



Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

News Release

For immediate release

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Surrey lawyers' achievements recognized

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family issues (e.g., involving child apprehension matters or domestic violence) and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).

Legal information is available through LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites. (See www.lss.bc.ca for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre and LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*

Vancouver, BC – The Legal Services Society (LSS) presented awards to Craig D. Sicotte and Jay Upton at a recognition event held February 23 to acknowledge Surrey lawyers' work on behalf of legal aid clients.

"These lawyers have combined their finely honed legal skills with their commitment to access to justice to help low income people resolve their legal problems," said Executive Director Mark Benton. "Their dedication is a cornerstone of legal aid, and the society is pleased to show its appreciation for their contributions. The services they provide are representative of the legal aid work done by hundreds of lawyers across BC."

LSS Board Chair Geoff Cowper, QC and board member Bruce Hardy presented the awards to Sicotte and Upton. The awards were given to acknowledge individual lawyers' achievements and outstanding service over the years.

Called to the BC bar in 1991, **Craig D. Sicotte** articulated with the firm Bull Housser and Tupper and spent a year as a Supreme Court law clerk working with the late Justice Kenneth Lysyk and Justice Peter Fraser in Vancouver. He then went on to start his own law firm and practiced criminal and family law. He eventually focused solely on criminal law. For the first decade of his practice, the majority of Craig's client's relied on legal aid as a means of obtaining representation and Craig continues to accept many LSS referrals today. For many years Craig volunteered at legal clinics providing free legal advice and he has been a guest speaker at Law 12 high school classes since 1996. Over the past year Craig has also assisted Crown Counsel in conducting court training sessions for new police officers from both the Surrey and Langley RCMP detachments.

Jay Upton was called to the Manitoba bar in 1992, the Alberta bar in 1993, and the BC bar in 1995. He articulated with Legal Aid Manitoba where he maintained conduct of an extensive family and criminal caseload, and was solely responsible for two rural circuits and youth remand court. In Alberta, he worked for the John Howard Society and was on Edmonton's Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board. He became a sole practitioner in BC in 1996, focusing on family, child protection, and criminal law, with the primary emphasis on family law. Upton regularly acts as family, criminal, and child protection duty counsel, and is roster counsel for the Vancouver and Surrey family duty counsel projects.

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Criteria used in the process of selecting lawyers for recognition include their willingness to take on difficult cases, their years and quality of legal aid service, and their community service.

The Tariff Recognition Dinner was one of several being held around the province to acknowledge lawyers' work on behalf of legal aid clients. Previous events have been held in Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Terrace, and Victoria, and another is planned for Vancouver later this year. In all, 14 BC lawyers will have received awards for outstanding service.

LSS, in partnership with lawyers, is developing quality assurance initiatives to ensure people with low incomes receive high calibre service. These measures promote best practices among all legal aid lawyers through education and other means. Recognition of lawyers' exemplary contributions is one part of this work.

The quality assurance program is funded by a grant from the Law Foundation of BC.

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