

2025 Bencher By-Election – County of Nanaimo

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 No. 3 – County of Nanaimo

- SMITH, Nicole E.
- DROZDIAK, Jeffrey A.
- RUTHERFORD, Jenny



SMITH, Nicole E. (she/her)

Called to the Bar: 2009

Ramsay Lampman Rhodes

Email: nesmith@rlr.law

Website: rlr.law/lawyers/nicole-e-smith/

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I was called to the bar in 2009 and am a partner at Ramsay Lampman Rhodes. We have offices in Nanaimo, Port Alberni and Courtenay. My practice focuses on civil litigation (injury and disability claims) and workplace investigations.

I grew up in the Okanagan, but for 25 years Nanaimo has been my home. I've raised my family here; we also spend a considerable amount of time in Port Alberni. Prior to becoming a lawyer, I worked in radio and was a morning show co-host and a reporter. I enjoy most sports and I love travelling.

Within the community of Nanaimo, I have served on boards of the Nanaimo Child Development Centre and the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society.

Within the legal community, I was secretary-treasurer for the Nanaimo County Bar for many years as well as the elected representative to the CBA. I helped coach a University of Victoria moot team to three national championships before becoming Canada's representative to the International Client Consultation Competition ("ICCC"). Last year I moved into a position on the international Committee for the ICC.

I am on the editorial boards of the Civil Trial Handbook and the Verdict.

I am also a TLABC governor.

ELECTION STATEMENT

As a Benchers, my goal will be to speak for lawyers as the transition is made to the Single Legal Regulator.

Now, more than ever, we need Benchers who are not afraid to insist on answers to the difficult questions and confront all attempts to compromise the independence of the bar, self-regulation and the rule of law.

I am proud of the role of the Law Society in protecting the public and setting and enforcing standards for lawyers. I also support and applaud the initiatives to improve Access to Justice and ensure our profession remains inclusive and diverse. I value perspectives from all walks of life and am committed to promoting education and reconciliation.

Lawyer health and wellness, including mental health and substance abuse issues are important in our profession as we demand so much from each other in the pursuit of legal competence and excellence. I bring an empathetic but realistic viewpoint to the issues faced by lawyers on a daily basis. I completed law school in Victoria while raising two young children and commuting from Nanaimo. I have the perspective of a lawyer in private practice, and as a woman who has grappled with the challenges of serving my clients and the community while raising a family.

I have had the privilege of recruiting and working with new articling students in our firm and to be available to act as a sounding board for lawyers in our firm and within my community when issues arise.

I look forward to representing Nanaimo County at the Bencher table and representing the interests of all lawyers in our County.

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DROZDIAK, Jeffrey A.

Called to the Bar: 2019

Civil Resolution Tribunal

Email: Jeff.Drozdiak@crtbc.ca

Website: civilresolutionbc.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Before getting my law degree from the University of Victoria, I worked for over a decade as an engineer in the mining sector. My career spanned all areas of the industry from research, university teaching, and laboratory testing to design work and plant operations. I hold both a Bachelor of Applied Science and Master of Applied Science in mining engineering from the University of British Columbia.

After articling at the firm of Ridgway & Company, I was called to the bar in 2019. I spent the next 5 years with the firm establishing a general law practice in the areas of corporate/commercial, estate planning, real estate, civil litigation, and family. In 2024, I was appointed to the Civil Resolution Tribunal. For the past year, I have worked remotely as an adjudicator, ruling on small claims disputes under \$5,000, strata property disputes, and accident benefit claims.

Since 2019, I have been President of the Cowichan Valley Bar Association. My mandate has been to bring the bar closer together. To further this goal, in 2024 we organized the 1st Biennial CVBA Barristers and Solicitors Conference in Cowichan Bay. Our conference had over 50 attendees and covered a wide range of topics.

ELECTION STATEMENT

Our profession is at a crossroads. The Law Society plays a pivotal role in society. It ensures our profession is independently governed while simultaneously protecting the public interest. Currently, we have a voice in this governance by electing fellow lawyers to be benchers. As a 6-year call with a professional background in engineering, I bring a fresh and unique perspective to this important role. I am seeking your vote, so I can speak for the County of Nanaimo as we enter these uncertain times.

My goals as a benchers are to help our profession successfully navigate through the implementation of the Legal Professions Act, support initiatives that promote a lawyer's mental health and well-being, and ensure the Law Society proactively addresses the challenges we face daily as professionals.

There is no subtle way to put this. The Legal Professions Act will change our lives as lawyers. We need strong and competent leadership as we tackle these changes. I believe my diverse background, focus, and strong work ethic would be invaluable as we make this transition.

I began my legal career in my late thirties, which means I brought a mature perspective to my practice. I recognized early on that being a lawyer is hard. We have one of the most difficult and time-consuming jobs in society. Even when we are not at work, without effective coping techniques, our minds can inevitably wander, thinking about how to handle a certain file. This is why, a lawyer's mental health is key. I am excited to see more senior lawyers recognize these challenges. However, we can always do more. As a benchers, I will promote a lawyer's well-being in every decision we make.

Finally, we are practising law in an ever-changing environment. As technology exponentially advances, sometimes it feels overwhelming. From increasingly elaborate fraud schemes to the adoption of generative A.I., the Law Society must proactively address these changes. As a benchers, I want to better understand the challenges faced by you, the members of the County of Nanaimo, and bring your concerns to the table.

I hope I have your support.

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RUTHERFORD, Jenny (she/her)

Called to the Bar: 2007

Jones & Co. / Agents for PPSC

Email: rutherford@joneslaw.ca

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jenny Rutherford, born and raised in B.C., was Called to the Bar in 2007. She spent the first half of her career as a member of the criminal defence bar before joining the prosecution in 2016.

Jenny resides in Nanaimo with her family, and works as an Agent for the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for North Vancouver Island. In the course of her work, Jenny travels throughout the Island, going as far West as Ahousaht and as far North as Port Hardy.

Jenny has provided regular educational training to police and civilian groups on the ethics of giving witness testimony, and she has taught Continuing Legal Education courses for fellow counsel on a range of topics. She has consistently mentored students and junior counsel throughout her career.

As a resident of Nanaimo, Jenny has been an active member of the Board of Directors for the Nanaimo FoodShare Society, serving as the Chair of the Board since 2023. She has also privately sponsored an Afghan lawyer and her family as refugees; they arrived safely in late 2024 and now reside in the community.

On her own time Jenny reads, writes short stories, and works in her garden.

ELECTION STATEMENT

It has never been more crucial to guard and maintain our democratic values as it is today. Representing a strong, united bar that is committed to maintaining the Rule of Law is important work.

As a Benchers I would work tirelessly to support our Bar and the essential workings of the Administration of Justice. I have a particular interest in promoting respectful and informed dialogue as we navigate the challenges and upheaval of today's world.

I have experience working on a community Board of Directors and have learned a great deal about the need to listen carefully to differing viewpoints and keep an open mind to differing perspectives. My time spent in various communities on Vancouver Island has given me insight into our varied needs and concerns. If elected, I intend to actively seek input from my Island colleagues in the County of Nanaimo to hear their views as they affect our profession and how we conduct ourselves.

Our Benchers engage in the vital task of ensuring the Bar remains informed, independent, and committed to access to justice and to the principles of truth and reconciliation. Each member contributes toward building relationships with government, community, and indigenous groups; providing reasoned and informed guidance on initiatives within the legal profession; and ensuring transparency and accountability throughout. All of us serve our communities in different ways. The role of Benchers involves hard work and dedication of resources and time to support the members of the Bar as they do this vital work.

If elected I am fully committed to doing my part. I would embrace the opportunity to serve as a Benchers for the County of Nanaimo, and I thank you for your consideration.

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