



Robson Square Provincial Courthouse welcomes back advocacy skills workshop after 4-year hiatus

After a 4-year pandemic-related gap, BC lawyers will once again have the chance to practise their advocacy skills in a real courtroom and get feedback from judges and experienced trial lawyers. The Continuing Legal Education Society of BC (CLEBC) will present its Winning Advocacy Skills Workshop at the BC Provincial Court at Robson Square in Vancouver from July 6-8, 2023.

The BC Provincial Court has been a strong champion of this workshop for two decades. More than thirty Provincial Court judges have served as faculty, including Chief Judges Hugh Stansfield, Thomas Crabtree, Melissa Gillespie, and Acting Chief Judge James Threlfall. Many judges have participated for several years, in addition to volunteering for other types of legal education.

The workshop has been hosted at the Court's Robson Square courthouse in Vancouver since 2018. Additional workshops have taken place at courthouses in Kelowna, Smithers, and Victoria. The BC government's Court Services Branch has supported these workshops with help from court staff and sheriffs while courts are in session and even after hours on Saturdays.

Unique opportunity for lawyers

This workshop offers a unique opportunity for lawyers to hone their skills in a real courtroom with actual judges providing honest, personalized feedback on their courtroom work, thus contributing to a high standard of advocacy in BC courtrooms. Provincial Court judges bring a wealth of trial experience to share with workshop participants. Their experience with shorter trials is particularly beneficial as they help lawyers conduct concise examinations and deliver succinct submissions effectively.

Under the leadership of workshop chairs Madam Justice Catherine A. Murray and Andrew I. Nathanson, KC, and the guidance of distinguished judges and numerous senior lawyers acting as team leaders and guest instructors, lawyers who attend will:

- work through a civil and criminal fact pattern and case materials, completing advocacy performance exercises in a small group led by a senior litigator team leader
- experience the intellectual, ethical, emotional, and physical demands of trial by

- performing multiple and repeated direct examinations, cross-examination, opening, and closing exercises in a mock courtroom setting
- receive real-time critiques regarding each of their performance exercises from team leaders and guest instructors
 - be video-recorded for two of their performance exercises
 - receive individual attention and personalized, constructive feedback during one-on-one sessions with senior members of the bench or bar who will review the video-recorded performances with them
 - watch live demonstrations of trial advocacy skills performed by experienced faculty
 - act as a witness for other student performances to understand the witness experience at trial
 - have the opportunity to understand the perspective from the bench
 - dramatically improve their craft in a short time!

The feedback from lawyers who have participated in this workshop has been resoundingly positive and is a testament to the value of the experience:

“This workshop was a great way to get experience and to get feedback from lawyers and judges who were focussed solely on helping me improve my skills. I would encourage others at my firm to participate in future.”

“Great to have individualized feedback and a safe space to make mistakes, also great networking with lawyers!”

“Respectful and practical learning environment. Very helpful to watch others, especially experienced litigators and judges.”

“The best part was the willingness of the instructors to walk us through matters which ranged from mundane to complex. The instructors make the course.”

If you are a civil or criminal litigator or want to be, consider joining CLEBC for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enhance your courtroom skills and confidence. Bursaries are available for qualified applicants. For more information or to register, visit cle.bc.ca/wasw23.

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