

MINUTES OF SPECIAL CONVOCATION

London – Monday, 21st June, 2010
2:00 p.m.

The Treasurer, (W. A. Derry Millar), benchers and their guests proceeded to in the London Convention Centre for the Call to the Bar ceremonies of 94 candidates listed in the Report of the Director of Professional Development and Competence.

CONVOCATION WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:00 P.M.

A quorum of Convocation was present.

The body of the auditorium was occupied by the candidates and their guests.

The Treasurer asked all present to stand for the National Anthem sung by Denise Pelley.

The Treasurer welcomed the candidates and their guests.

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CONFERRING OF AN HONORARY DEGREE

Mr. Ruby, a representative of the Professional Development and Competence Committee introduced the Doctoral candidate, Abdulrahim Ali Chahbar and read the following citation:

“Treasurer may I present to you and this Convocation Abdulrahim Ali Chahbar, and request that you confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

This degree is awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in service and benefit to the legal profession, the rule of law or the cause of justice. Abdul Chahbar exemplifies this criterion.

His life has been inextricably intertwined with Ontario’s legal system despite the fact that he is not a member of the legal profession. In 1996, he was appointed a lay bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada, a position he held until 2009. During his tenure, he acted as the Society's Complaints Review Commissioner, as a representative on the National Committee on Accreditation and as a Director of LAWPRO. In October 2009, he was appointed a Justice of the Peace of the Ontario Court of Justice. There is no doubt that his sharp intellect, strong work ethic and collegial nature will win him the respect of his judicial colleagues as it did his fellow benchers.

Abdulrahim Ali Chahbar is most deserving of this honour and I request you, Sir, to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.”

The Treasurer admitted Abdulrahim Ali Chahbar to the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

Mr. Chahbar then addressed the candidates and their guests.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Justice Ducharme, Mr. Treasurer, benchers, new calls and family & friends of new calls, Law Society staff, ladies and gentlemen. Please allow me the opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the benchers of the Law Society of Upper Canada for seeing fit to bestow such an honour on me. Today, I feel extremely proud and humbled and at the same time find myself somewhat in a state of disbelief asking myself once again, why me? Why did the Law Society of Upper Canada see fit to award me with this honorary degree when there are so many deserving individuals more worthy than I? I mean this sincerely.

I first started with the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1996, and in that time I've seen many great people, most of whom I am lucky enough to call friends, stand as I am today and receive this prestigious honour.

To have my peers include me in a class of honourees which include the likes of like Dr. Clayton Ruby, Dr. Constance Backhouse, Dr. Harvey Strosberg, Dr. Vern Krishna, Dr. Susann Elliot, Dr. Gavin MacKenzie, Madam Justice Harriet Sachs, Justice Armstrong, Mr. Justice Marrocco and Justice Sydney Robins and Dr. Laura Legge, the first woman Treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada, how can I help but not ask the question “WHY ME?”

I say with the utmost sincerity that there are no words to adequately express how fortunate I feel to have my name included with this class of most distinguished legal luminaries and giants of the profession.

A few times during my life I've felt somewhat overwhelmed by a specific moment. I think it happens to us all at least a few times during the course of our lives. During these rare moments, you can't help but feel overwhelmed by events unfolding before you. I might as well let you know that I'm experiencing that feeling once again right now. I suspect that you might be having that same feeling right now.

Many of you new lawyers may experience this feeling as you walk across the stage and hear your name called this day. Trust me when I tell you that many of your parents, proudly sitting behind you today are experiencing this overwhelming feeling of pride with you.

You may not appreciate or recognize it right now, but take it from someone who saw his son walk across this very stage a couple years ago, that there are no prouder people here today than those people sitting behind you. On this front, I would be remiss if I didn't ask you take a moment, stand, turn around and applaud them and recognize the support and role they played in you being here today.

It's kind of funny that the same people who you just applauded for their support are the same people who will also keep you grounded and not let your accomplishments go to your head. They are the same people who knew you before you went to law school and before you became lawyers and they are the same people who won't let you forget where you came from and let any of this go to your head.

Alexander Pope said "Praise is like ambergris, a little whiff of it by snatches is very agreeable, but when a man holds a whole lump of it to his nose, it is a stink and strikes you down."

As we gather here today to mark your entry into the ranks of this hallowed and noble profession, I would ask you to take a moment to consider what does all of this actually mean? In a few moments, you will walk across this stage and your days as an articling student will officially draw to a close. (If the people at the back of the room could see what I see, that thought alone should bring a smile to your face) and you will be lawyers from this day forth. But I ask you to consider what this means. What does it mean to be a lawyer? I close my remarks today with what I believe to be the answer and some advice.

Life will provide you with a series of opportunities and obstacles and the true measure of your worth, not just as a lawyer, but as a person, will be determined by how you react. When you really think about it, there are really only two types of people, those who when faced with an opportunity, seize it and make the most of it and those who by virtue of some reason, whether fear or timidity or ignorance or lack of purpose, let the opportunity pass.

As lawyers, you are the caretakers of the law, and people from this day forward will come to you and entrust you with their most important affairs. They will be looking to you for help and guidance and in doing so, they expect, as they should, that their interests and yours will merge. The relationship between the solicitor and client is a sacred trust that dates back to time immemorial and continues strong until this very day.

The system you are entering is not easy. It is adversarial by nature and design. The dialect of the law is often characterized in polar opposite terms. Plaintiff and Defendant. Victim and Accused. Innocent and Guilty. But rarely is it this clear cut. Rarely is it this black and white. Everything is open to interpretation. There is no uniformity in perspective one can take. All you can do is best serve the interests of your client and strive to do what is just in your eyes. Remember, it may sound cliché, but you have to look at yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and you have to like the person that is looking back at you.

Following this logic, lawyers are not simply advocates for their clients. This is too small a role, too minor of a definition. As lawyers, you will have the opportunity time and again to stand as a peacemaker and who amongst us is better than one who makes peace amongst adversaries?

One of the most revered and trusted personalities in American history, Abraham Lincoln, who as you may know was a lawyer, recognized this and eloquently advised all lawyers when he said, QUOTE: "Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbours to compromise whenever you can. As a peacemaker, the lawyer has the superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough." END QUOTE.

“There will still be business enough.” Remember these words as you go forward. Billable hours are important. Targets must be met and deadlines will be set, but you must remember that you must not let your work consume you entirely. Make time for family. Make time for friends. Make time for yourself.

Believe me when I tell you that you that when you are old and grey and your best days have long past, you will not say to yourself “I wish I had put in even more hours at the office or if I had only billed more.” You don’t take these things with you – all of your accumulations and worldly possessions are transient in nature and do not go with you. The truly happy amongst us are those who are able to strike a balance between our work and family. Remember this as you go forward.

I close with a few special “thank yous.” To Clayton Ruby, I thank you for being my friend. Thank you for your kind words this day and I am honoured by your presence here today. To my friend Deidre Rowe Brown, your support over the years has been truly valued. I’d like to recognize two very special people who have taken time from their extremely busy schedules to join us today. Senior Regional Justice of the Peace for the Western Region, His Worship Stuart Taylor and Her Worship, Anne Marie Decicco-Best, who is no doubt known to most of you here as the hard working and dedicated Mayor of our fine city and who I consider to be a dear friend dating back to my time on City Council.

To my brothers here today, to my mother and father who are too frail to be here today, thank you for your love and support. Lastly, the most sincere and heartfelt thank you goes to my family. My wife Ahlam, for 31 years, you have been my partner, my crutch and my strength. Thank you for everything. To my children, Ali, Darwish, Rima and Omar, you are my pride, my joy, my life and you represent the very best of me.

Again, congratulations to the new calls today as you become members of the Law Society of Upper Canada. Remember as you go forward, that this is your governing body and there is no finer group than them.

Thank you.“

CALL TO THE BAR

Mr. Caskey, Ms. Potter and Mr. Yachetti presented to the Treasurer 94 candidates for the Call to the Bar.

94 CANDIDATES FOR CALL TO THE BAR

(list of candidates in Convocation file)

The Treasurer conferred upon the candidates the degree of Barrister-at-law and called them to the Bar of Ontario.

The Treasurer addressed the new barristers.

CONVOCATION ADJOURNED

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Following Convocation a Special Sitting of the Court of Appeal for Ontario and the Superior Court of Justice convened with the Honourable Regional Senior Justice Edward Ducharme presiding.

The candidates were presented to Justice Ducharme before whom they took the Oaths and acknowledged their signatures on the Rolls in the presence of the Court.

Justice Ducharme then addressed the new barristers and solicitors.

Confirmed in Convocation this 29th day of September, 2010.

Treasurer