-3) to President Thomas L. Spraggs, KC, First Vice-President Michael F. Welsh, KC, and Second Vice-President Katrina Harry, KC, individually and to all the Benchers en masse, whose terms began January 1, 2026.

Justice Iyer congratulated all of the Benchers elected, re-elected, appointed and re-appointed, and spoke of the importance of their service to the public and to the legal profession to protect and uphold the rule of law and the administration of justice. She wished them all the best with this work in the year to come.

2. Indigenous Welcome

Carleen Thomas, a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, introduced herself to Benchers and welcomed them to the meeting and to the ancestral lands of the Tsleil-Waututh people. She spoke of her family's history and traditions and the connection with the Squamish and the Musqueam peoples. She spoke of the work that needed to be done to continue to move towards truth and reconciliation by continuing to learn the history of the land and Indigenous peoples.

3. President's Welcome and Introductory Remarks

President Thomas L. Spraggs, KC welcomed Benchers, staff, and guests to the first Bencher meeting of 2026.

Mr. Spraggs expressed his gratitude for the support he has received thus far in his transition to President for 2026. He advised that his focus and the work of Benchers over the course of the year would be guided by the Law Society's new strategic plan, as well as, protecting the rule of law and the public interest.

Mr. Spraggs spoke about some key priorities for the year, including a focus on innovation and governance, as well as a project regarding the regulation of artificial intelligence within the profession.

Consent Agenda

4. Minutes of December 5, 2025, meeting (regular session)

The minutes of the meeting held on December 5, 2025 were approved unanimously and by consent as circulated.

5. Minutes of December 5, 2025, meeting (*in camera* session)

The minutes of the *in camera* meeting held on December 5, 2025 were approved unanimously and by consent as circulated.

6. Law Society Representatives Appointed Pursuant to *King's Counsel Act*

The following resolution was passed unanimously and by consent:

BE IT RESOLVED the Benchers appoint President Thomas L. Spraggs, KC and First Vice-President Michael F. Welsh, KC as the Law Society's representatives to be consulted pursuant to section 2(2)(c) of the *King's Counsel Act*.

Reports

7. President's Report

Mr. Spraggs incorporated his report into his welcome and introductory remarks.

Mr. Spraggs advised Benchers that two calls for expressions of interest would be issued to Benchers: the first for those who wished to be considered for appointment to the new Judicial Liaison Committee, and the second for those who wished to be considered for appointment as the Law Society's member on the Federation of Law Societies of Canada ("Federation") Council, following Brook Greenberg KC's term concluding later in the year.

8. CEO's Report

Gigi Chen-Kuo, Chief Executive Officer & Executive Director, began her report by speaking about the Law Society's new 2026-2028 Strategic Plan, which would guide the work of the Law Society over the next three years. She also reflected on her first year serving as the Law Society's CEO and Executive Director.

Ms. Chen-Kuo updated the Benchers about the issuance of a public statement earlier in the week, which expressed concern regarding the provincial government's stated intention to amend the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. She advised that the Law Society's position was to urge the provincial government to refrain from attempting to constrain the role of the courts in interpreting legislation, as this could jeopardize the independence of the judiciary. Ms. Chen-Kuo also clarified the procedure for news releases, in accordance with the Media Relations Policy.

Ms. Chen-Kuo then provided an update regarding the governance review being undertaken by the Federation. She indicated that the final report would be presented at the October Federation Council meeting.

Ms. Chen-Kuo advised that Sherry Small, Director of Indigenous Initiatives, and herself have been working on the development of an organizational training plan to advance truth and reconciliation within the Law Society, at both the staff and Bencher levels.

Ms. Chen-Kuo concluded her report with an update regarding the Employment Engagement Survey. She indicated that a two-year action plan has been finalized, and regular progress updates would be provided to staff and to Benchers.

Update

9. Walking the Path of Transformation: A Journey of Practice

Mr. Spraggs invited Sherry Small, Director, Indigenous Initiatives to address the Benchers.

Ms. Small introduced herself and gave a presentation on *Walking the Path of Transformation: a Journey of Practice*. She spoke about the purpose and intention of the presentation and outlined her leadership approach and her role within the Law Society.

Ms. Small spoke about two foundational structures that will connect directly with the Law Society's ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation: the Journey of Practice and the internal working group established to oversee this work. She then presented an overview of the Journey of Practice as a learning pathway for the Law Society to live its commitments to Indigenous peoples and to build sustained practices in terms of the integration of Indigenous engagement and inclusion. Ms. Small emphasized the importance of continuity in the carrying out of this work; building practices that are relational and rooted in relationships, accountability, and respect and that are consistent with Indigenous worldviews; and the importance of seeking and integrating Indigenous engagement early and often. She also spoke about the strong commitment to reconciliation across the Law Society.

Ms. Small then provided an overview of the internal working group, which will serve as the operational engine of the Journey of Practice and will focus on aligning the Law Society's new strategic plan with the Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters Task Force's report and recommendations.

Ms. Small then spoke about next steps in the Journey of Practice, and she indicated that regular reports would be provided to the Benchers.

Presentation

10. Lawyers Indemnity Fund: The Journey to the Present

Su Forbes, KC, Chief Operating Officer, Lawyers Indemnity Fund presented an overview of the Lawyers Indemnity Fund ("LIF"), including an overview of the team structure, the program itself, types of coverage, types of claims, causes of claims, volume of claims, and other trends. She also spoke about the work being undertaken to help prevent claims and enhance risk management, as well as the different types of policies and how these are structured.

Ms. Forbes concluded her report by providing an overview of the results received from satisfaction surveys, which have been overwhelmingly positive.

Discussion & Decision

11. Revisions to Bencher in camera Policy

Mr. Spraggs introduced the item and provided an overview of the proposed revisions to the *in camera* policy. He referenced the discussions that had taken place at the previous Bencher meeting, as well as the discussions held by the Executive Committee at their January meeting.

There was no discussion on this item, and the following resolution was passed unanimously:

BE IT RESOLVED the Benchers approve the proposed revisions to the *in camera* Policy as set out in Appendix A and B.

For Information

12. Briefing by the Law Society's Member of the Federation Council

There was no discussion on this item.

13. External Appointment: Law Foundation of BC

There was no discussion on this item.

14. 2026 Schedule of Bencher and Executive Committee Meetings

There was no discussion on this item.

15. 2027 Schedule of Bencher and Executive Committee Meetings

There was no discussion on this item.

The Benchers then commenced the *in camera* portion of the meeting.

Other Business

External appointment: Legal Aid BC

Following discussion *in camera* on this matter, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

BE IT RESOLVED the Benchers appoint Nancy Carter, KC to the LABC Board of Directors for a three-year term commencing February 12, 2026 and concluding February 11, 2028.

Oshawa Courthouse Incident

The Benchers discussed the recent incident in Oshawa Ontario, where a Black woman lawyer wearing a head scarf was reportedly subjected to physical violence by police while working at the courthouse. It was noted that the matter is being investigated and the hope is that the authorities get to the heart of what occurred and why, so that situations like this do not happen again or be forgotten.

Some Benchers commented that such incidents cause significant harm, and that it is important for the Law Society to speak out in support of racialized lawyers. The Law Society has an important role and responsibility to voice opposition to such incidents in order to protect the public interest in the administration of justice, and demonstrate its support and solidarity for all who serve within the justice system.

RN

2026-04-08