

# Straight From the Bench Conference 2025

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# Agenda

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

Rasha El-Tawil, Leslie Jack, Dara Lambe, John Nicholson

7:45-8:45	Continental Breakfast
8:45-9:00	Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Sponsor Introductions
9:00-10:00	<b>EDI Panel:</b> Trauma Informed Lawyering - The Honourable Justice Barbara MacFarlane, Teresa Donnelly, Anna Matas, Moderator: Rasha El-Tawil
10:00-10:30	<b>Update:</b> Canadian Tobacco Litigation – André Michael, Mike Peerless, Jim Virtue
10:30-10:45	<b>BREAK</b>
10:45-11:45	<b>Panel:</b> Considerations for Guardianships and Infant Settlements – The Honourable Justice Martha Cook, Adrien Cameron, Kaylie Handler, Barb Legate, John Morrissey, Moderator: Rasha El-Tawil
11:45-12:00	<b>Case Comment (Anti-SLAPP Proceeding):</b> Burjoski v. WRDSB – Katie Warwick
12:00-12:15	<b>Case Comment:</b> Jackson vs. Rosenberg – Josh Laplante
12:15-1:15	<b>LUNCH</b>
1:15-1:25	<b>LEAP Presentation</b>
1:25-1:30	<b>Sponsor Introductions</b>
1:30-2:00	<b>Update:</b> Appeal Proofing Your Trial – Debbie Boswell
2:00-2:45	<b>Fireside Chat:</b> Courtroom Advocacy Best Practices – The Honorable Justice M. Carnegie, The Honourable Justice E. ten Cate, Moderator: Johnathan Nicholson
2:45-3:00	<b>BREAK</b>
3:00-3:15	<b>Update:</b> Criminal Evidence Primer - Lower Your Expectations: Reasonable Expectation of Privacy in the Age of Attard –Carolynn Conron
3:15-3:30	<b>Update:</b> AI for Lawyers: It is All About the Prompts – Andrew Murray
3:30-3:45	<b>Update:</b> Employment Law – Jaime Rivera-Campos
3:45-4:00	<b>BREAK/Sponsorship Draws</b>
4:00-5:00	<b>HOT TOPIC:</b> Civil Rules Review – Phase 2 Proposals and Process. Q&A with the Civil Rules Review Committee Member Jacob Damstra
5:00	<b>Acknowledgements &amp; Closing Remarks</b>

# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak, and Attawandaron Nations. The Peoples of these respective Nations have longstanding relationships to the lands of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. Today, there are 11 First Nation communities in southwestern Ontario, including Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Munsee-Delaware First Nation, Delaware Nation at Moravian, Chippewas of Caldwell First Nation, Walpole Island First Nation, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Kettle Point First Nation, Stony Point First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, and Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation. In addition, there is a growing Indigenous urban population. Further, we convey that we value and have deep appreciation for the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

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# 2025 Planning Committee



**Rasha El-Tawil**

Rasha El-Tawil is a partner at Siskinds LLP in the personal injury group. Rasha's litigation practice includes serious injury claims, sexual abuse claims, and appellate advocacy.

Rasha has been selected by her peers for inclusion in The Best Lawyers™ in Canada since 2022, and was a recipient of the London Inc. "Top 20 Under 40 Award" in 2020.

Rasha is a recognized leader within and outside Siskinds. She is a member of the Siskinds board of directors. Rasha is committed to advancing equity within and outside the firm, and has co-chaired the firm's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Committee.

She is involved in the legal community, with leadership roles with the Middlesex Law Association as a trustee, Bench and Bar representative, and past EDI and professionalism representative.

Rasha obtained a Bachelor of Arts, Honors Political Science & Philosophy from Western University in 2004, graduating with the gold medal. Rasha graduated from Western University's Faculty of Law in 2007. Rasha has continued to give her time

and expertise to Western as a lecturer at Community Legal Services and, most recently, an adjunct professor in the Litigation Capstone Course. She is the vice-chair of the Young Alumni Advisory Council for Western Law.

Rasha completed her articles with Siskinds and was called to the Bar in 2008.

Rasha is a native Londoner and speaks Arabic.



**Leslie Jack**

Leslie is an associate lawyer at Shillington McCall LLP. Leslie is fully bilingual and completed a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) at the University of Toulouse 1 Capitole (2014). She also completed two Masters of Laws (LL.M.) at the University of Ottawa (2016) and at Osgoode Hall Law School (2020). Her practice focuses on insurance defence, including accident benefits, breach of fiduciary duty, and tort claims.

Since Leslie's call to the bar in 2021, she has worked for multiple regulatory bodies and major insurance companies focusing on investigations, regulatory compliance and regulatory litigation. When she is not serving her clients, Leslie is involved with Fanshawe College as a Professor at the School of Public Safety,

Leslie is a committed community volunteer and currently a board trustee of the Middlesex Law Association, Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness and Leads Employment. Leslie is also a member of the Canadian Black Lawyers Association, L'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario and the Canadian Defense Lawyers Association.

Outside of the office, Leslie is an avid long-distance runner, most of her runs are with her long-haired Weimaraner.



**Dara M. Lambe**

Dara Lambe is a Partner at Lerner's LLP. Dara is based in the London office where she serves as Practice Group Leader of the Specialty Risk and Insurance Group. Dara's practice is focused on insurance law, medical negligence and professional liability. She has appeared before all levels of court in Ontario and represents clients in proceedings before the Consent and Capacity Board of Ontario, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario and before provincial regulatory tribunals. She has served as an adjunct professor at Western University as a lecturer in the Insurance Law course. In her spare

time, she enjoys cooking, kayaking and parenting an amazing teenager.



**John Nicholson**

John Nicholson is a partner with Cohen Highley LLP. Called to the bar in 2006, John has a diverse civil litigation practice which includes medical malpractice litigation, estate litigation, personal injury, commercial and insurance litigation, and professional regulation matters.

John was the recipient of numerous awards in law school before being called to the bar, and bringing his analytical focus into practice for his clients.

John was born in Burlington, and has now lived in the London area for 20 years. When not practicing law, John's focus is on being a dedicated parent to his three children.

Since 2020 John has been a trustee of the Middlesex Law Association, and is a member of the Civil Bench and Bar Committee.



# EDI Panel:

## Trauma Informed Lawyering

With The Honourable Justice Barbara MacFarlane, Teresa Donnelly, Anna Matas, Moderator: Rasha El-Tawil



**Justice Barbara MacFarlane**

Justice Barbara A. MacFarlane graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1998. She was called to the Bar in 1999.

Prior to her appointment to the Bench, Justice MacFarlane's practice focus was prosecuting medical negligence cases. Before moving her practice to

London in 2018, she practiced at a downtown Toronto law firm, where she enjoyed a 30-year career (before and after law school). Through her legal career, Justice MacFarlane represented some of the most vulnerable litigants, suffering from tragic and life changing events.

She has regularly been asked to speak or write for various law associations, including the Advocates' Society, Ontario Trial Lawyers' Association, Ontario Bar Association, American Bar Association, American Association for Justice, and the Law Society of Ontario.



**Teresa Donnelly**

Teresa Donnelly has been a lawyer with the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General since 1994.

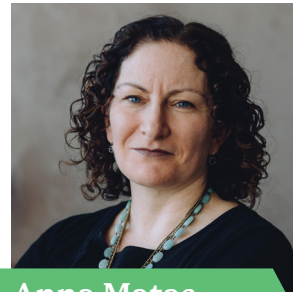
As a Crown, Teresa has been dedicated to prosecutions involving violence against women and children – both domestic violence and sexual violence.

As the West Region Sexual Violence Crown with the Ministry's Sexual Violence Advisory Group, she is one of 7 full-time prosecutors in Ontario dedicated to enhancing the quality of sexual violence prosecutions and the victim's experience in the criminal justice system.

In addition, Teresa was elected as a Benchers with the Law Society of Ontario in 2015 and 2019. She was elected the Treasurer or President of the Law Society of Ontario from June 2020-June 2022. Teresa was the fifth woman Treasurer in the 223 year history of the Law Society of Ontario. As Treasurer her focus included the mental health of legal practitioners, EDI, women in law, reconciliation, the competence and ethical responsibilities of lawyers and paralegals, and the important role that paralegals play in access to justice in Ontario.

Teresa is the President of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada and a faculty member of the National Criminal Law Program where she has presented on various topics including dangerous offenders, sexual violence, human trafficking, and ethics. With Beth Beattie, LSM, she co-Chairs the Law Society of Ontario's Mental Health Summit that reaches thousands of legal practitioners each year. She is also the President of the South West Region Women's Law Association in Ontario. A member of the Advocates Society and the Huron Law Association.

In June 2024, Teresa received an honorary Doctor of Laws from the Law Society of Ontario.



**Anna Matas**

Anna Matas (pronounced May-tas) is a partner at St Lawrence Barristers, a boutique litigation firm in Toronto. An accomplished trial and appellate lawyer, she represents clients at all levels of court, including in complex appeals before the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.

A significant part of Anna's practice focuses on plaintiffs' claims arising from sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. She also defends regulated health professionals in civil litigation as well as in administrative and regulatory matters.

Anna is frequently retained to conduct sensitive, trauma-informed investigations in cases involving harassment, discrimination, or abuse. Her approach is rooted in fairness, professionalism, and a deep understanding of how a legal processes can affect all parties involved in the proceedings.

In 2024, Anna received the President's Award from the Women's Law Association of Ontario, recognizing her leadership, excellence, and contributions to the advancement of women in the legal profession.

# Update: Canadian Tobacco Litigation

With André Michael, Mike Peerless, Jim Virtue



**André Michael**

André I. G. Michael has been lead-counsel for nine Provinces and Territories in their tobacco health care costs recovery litigation. A quarter-century undertaking, the past six years of which have been in CCAA proceedings, this litigation across the country has resulted in the largest legal resolution in Canadian

history, and third largest world-wide.

A Partner at Siskinds in London since 1993, having been called to the bar in 1988, André's entire career has been devoted to health care litigation, much of which focused on complex medical malpractice litigation, including stroke, brain and spinal injury, and cancer cases.

André has been named among the Best Lawyers since its inception in Canada in 2006; was a Director of the *Advocates Society* from 2009 to 2012, co-chairing the Education Committee and the Standing Committee on Advocacy and Practice; and is a Fellow of *The American College of Trial Lawyers*.

André's extracurricular interests include playing tennis, supporting Arsenal F.C., and frequently returning home to the West Indies.



**Mike Peerless**

Mike has 31 years of experience with litigation class actions, mass torts and complex multi-party litigation.

He has been recognized as one of Canada's leading class action litigators. Since its inaugural 2006 edition, Mike has been named annually in Best Lawyers in Canada.

He has also been named annually in *The Canadian Legal Expert Directory*. Mike is a regular speaker at conferences given by the Law Society of Ontario, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Institute, the Barreau du Québec and the Advocates' Society.



**Jim Virtue**

Jim is a partner and a long term leader / practitioner at Siskinds. His skill in the insurance sector are highly regarded, and in 2023 he was named as one of the Best Lawyers in Canada's Lawyer of the Year for Insurance Law. Jim is also a respected educator with contributions in a range of roles, from adjunct professor at Western

Law School to work with the Bar Admission course and seminars on Trial Advocacy techniques.

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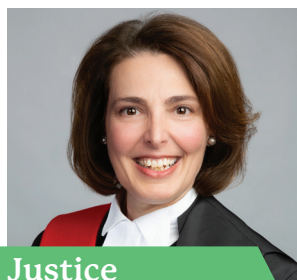
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# Panel: Considerations for Guardianships and Infant Settlements

With The Honourable Justice Martha Cook, Adrien Cameron, Kaylie Handler, Barb Legate, John Morrissey



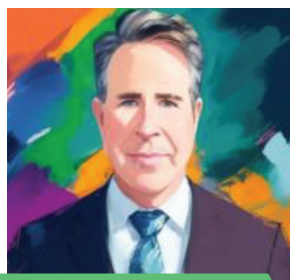
**Justice Martha Cook**

Justice Martha A. Cook earned her B.Sc. (Hons.) from the University of Waterloo in 1996 and an LL.B. from Queen's University Law School in 1999. She completed her articles with Davies, Ward, Phillips & Vineberg LLP before being called to the Ontario bar in 2001.

Justice Cook practised civil and administrative law in Toronto before returning to her hometown of Stratford and opening a law practice in 2009. There, she provided legal services in civil litigation, estate matters, administrative law, and selected criminal defence matters. She appeared as counsel before every level of court in Ontario as well as the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal.

Justice Cook volunteered her time to a range of legal and not-for-profit organizations. She was a director of The Advocates' Society and was past Chair of the Practice Groups Standing Committee, Vice-Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee, and Chair of the Infrastructure Task Force. She was a regular speaker, mentor, and facilitator at continuing legal education programs and enjoyed participating in mock trial programs for elementary, high school and law school students. She was Treasurer of the Huron-Perth Community Legal Services Clinic and served as a director on the Board of Stratford Summer Music.

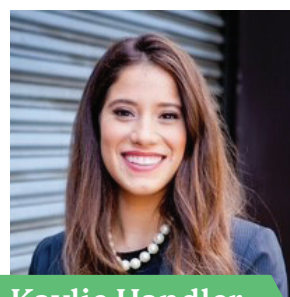
Justice Cook is a proud mother of one son. She enjoys trying to train her Rhodesian Ridgeback dog, baking, backwoods camping, and adventure travel.



**Adrien Cameron**

Adrien P. Cameron is a lawyer with the law firm of Frauts Lawyers. He is a graduate of Dalhousie University and the University of Windsor, where he obtained his LL.B. Adrien was called to the Ontario Bar in 1998. His practice involves civil and commercial litigation in matters relating to employment and labour law, estate law, insurance law, and

personal injury law. He has appeared as counsel before all levels of court in Ontario, as well as the Ontario and Canadian Labour Relations Boards, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the former Financial Services Commission of Ontario. Adrien has co-written several legal papers. He has served on the Board of Trustees for the Middlesex Law Association, and sat as its President between 2005 and 2007. He is a member of the Middlesex Law Association and the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. When not working, Adrien can be found spending time with his toy poodle, managing and sometimes coaching a men's soccer team, and generally enjoying life.



**Kaylie Handler**

Kaylie Handler is counsel in the Property Rights dept. at the Office of the Children's Lawyer, where she provides legal services on behalf of minors in certain estates, trusts, and civil matters in Ontario. Kaylie was called to the bar in Ontario in 2009. At the start of her career, Kaylie articulated at the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee,

where she also worked as counsel. Kaylie then worked in private practice for several years at a boutique law firm in Toronto where she practiced exclusively in the area of estates, trusts, guardianship and elder law.





**Barb Legate**

I start work each day knowing that my clients need my help. They may be facing the betrayal of an insurance company that isn't as supportive as they first seemed to be; the betrayal of a trusted medical professional whose inattention or incompetence has left them with a lifelong disability; or a fun

recreational encounter has gone terribly wrong; I know they fear for their future or their loved one's.

I approach law like a mother bear: supportive but fierce when called upon to protect those who have come to me for help. I love the challenge of combining in-depth medical knowledge with the thrill of David vs. Goliath litigation. I cannot take away my clients' pain, but I can give them hope for a renewed future.



**John Morrissey**

John Morrissey is a third-generation lawyer who practices in Siskinds' estate litigation group. John was called to the bar in 2016 and has been a lawyer at Siskinds since 2021. John's practice focuses on Will challenges, capacity issues, fiduciary accounting, guardianship proceedings, and power of attorney

disputes. John has extensive experience with proceedings under the Substitute Decisions Act 1992, the Trustee Act, the Succession Law Reform Act, and the Estates Act, representing clients at various levels of court in Ontario including Ontario's Court of Appeal, the Superior Court of Justice, and Federal Court. In 2024 and in 2025, John was named in Best Lawyers™: Ones to Watch in Canada, which is an award that recognizes Canadian lawyers who are earlier in their careers for outstanding professional excellence in their private practice.

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# Case Comment (Anti-SLAPP Proceeding):

## Burjoski v. WRDSB

With Katie Warwick



**Katie Warwick**

Katie Warwick is an employment and human rights lawyer at Harrison Pensa representing and advising both employers and employees in a variety of employment-related matters, including human rights complaints, allegations of discrimination or harassment, workplace safety, occupational health, and wrongful termination disputes.

Katie's employment and human rights law responsibilities take her before the Superior Court of Justice, the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

When she's not in the office, Katie enjoys trying new restaurants with family and friends, reading science-fiction and fantasy books, and watching movies with her rescue cat, Buyo.

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# Case Comment:

## Jackson vs. Rosenberg

With Josh Laplante



**Josh Laplante**

Joshua is a partner with Cohen Highley LLP with an exclusive focus on estate disputes, power of attorney issues, guardianship matters, and the administration of estates. He is committed to providing clear, compassionate, and effective legal advice to clients facing complex and often emotionally charged

legal challenges. Whether navigating the intricacies of contested wills, advising on capacity and guardianship concerns, or assisting estate trustees with estate administration, Joshua offers thoughtful guidance tailored to the unique needs of each client and situation.

Joshua is committed to advocating for elder rights and the protection of individuals who may be unable to make

decisions for themselves. Josh advocates tirelessly for vulnerable individuals, ensuring that their voices are heard and their interests protected. Joshua represents both executors and beneficiaries in estate disputes, offering strategic guidance and strong advocacy to his clients through estate accounting disputes, removal of estate trustees, rectification of wills or trusts, or dependent support claims.

Having started his career in Cohen Highley's Kitchener office, Joshua transitioned to the firm's London office in 2021. Today, he maintains strong roots in both communities and services clients throughout Ontario. Outside of the office, Joshua is an avid golfer and can often be found on one of the many local public courses, looking for new courses to explore with a love of the challenge of the game. While he's not on the golf course, Joshua frequently attends live shows and concerts, and enjoys checking out local pubs and restaurants.

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If we must proceed to court, our clients can count on us to explain our findings in simple, understandable language in order to present their case clearly, avoid confusion, and save them time and expenses.

# Update: Appeal Proofing Your Trial

With Debbie Boswell



**Debbie Boswell**

Debbie Boswell is a partner in the Appeals, Dispute Resolution and Advocacy, Health Law, and Education Law London practice groups at Lerner LLP. She is also a certified workplace investigator.

Debbie has acted as counsel at all levels of court in Canada, including the

Supreme Court of Canada. She has a special interest in appellate advocacy after completing judicial clerkships at the Court of Appeal for Ontario and the Supreme Court of Canada.

As an active member of her community, she regularly serves on boards or committees for not-for-profit organizations and professional associations. She has taught legal research and writing to law students, served as a moot coach advisor, and is an assessor within the Law Practice Program.

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## Fireside Chat: Courtroom Advocacy Best Practices

With The Honorable Justice M. Carnegie,  
The Honourable Justice E. ten Cate



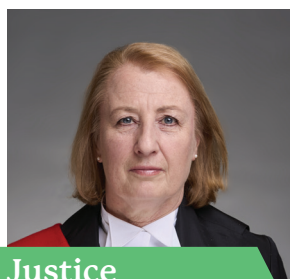
**Justice M.  
Carnegie**

Justice Carnegie was appointed to the SCJ in London in January 2024. Prior, he had been the Local Administrative Judge of the OCJ in London, appointed in March of 2020.

Called to the bar in 2000, he commenced his legal career in London, articling and as an associate with Cohen Highley

LLP – with Justice Fletcher Dawson as his principal. He was appointed as an Assistant Crown Attorney in Oxford County in 2002, was seconded on several major case homicides and was appointed Regional Crown Counsel in 2016.

He obtained his BA (Hons) at Queen's University in 1995, followed by his LLB at Western University in 1998.



**Justice  
E. ten Cate**

Justice Evelyn ten Cate practiced family law briefly before joining Fosters Law LLP in 1996. For the next 28 years, she practiced civil litigation, primarily in the areas of insurance defence and personal injury. She was appointed to the bench of the Southwest Region in February of 2024.



# Update: Criminal Evidence Primer

## Lower Your Expectations: Reasonable Expectation of Privacy in the Age of Attard

WithCarolynn Conron



**Carolynn Conron**

Carolynn Conron is the owner and operator of Conron Law Professional Corporation, a boutique criminal defence practice in London, Ontario. She graduated summa cum laude from McMaster University with a double major in philosophy and communication studies and a minor in psychology.

She then attended law school at the University of British Columbia, where she worked at the UBC First Nations Legal Clinic in her third year, developing a passion for criminal law.

After being called to the bar in British Columbia in 2010, Carolynn returned to her hometown of London, Ontario, and was called to the Ontario bar in 2011. She earned a Master of Laws from Western University in 2012, focusing

on Canada's Medical Marihuana Access Regulations, while also working as review counsel at Community Legal Services. In April 2013, she launched her own criminal law practice. Since 2018, she has been recognized as one of London's Top Three Rated defence lawyers and, in 2020, was named one of London Inc.'s Top 20 Under 40.

Carolynn has served as the London Director of the Ontario Criminal Lawyers' Association and Vice President of the London Criminal Lawyers' Association. She was previously a board member for The Meal in support of Diabetes Canada and currently sits on the boards of the Downtown London Business Association and London Lawyers Feed the Hungry.

Beyond law, Carolynn is an avid yogi, a vocalist in the band The Soldiers of Disappointment and emerged victorious in a charitable boxing match for the Fight to End Homelessness. She is also the proud mother of a 14-year-old son and a 9-year-old daughter.

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# Update: AI for Lawyers: It is All About the Prompts

With Andrew Murray



**Andrew Murray**

Andrew is a partner at Lerner LLP, where he is a member of the Plaintiff Personal Injury Practice Group. He has been helping plaintiffs for more than 30 years. He is certified by The Law Society of Ontario as a specialist in civil litigation. He is a member of The Advocates' Society and

a past co-chair of The Advocates' Society's personal injury and insurance law practice group. Andrew is a Past President of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Trial

Lawyers Association. He also maintains memberships in the Canadian Bar Association, the Medical-Legal Society of Toronto, The American Association of Justice, the Head Injury Association of London & District, and the Middlesex Law Association. Andrew's focus is civil litigation, with an emphasis on motor vehicle work, including accident benefits. Andrew is recognized in the 2025 edition of Best Lawyers as Lawyer of the Year for personal injury in London/Windsor. As it relates to his involvement at Straight From The Bench, Andrew is also the Chair of Lerner's Digital Leadership Committee and has devoted a lot of thought to the implications of artificial intelligence in a law practice.

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# Update: Employment Law

With Jaime Rivera-Campos



**Jaime Rivera-Campos**

Jaime Rivera-Campos is a labour and employment lawyer in Hicks Morley's London office. His practice covers all areas of labour, employment and human rights and he provides advice and representation to employers and management in both the private and public sectors on a wide

range of issues. Jaime has appeared as counsel on various litigation matters. Before joining Hicks Morley, Jaime worked at one of Ontario's largest employers where he provided strategic legal advice to various internal clients. He believes there is no "one size fits all" approach when it comes to providing his clients with advice. Instead, he focuses on building strong relationships with his clients to truly understand how their businesses operate to create strategies that fit their unique goals and challenges.

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## Hot Topic: Civil Rules Review – Phase 2 Proposals and Process

### Q&A with the Civil Rules Review Committee Member Jacob Damstra



**Jacob Damstra**

Jacob is a litigation Partner at Lerner's LLP. He was called to the Bar in 2016 after completing his articles as a Judicial Law Clerk for Justices R.A. Blair, P.D. Lauwers, and D.M. Brown at the Court of Appeal for Ontario. He maintains a dynamic dispute resolution, litigation, and appellate advocacy practice involving

complex commercial and insurance disputes, public and administrative law, health law, and environmental, municipal and regulatory matters. He is a frequent guest lecturer, advocacy judge and coach, and speaker and writer on issues of wellness, professionalism, appellate advocacy, and environmental/municipal legal issues.

Jacob graduated with distinction from Western Law in 2015 and concurrently obtained a Master of Arts in History, with a specialization in Transitional Justice and

Post-Conflict Reconstruction, focusing on transnational civil litigation to remedy human and environmental rights violations. Prior to his JD/MA program, Jacob obtained a BA (Hons) in International Relations from Western University from which he graduated as Gold Medalist.

Jacob was the recipient of the Canada 150 Medal from his Member of Parliament for service to the community, he was named to Business London's Top 20 in their 20s list, he is regularly recognized by Best Lawyers in Health Law and Commercial Litigation, and he is ranked in the Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory for Medical Negligence Law and Corporate//Commercial Litigation.

Jacob is member of the Civil Rules Review Working Group mandated to reform and update Ontario's civil rules of procedure. He serves in the Canadian Armed Forces Primary Reserves as a Legal Officer in the Office of the Judge Advocate General, he is a member of the Ontario Justice Education Network Southwest Regional Committee, and the proud father to four sons.

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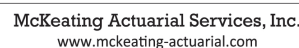
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