

2014

# Distinguished *Service Awards*

## OVERVIEW

The Distinguished Service Awards celebrate excellence in the legal profession. Jointly awarded by the Law Society of Alberta and the Canadian Bar Association - Alberta branch, these prestigious awards recognize the many outstanding contributions Alberta lawyers make to legal scholarship, pro bono legal service, the community and to the profession.

## AWARDS PROGRAM



Legal Scholarship ❖ Pro Bono Legal Service ❖  
Service to the Community ❖ Service to the Profession ❖

SERVING  
*the* PUBLIC  
INTEREST

Friday, January 31, 2014  
The Westin - Calgary  
11:30 a.m.



THE CANADIAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
Alberta Branch



**SHANNON K. O'BYRNE**

*Legal Scholarship*



**ERIN J. RUNNALLS**

*Pro Bono Legal Service*



**LONNY L. BALBI, QC**

*Service to the Community*



**NORMAN F.W. PICARD, QC**

*Service to the Profession*

Deemed by University of Alberta Faculty of Law's Dean Philip Bryden as "one of Canada's very best legal scholars," Ms. O'Byrne is described as "remarkably well rounded and prolific." A small library could be built around her scholarly publications and that library would certainly be well frequented. Her articles have received over 40 judicial citations at different levels of the court, including the Supreme Court of Canada. Ms. O'Byrne's analysis of both private and public law issues speaks to her breadth of knowledge. A few subjects cited as particularly influential include: her advocacy for the development of the doctrine of good faith performance in Canadian contract law, her approach to recovery for mental distress damages, and her groundbreaking work on discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Ms. O'Byrne's first-rate reputation has earned invitations to present at numerous academic and continuing legal education conferences, most notably for the National Judicial Institute. Ms. O'Byrne has also co-authored five editions of Canada's leading business law textbook, *Canadian Business & the Law*, which is taught at business schools across the country. As noted by her colleagues, Ms. O'Byrne has always emphasized that teaching and research directly support each other. In a similar regard, she has been commended as "one of the faculty members from whom the (University of) Alberta Faculty of Law derives much of its strength." In 2002 she was awarded the University of Alberta's highest teaching honour, the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

Sometimes it does not matter how long you have been on the road, it is the distance travelled that truly counts. Ms. Runnalls is touted as a trailblazer for her significant contributions in the area of pro bono legal service. While it has only been five years since her call to the Bar, Ms. Runnalls has accomplished more in this field of volunteer work than many seasoned lawyers. She is regarded as instrumental in the early development of Pro Bono Law Alberta's Civil Claims Duty Counsel (CCDC) project which fills a void for low-income legal services in the Civil Division of the Provincial Court. In addition to her full-time practice as an Associate at Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP, she coordinates the CCDC project for her firm and is the Calgary Associate Representative on the Pro Bono Committee. Ms. Runnalls' advocacy for access to justice extends through her planning, coordination, participation and leadership in the Immigration Law Pro Bono project and to her work as an active volunteer lawyer with Calgary Legal Guidance. Her innovative experience is well-regarded in the profession, supported by her invitation to present on the national stage at the Pro Bono Conference in Montreal, Quebec. According to a colleague, Ms. Runnalls "serves as an example to us all of the good that can be achieved when one donates one's time."

Some put their passions into words, others into actions; Mr. Balbi does both. Simply put, "he makes it happen." Where many see a daily commute, Mr. Balbi saw Bike to Work Day. Promoting physical fitness and environmental sustainment, Mr. Balbi is the founder, organizer and funder of this annual event which continues to flourish every year. His community spirit is also evident through his volunteer work with the Mustard Seed, World Vision Canada, and his annual trips to visit orphans in Mexico. Many of Mr. Balbi's volunteer efforts yield benefits to both the community and the profession. For instance, Mr. Balbi is a founding member of the Dispute Resolution Officer Program at the Calgary Courthouse which provides lawyers with an opportunity to volunteer their time to assist separating spouses in a more efficient and economic manner. As described by his nominator, "this program has been a proven success since 2001 and is a testament to Lonny's belief that the system should be 'front-end loaded.'" Mr. Balbi's commitment is further manifested through his participation on the Federal Advisory Working Group on Family Law, as well as his initiation and hosting of Super Conferences on the topics of Spousal Support and Unjust Enrichment. He also currently teaches Advanced Family Law at the University of Calgary Faculty of Law. His commitment and desire to address disparities in the area of family law has a trickle-down effect on the quality of legal services provided to the community and beyond. His previous recognitions include: the Calgary Award for Community Achievement, the Calgary Award for Environmental Achievement, the Leaders of Tomorrow Award and the John Haynes Memorial Award.

The high esteem in which Mr. Picard is held within the Alberta legal landscape is captured best in the words of a colleague. "Genuinely motivated to enrich legal and general community life, Norm embraces a spirit of volunteerism with passion and humility." Beginning as an editor with the Alberta Law Review, Mr. Picard has invested thousands of hours spanning four decades in an effort to improve and support the legal profession. As a Bencher with the Law Society of Alberta, Mr. Picard participated on several committees and contributed extensively to the Law Society Bar Admission Course. The Canadian Bar Association has also been fortunate to benefit from the contributions of Mr. Picard. With over 30 years of participation on a provincial and national level, he has held a variety of influential roles, including seven years as a member of the National Council. His intensive volunteer and practice experience within the legal profession have accurately labelled Mr. Picard as a "go-to" and respected resource. His ample contributions to legal education include: frequent lectures at Legal Education Society of Alberta courses, sessional instructor at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law, and author/editor of many legal publications. While the accolades for Mr. Picard's legal endeavors are extensively praised, his tireless positivity, leadership and humour are also widely commended by his peers. As emphatically stated by a long-time peer, Mr. Picard has "truly broken through preconceived notions that not only the public may have about lawyers, but that we as lawyers sometimes have about ourselves."