

The Distinguished Service Awards

Terms of Reference

Updated August 2026

Purpose

The purpose of the Distinguished Service Awards is for the Law Society of Alberta (“Law Society”) and Canadian Bar Association Alberta Branch (“CBA Alberta”) to recognize distinguished legal contributions in four areas:

- service to the community
- service to the profession
- service in legal scholarship
- *pro bono* legal service

The Distinguished Service Awards

The Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to members of the legal profession in Alberta in recognition of their outstanding dedication, creativity, initiative, achievement and contribution to the community, the profession, legal scholarship, and *pro bono* activities.

Frequency and Presentation

The awards will be presented annually at an event of the organizers’ choosing, with the intent to showcase the awards and recipients to the profession.

Nomination

Members of the legal profession are nominated by a single nominator.

Eligibility: All nominations will be considered for two years.

Benchers and staff members of the Law Society, staff and executive members of CBA Alberta, and members of the judiciary are eligible for nomination one year after their term in office/employment ends.

All other members of the legal profession are eligible. Previous conduct record does not preclude someone from being eligible unless citations have been issued against them and those citations have not been dealt with, or the member is currently either suspended or disbarred. If there are questions as to a nominee’s eligibility, the selection committee will make a recommendation to the presidents of the Law Society and of CBA Alberta for a final decision.

There is no “currently active member” requirement for the DSA, and posthumous awards can also be made.

Call for Nominations: The call for nominations will be issued jointly each year through the appropriate communications tools of Law Society and of CBA Alberta. Nominators provide all details regarding the nominees in a nomination package, in a form agreed to by the organizers, and sent to the designated address provided by the organizers by a date agreed to by the organizers.

Nomination package: All nomination packages submitted should include:

- A statement by the nominator detailing why the candidate is worthy of the particular category of award for which they are being nominated.
- A curriculum vitae outlining the nominee's background, career and any presented activities that qualify them for nomination in **one** of the four categories, and
- A maximum of two letters of support for the nomination.

Selection

Each year the award recipients are chosen by a selection committee.

Selection committee: The selection committee will have at least seven or eight committee members. These will include:

- The President and President-Elect of the Law Society or designate
- The President and Vice-President of CBA Alberta or designate
- Law Society Lay Benchers
- One CBA Alberta member
- One or two members of the legal/academic community (suggested are the deans or associate deans of the University law schools in Edmonton and Calgary)

Notwithstanding the above, the Law Society and the CBA may appoint a nominee at their discretion if the officers for their organization are unable to participate on the committee. As much as possible, the selection committee makeup should be diverse.

The organizers will provide each selection committee member with the nominee information to review and choose their top three choices for each DSA category. The committee will then meet one or more times as needed by video or teleconference to determine the selected recipient in each category.

Selection criteria:

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| ▪ role model for other lawyers | ▪ individual achievement |
| ▪ dedication | ▪ obstacles overcome |
| ▪ results achieved | ▪ significance of achievement |
| ▪ creativity | ▪ impact |
| ▪ initiative | ▪ effective contribution to the role of law in society |

General Considerations

The selection committee shall consider diversity among award recipients by recognizing:

- the regional and gender distribution of the members of Alberta's legal profession
- that members from under-represented groups, or from smaller communities, may have fewer opportunities to experience, and therefore excel in, aspects of the selection criteria
- that years of service is not one of the selection criteria and will not be a determining factor.

Number of recipients selected

No more than one recipient will be awarded a DSA in each category. Presenting a single award in each category is more prestigious than having multiple recipients win in one category. The selection committee will choose one recipient in each category in a given year unless an award is being presented for a particular project which was accomplished jointly by two individuals. Recipients will receive an award solely in the category for which they have been nominated.

Alerting the recipients

The presidents of Law Society and of CBA Alberta will call the recipients to inform them that they will be receiving an award. The organizers will then send a formal confirmation to each recipient detailing when the award ceremony will take place and how many guests they may invite.

Programs

A written program will detail the award recipient's qualifications for the award and will be made available at the awards ceremony. Coordination of design, production and printing of the programs will be managed by the organizers.

News Release

There will be a news release issued announcing the DSA recipients unless there are unusual or extraordinary circumstances.

The Awards

Pins: The organizers will arrange a lapel pin for each recipient.

Certificates: The organizers will produce a professionally designed and framed certificate with the Law Society and CBA Alberta seals for each recipient.

The Awards Ceremony

The organizers will make arrangements for the DSA awards ceremony, which may be held either virtually or in person. If the ceremony is held in person, award recipients will receive a maximum of four complimentary tickets, including one for themselves. Other guests or coworkers are encouraged to purchase tickets from the organizers. The awards ceremony will be advertised on the Law Society and CBA Alberta websites prior to the event.

Speeches

Speeches are written for the presidents of the Law Society and CBA Alberta by the organizers to aid them in presenting the awards. Speech content is normally split between the two presidents.

Photography

The organizers will hire a photographer for the awards ceremony. The photographs may be used in Law Society and CBA Alberta communications, on websites and social media, and as mementoes for the DSA recipients.

Travel Arrangements for Recipients

The organizers will coordinate travel and accommodation as necessary for award recipients who reside outside of the city limits for the awards ceremony.

The Organizers

The Executive Directors of Law Society and CBA Alberta will mutually agree on who the organizers will be each year, which could be staff of Law Society, CBA Alberta or a designated third party.

File Retention

The Law Society and CBA Alberta will maintain their own records for this program.

Costs

All costs will be shared equally by the Law Society and CBA Alberta.