

MINUTES OF SPECIAL CONVOCATION

Saturday, December 13th, 1997
6:15 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Treasurer (Harvey T. Strosberg, Q.C.), Aaron, Adams, Armstrong, Backhouse, Banack, Carpenter-Gunn, Carter, R. Cass, Cronk, Crowe, DelZotto, Farquharson, Feinstein, Finkelstein, Gottlieb, Lamek, Lamont, Lawrence, Legge, MacKenzie, Marrocco, Millar, Murphy, Puccini, Ross, Scott, Swaye, Wilson and Wright.

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A Special Convocation was held in the Great Library, on Saturday, 13th December, 1997 at 6:15 p.m. The purpose of the Special Convocation was to elect The Honourable Brian Dickson, an Honorary Bencher of the Society.

Also present for the Special Convocation were Chief Justice R. Roy McMurtry, Chief Justice Heather Smith, Justice Sydney Robins, Justice Stephen Borins, Justice George Finlayson, Justice John Laskin, Justice Stephen Goudge, Chief Justice John Morden, Justice Lee Ferrier, Justice James Spence, Justice Mendes DaCosta, Justice Lloyd Brennan, Justice Joan Lax, Justice Denise Bellamy, Justice Sandra Chapnik, Justice James Carnwath, Justice Thomas Callon, Justice Maurice Cullity, Justice Robert Sharpe, Justice Robert Montgomery,, Justice James MacPherson, Justice John O'Driscoll, Justice Frances Kiteley, Edward Greenspan and Edward Ducharme, staff and the Benchers' spouses and guests.

The Treasurer called Convocation to order and said:

"This Special Convocation of The Law Society of Upper Canada is called for the purpose of confirming the election of The Right Honourable Brian Dickson as an Honorary Bencher of this Law Society.

The Benchers of the Law Society are honoured to conduct this Convocation in the presence of our many distinguished guests today.

I am very pleased to extend a welcome today to The Right Honourable Brian Dickson on this auspicious occasion. I would also like to express a special word of welcome to Mrs. Dickson and their son, Brian, a graduate of the University of Toronto Law School and a member of the Ontario Bar.

The Benchers of the Law Society of Upper Canada are charged by law with the responsibility to govern the legal profession in the public interest. The office of Bencher carries with it a responsibility to ensure that the legal system serves the needs of the people. In the furtherance of our duties we may elect Honorary Benchers to Convocation. I now invite Marshall Crowe to report on the office of Honorary Bencher."

Mr. Crowe reported on the office of Honorary Bencher and said:

"Chief Justice, The Right Honourable Mr. Dickson, Treasurer, distinguished guests, fellow Benchers.

The Benchers of the Law Society are authorized by law to elect such persons as they deem appropriate to the office of Honorary Bencher. By custom, we look back to His Late Majesty King Edward VII as the first Honorary Bencher by reason of the recognition accorded to him by the Law Society on his visit to Osgoode Hall in 1860 as Prince of Wales. We have been honoured in the more than one hundred and thirty years which have passed since then by the acceptance of the office of Honorary Bencher by fourteen men and women of exemplary distinction and accomplishment. These have included two Governors-General of Canada, two Prime Ministers, a Chief Justice of Canada, a Premier of Ontario and one Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Our present Honorary Benchers include Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, The Right Honourable Lincoln Alexander and our former Secretary and Under-Treasurer, Kenneth Jarvis. Most recently we were honoured when His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales became an Honorary Bencher.”

Ms. Cronk then presented The Right Honourable Brian Dickson to Convocation and said:

“Mr. Treasurer;

On April 25th, 1997 at a Convocation of the Benchers of the Law Society, on motion duly made by the late Barry Pepper and seconded by Marshall Crowe, Convocation elected The Right Honourable Brian Dickson, an Honorary Bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada, such election to be effective upon confirmation by the Treasurer in Convocation.

Treasurer, I have the honour to request that Convocation now receive the citation and that you then confirm the election of The Right Honourable Brian Dickson as an Honorary Bencher.”

The Treasurer then confirmed the election of The Honourable Brian Dickson as an Honorary Bencher of The Law Society of Upper Canada and said:

“Mr. Dickson;

As Treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada and on behalf of the Society and of the members of the legal profession of this Province, I wish to express to you, Sir, our grateful recognition of the honour you do us in coming today to this Convocation, to be made an Honorary Bencher of the Law Society.

By virtue of the authority vested in me by Convocation and the statute in that behalf I hereby confirm the election of The Right Honourable Brian Dickson as an Honorary Bencher of The Law Society of Upper Canada.”

The Treasurer handed the presentation folder to Mr. Dickson and said:

“Sir, we would be grateful if you would now address us.”

Mr. Dickson then addressed Convocation.

“Mr. Treasurer, Benchers of The Law Society of Upper Canada, Distinguished Guests, thank you Honourable Benchers for the signal honour that you have conferred on me this evening.

I have taken particular pleasure in the opportunity to spend an evening with so many colleagues who literally form the fabric of the legal system in Ontario and who, consequently, are alive to the dynamics that propel its constant evolution. The ongoing interaction of members of the Law Society is part of what ensures that the interpretation of our laws stays in touch with broader developments in our society.

The Law Society, then, is a critical component of the engine that drives our legal system. Together with our law schools, the law societies across Canada play an essential role in ensuring that the profession stays attuned to ongoing developments and the community's norms. This is obviously especially true of The Law Society of Upper Canada which, by virtue of representing the largest bar in the country, has a particular responsibility to ensure that its members are alert to the community's needs and expectations.

A tremendous variety of opportunities are now offered to talented young students wishing to pursue a legal career, much more so than when I started my legal studies. The infrastructure now underlying our system of legal education is multifaceted, dynamic and has truly come to reflect the complexities that shape this country. In the years since I first studied law - at a time when we had only a handful of law schools, we have seen a remarkable step forward - one that will ensure that young lawyers coming into practice across the country bring with them a wide variety of knowledge and experiences that will continue to ensure that the law reflects new ideas and developments.

I was led to reflect on how much has happened to the role of law societies since I first embarked on the practice of law. The membership of our law societies has evolved dramatically as new generations have been admitted to practice and worked their way up the professional ladder. As a result, the range of issues that our law societies deal with has expanded greatly. This is all for the good. Our law societies play a vital role in ensuring that members of the bar and the bench do not stop being part of the learning process once they leave law school. Indeed, it is essential if we are to retain a vibrant and dynamic profession that is alert to contemporary issues that that process of learning and sensitization to new issues and ideas continue long after graduation day. Our law societies play a fundamental role in ensuring that the profession stays alert to new challenges and remembers that it has profound obligations to society at large to hold itself to standards of ethical conduct that our community expects of the legal profession.

And so I congratulate you on the work you have done to date, but urge you to continue to discharge your responsibilities with enthusiasm and vigour.

Thank you again for the very fine tribute that you have bestowed on me this evening."

CONVOCATION ROSE AT 6:30 P.M.

The Benchers and their guests then moved to Convocation Hall for a reception and the Benchers' Festive Party.