
For Immediate Release

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Media Advisory Law Society Awards Honour the Best of the Profession

Toronto – The Law Society of Upper Canada will present awards to nine lawyers who represent the highest level of achievement and commitment to serving society and the profession. The Law Society Medal, the Lincoln Alexander Award and the Laura Legge Award will be presented by Treasurer W. A. Derry Millar at a special ceremony at Osgoode Hall on September 23, 2009.

Established in 1985, the Law Society Medal is presented to outstanding Ontario lawyers whose service reflects the highest ideals of the profession. The award is given for outstanding service whether in a particular area of practice, in the academic sphere, or in some other professional capacity. This year's Law Society Medal recipients are: **Professor Nicholas Bala, George Biggar, Elizabeth Goldberg, James Douglas Grenkie, Q.C., Peter Hrastovec, Patricia Jackson and Susan Vella.**

The Lincoln Alexander Award is presented to a lawyer who has demonstrated a commitment to the public and its well-being through community service. The award was created in 2002 in honour of former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Member of Parliament, and 2002 Law Society Medal recipient the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, P.C., C.C., O. Ont., Q.C., in recognition of his dedication to the people of Ontario and the legal community. This year's recipient of the Lincoln Alexander Award is **Sandra Thomas.**

The Laura Legge Award recognizes an Ontario woman lawyer who has exemplified leadership within the profession. The award was established in 2007 in honour of Laura Legge, O. Ont., Q.C., the first woman elected a bencher of the Law Society and the first woman to serve as its Treasurer. This year's recipient of the Laura Legge Award is **Janet Leiper.**

The Law Society regulates lawyers and paralegals in Ontario in the public interest. The Law Society has a mandate to protect the public interest, to maintain and advance the cause of justice and the rule of law, to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario and act in a timely, open and efficient manner.

For more information about the Law Society, visit us [online](#).

Biographical information is attached to this media advisory.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

2009 Law Society Medal Recipients

Professor Nicholas Bala, Kingston, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1982.

Professor Bala is Canada's foremost authority on legal issues related to children. His work has helped to make the legal system and the professionals who work in it more sensitive to the needs of children and families in crisis. He is an exceptional legal scholar and a highly regarded professor at Queen's University Faculty of Law, where he has taught since 1980.

George Biggar, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1972.

Mr. Biggar practised criminal and family law from 1972 to 1984, and from 1973 to 1984, he also supervised law students at Parkdale Community Legal Services. He then joined Legal Aid Ontario, where he held several senior positions, and is now a special advisor to the President and CEO. A passionate advocate for the right of low-income Ontarians to access the justice system, his work has helped define how legal aid is delivered in Canada.

Elizabeth Goldberg, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1976.

Ms. Goldberg has served the public interest throughout her career in public service. Currently the chief executive officer of the Law Foundation of Ontario, she has held senior positions with the Ministry of the Attorney General, including Chief Constitutional Counsel, Constitutional Branch (1991 to 2005), and the Ministry of Government Services where she was executive lead, Public Service Legislation Project. She has served on the boards of the Osgoode Hall Alumni Association, the Ontario Justice Education Network, and the Osgoode Society for Legal History.

James Douglas Grenkie, Q.C., Morrisburg, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1970.

Mr. Grenkie has made a broad contribution to the profession and his community through his work in family and criminal litigation, as well as commercial municipal, estate and real estate law. He is an active member of the Ontario Bar Association (OBA) and is now a trustee of ALERT, the charitable arm of the OBA, and the director of the Foreign Conference Committee. He served on the OBA executive from 1980 to 1990, including as branch president from 1988 to 1989.

Peter Hrastovec, Windsor, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1984.

Mr Hrastovec was managing partner of Raphael Partners LLP until 2008, and now works as a sole practitioner, practising in employment and labour law and commercial litigation. He has made a significant contribution to his community as an energetic and active volunteer with many organizations. He is past president of the Windsor Symphony Society, a past president of the Rotary Club of Windsor (1918); a past honorary co-chair of the local United Way Campaign; and a past chair of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Patricia Jackson, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1979.

Ms Jackson is one of Canada's senior trial and appellate counsel with a broad litigation practice, and has significant expertise in class actions. She has been lead counsel in a number of cases which have established important precedents in Canadian jurisprudence. She is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; vice president and a board member of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; the senior chair of the University of Toronto Tribunal; a former director of The Advocates' Society; a former member of the Ontario Judicial Council; and a former director of the Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation.

Susan Vella, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1988.

Ms. Vella has an innovative legal practice that demonstrates a fundamental commitment to advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable members of society, representing victims of sexual and physical assault and mental cruelty, including survivors of long-term institutional violence and residential schools. She served as commission counsel to the Ipperwash Inquiry; is a past president of the National Association of

Women and the Law; and was a legal consultant to the Canada Law Commission regarding its report *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions*.

2009 Lincoln Alexander Award

Sandra Thomas, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1992.

Ms. Thomas is committed to the principles of a multicultural society, including the importance of diversity in the legal profession. She is the founding president of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, and served as an advisor to former Chief Justice R. Roy McMurtry on the Mayor's Panel on Community Safety from 2005 to 2007. She is also past regional co-chair of the Department of Justice's Advisory Committee on Visible Minorities. She volunteers at the York-Westview Partnership at York University, and is actively involved in the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics and Character Education, a program aimed at stemming gang-related violence in the Jane-Finch community.

2009 Laura Legge Award

Janet Leiper, Toronto, called to the Bar of Ontario in 1987.

Ms. Leiper has had a diverse professional career, one that demonstrates her passionate commitment to public service and access to justice. She is currently a visiting professor of public interest law at Osgoode Hall Law School, and responsible for implementing the school's public interest service requirement for LL.B. students. She served as the chair of the board of Legal Aid Ontario from 2004 to 2007, and is a member of the Ontario and Nunavut Review Boards, for both of which she has also acted as counsel. She has more than 20 years of experience practising criminal law and was the Toronto director of the Criminal Lawyers' Association from 1993 to 1995, and the provincial director from 1995 to 2001.