



THE CANADIAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
Alberta Branch

Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch  
Law Society of Alberta



LAW SOCIETY  
of ALBERTA



*Celebrating Excellence*

*Program*

January 26, 2017  
11:15 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Sutton Place Hotel  
Edmonton, Alberta

**Lunch**

**11:30 a.m.**

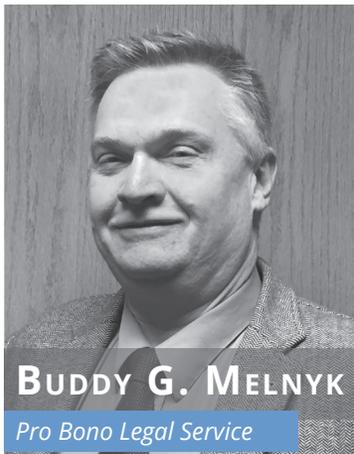
Master of Ceremonies: Jenny McMordie, Vice President,  
Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch

Grace delivered by The Honourable J.D. Rooke, Associate Chief Justice,  
Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta

**Distinguished Service Awards Presentations**

**12:30 p.m.**

Jeremiah Kowalchuk, President, Canadian Bar Association - Alberta Branch  
Anne L. Kirker, QC, President, Law Society of Alberta



“It’s people like Buddy who prove, one client at a time, that we are truly a helping profession,” wrote nominator Donna Derie-Gillespie. Throughout his legal career, Buddy G. Melnyk has distinguished himself as a champion of the needs of pro bono clients in central Alberta.

Mr. Melnyk completed his B.Comm. and LL.B. at the University of Alberta, and was admitted to the Alberta Bar in 1991. He has spent his entire legal career thus far in Red Deer, practicing largely in family law and civil litigation.

He is passionate about sharing his knowledge of the law. Mr. Melnyk is currently an instructor for the Legal Assistant Program at Red Deer College, and has previously taught Business Law in the Faculty of Business, and various legal interest courses in the Faculty of Extension. He has previously volunteered as an instructor for the CPLED program to pass down his knowledge to the next generation of lawyers in central Alberta.

Mr. Melnyk also devotes his time to the legal organizations in our province. He is a member of the Family Law Rules Advisory Committee, Chair of the Legal Education Society of Alberta Family Law:

Chamber Advocacy and Practice Pointers Program, and active participant in the Law Society of Alberta Mentor Connect program. His ongoing volunteer work with the Law Society of Alberta was recognized in 2016 when he was a Volunteer Recognition Recipient.

However, it is the vast scope of his pro bono activities that distinguishes Mr. Melnyk. He is one of the most active volunteers with the Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic, and has volunteered his time to pro bono clients there since 2008. Mr. Melnyk goes above and beyond the call of duty for the Legal Clinic, and has been known to attend court for Legal Clinic clients at a moment’s notice in place of sick or injured staff lawyers. On the occasions when the clinic was without a staff lawyer, Mr. Melnyk stepped in to take ownership of the client files, and act, on a purely volunteer basis, as the staff lawyer for the clinic. He has also been an invaluable mentor to Legal Clinic staff, first as a mentor to the first staff lawyer at the clinic, who was a new call at that time, and then to the incoming Executive Director. His work with the Central Alberta Legal Clinic earned him the 2010 Prism Award for outstanding pro bono legal services in central Alberta.

Mr. Melnyk is known throughout the central Alberta Bar to always be ready with a joke and a smile for his colleagues, and it is this warmth of character and his high regard for access to justice that sets him apart as a distinguished member of the legal profession.



**PROFESSOR JONNETTE  
WATSON HAMILTON**

*Legal Scholarship*

The contributions of Professor Jonnette Watson Hamilton have been prolific, to say the least. Her research and writing spans chapters in books, peer reviewed articles, newspaper and blog publications, and commissioned research.

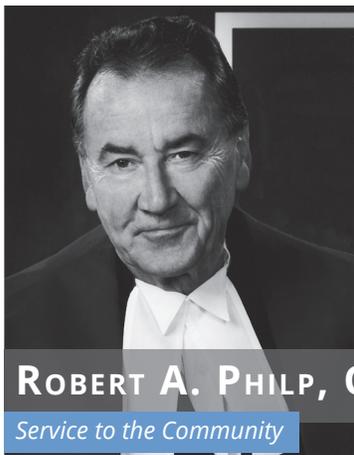
Professor Watson Hamilton completed her LL.B. at Dalhousie University, and was called to the Alberta Bar in 1979, where she worked in private practice until the completion of her LL.M. from Columbia University in 1992. Shortly thereafter, she began teaching at the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, and was promoted to Full Professor with Tenure in 2011. In her time at the Faculty of Law, Professor Watson Hamilton has twice been the recipient of the Howard Tidswell Memorial Award for Teaching Excellence (2008 and 2011-12), recognizing “prolonged high-level teaching performance, teaching methodology and contribution to curriculum.”

Professor Watson Hamilton has made significant contributions to legal scholarship in the province of Alberta throughout her career. One such example of these contributions is *ABlawg*, the University of Calgary Faculty of Law Blog, of which she was one of the founders. *ABlawg* provides commentary from faculty and instructors, students, and research associates on developments in Alberta law. She continues to be an active contributor to the blog, providing over one hundred posts to date. While her writing there

covers a variety of issues, it is her work on equality rights that her Faculty of Law colleague Nigel Bankes calls “especially impressive.” This work traces the evolution of equality jurisprudence at the Supreme Court of Canada, and has since been collected into an *ABlawg* ebook.

Another example of Professor Watson Hamilton’s contributions to legal scholarship in our province is her work with the Alberta Law Reform Institute. In 2010, she was commissioned to research the area of *Matrimonial Property Act* reform, where she researched 10 years of case law in Alberta. This work was included in the ALRI discussion paper and final report *The Matrimonial Property Act: Valuation Date*, which provided recommendations on agreed valuation dates, default valuation dates, and post-valuation changes in matrimonial property disputes.

The volume of Professor Watson Hamilton’s work makes her stand out among her peers, with over 50 publications in addition to her submissions to *ABlawg*. What also makes her stand out is the sheer breadth of her work, which spans such diverse areas of the law such as property law and theory, aboriginal rights, equality rights, commercial arbitration, dispute resolution, and many more. Her vast work as a scholar is summed up by Catherine Brown, who quoted an external reviewer up on the occasion of Professor Watson Hamilton’s promotion to Full Professor: “She is, in many ways, the model of a fully rounded legal scholar.”



**ROBERT A. PHILP, Q.C.**

*Service to the Community*

The Honourable Robert A. Philp, Q.C., has taken on many roles throughout his career - lawyer, Justice of the Peace, Provincial Court Judge, and now, Chief of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. In each of those roles, his “decisions, advice and interventions have literally saved lives,” as stated in the first point in a list of 26 reasons for his nomination.

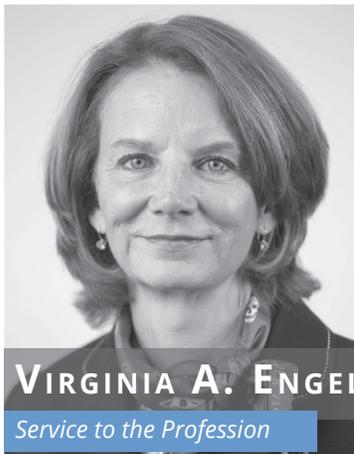
Mr. Philp received both his B.A. and his LL.B. from the University of Alberta, and was called to the bar in 1976. He has spent the entirety of his career in Edmonton, practicing in the areas of labour, criminal, and administrative law in private practice, as well as with the Alberta Labour Relations Board and Human Rights Commission, until his elevation to Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta in 2005. In 2014, Mr. Philp retired from the bench and took on the role of Chief of the Commission and Tribunals for the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

While his professional experience is vast, it is his community involvement that sets Mr. Philp apart among his peers. He has been a long-serving director with the Alberta Lawyers’ Assistance Society, a board member for Boyle Street Community Services (where he also leads weekend recovery meetings), President of the Jellinek Society - Recovery House, and board member for the Edmonton Community

Legal Centre, just to name a few. In reviewing Mr. Philp’s community involvement, a common thread becomes apparent; his desire to assist those who suffer from addictions, mental illness, homelessness, and other conditions that cause them to be marginalized by society.

Mr. Philp’s professional life has blended with his community involvement in ways that enrich the lives of the disadvantaged citizens that he volunteers his time to help. He is a proponent of restorative justice processes, and has a deep understanding of the “rationale and application of Gladue Sentencing in the Criminal Courts of Alberta,” say nominators Bob Aloneissi, Q.C., and Adam Garrett. He was a recipient of the Eagle Award from the Native Counselling Services of Alberta for his support and mentorship. While still a judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta, Mr. Philp also helped to pilot a warrant mitigation initiative with Boyle Street Community Services, which enable Boyle Street clients to work with the Crown Prosecutors to manage less serious warrants in such a way that resulted in fewer clients going to prison or being denied housing.

In his nomination, nominators Bob Aloneissi, Q.C., and Adam Garrett say, “It speaks volumes for the character of Mr. Philp when individuals from both sides of the bar, the Crown and the Defence, can wholeheartedly support his nomination.” His dedication to truly helping those that he has come across in his career exemplifies the best qualities of members of the legal profession.



**VIRGINIA A. ENGEL, Q.C.**

*Service to the Profession*

The contributions of Virginia A. Engel, Q.C., to the legal profession are almost too numerous to list. Described by Peacock Linder Halt & Mack LLP colleague Johanna Price as a “shining light”, her contributions to her professional associations, as well as to the advancement of women in the legal profession certainly make her a beacon of the legal community.

Ms. Engel received her LL.B. from the University of British Columbia in 1983, and was called to the British Columbia Bar in 1984 and the Alberta Bar in 1990, both of which she remains a member of to this day. She is also a graduate of the ICD-Rotman Directors Education program through the Institute of Corporate Directors and Rotman School of Management, and received her ICD.D. designation in 2014.

Regularly recognized as a leader by her peers, Ms. Engel is a recipient of the Queen’s Jubilee Medal (2003), Women in Law Leadership Award for Leadership (2011), and recognized by the Women of Influence as an outstanding Senior Executive (2011). In addition, she made the list of Best Lawyers in Canada (Corporate and Commercial Litigation and Legal Malpractice) from 2008 to 2016, was named Lawyer of the Year (Best Lawyers, Legal Malpractice Law in Calgary) in 2011, and recipient of the LEXPERT 2013 Zenith Award celebrating leading women lawyers. These awards represent just a few of her many accomplishments over the years.

Ms. Engel has spent much of her career volunteering her time to the organizations that support the legal profession. Her work with the Canadian Bar Association touched lawyers across the country, and includes work with both national and local committees, serving as President of the CBA Alberta Branch (2001-02), and sitting as Director and Chair (2013-15) of CBA Financial Services, and Director and President (2009-11) of the Canadian Bar Insurance Association. She was also one of the founding members of the Association of Women Lawyers, and served as president in 1996-97. Her commitment to the AWL has never wavered throughout her many years of service, and she is still an active member and mentor to the younger members of the association, and the profession.

As Michele H. Hollins, Q.C., and the Honourable Madame Justice Gillian D. Marriott wrote, “Virginia embodies the underlying premises for both the [Canadian Bar Association and the Law Society of Alberta] with her commitment to professionalism, client service and the betterment and support of lawyers.”



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