

Disclosure | AAPP Newsletter

President's Message | Heidi Semkowich

Spring has sprung! Or has it...? Whatever season we are in, I cannot believe we are in Q2 of the year already! I really feel like time is just speeding up and with the blink of an eye, another month has gone by.

Things continue to whir and buzz at the Board level for the AAPP. I am pretty sure that if you asked any of the Directors on the Board, they would all tell you that there is no shortage of work to go around these days.

As I think about how far the AAPP has come and how much we have grown as an association, I thought that now might be the appropriate time to give you all a bit of background on where the road began for me.

When I stepped up as President in 2017, I really had no idea what was in store for the AAPP. It was a brand new Board of Directors (except for one Director that carried over from my predecessor), and the association was struggling. Membership numbers were down in the low double digits (under 50 members at that time), and the association was basically an unknown entity in our industry.

The newly elected Board sat down and weighed our choices—either wrap up the association and start fresh, or strap on our boots and get to work on reviving the existing one. Revival it was! It has been an absolutely wild ride for everyone who has been on the Board since that day.

The Board set out to increase membership numbers, launch education, mentoring and networking initiatives for our members. We updated infrastructure, spiffed up the

website and start getting the refreshed and rebranded AAPP name out there.

Countless hours and much blood, sweat and tears later, here we are in 2024! There is a full compliment on the Board of Directors, membership has surpassed 300, and we are growing daily. We launched the mentorship program a few years ago, and it has exploded in growth year after year. The lunch n learn webinars continue to grow in popularity, the ARP designation was introduced for our paralegal members, and paralegal studies programs are launching at select post-secondary institutions. We even hosted the inaugural conference and awards gala in 2023.

There have been changes on the Board over the years, but every single person that I have had the privilege of working with, has been nothing short of fantastic. The Board in 2017 had a vision of how great the AAPP could be, and it brings me great pride to be a part of the association it has become and will continue to develop into.

I think I have said it before, but it is worth repeating, I truly had no idea what I was in for when I joined the Board back in 2017. But I can wholeheartedly say that I would not change my decision to do so.

So with the brief history lesson now out there, you might be wondering what is next. In a word — REGULATION! Most of you are likely aware that regulation of paralegals in Alberta remains one of the AAPP's top priorities. We have made so much progress on this front, but the wheels unfortunately move slow, and with every undertaking of this magnitude, it's a bit of a rollercoaster ride to say the least.

The Board remains engaged in consultations with legal stakeholders and the provincial government to keep regulation moving in a forward direction. Unfortunately, I cannot offer a timeline on how things may progress, but I can tell you that the Board continues to work diligently.

We are at the point where a public facing campaign will be launched. It is time for legal support professionals in Alberta to come together and become one loud and proud voice.

With Saskatchewan, BC and Manitoba quickly moving towards regulation of paralegals, it is inevitable that regulation will happen in Alberta as well!

Please watch the AAPP website and your emails for more information on the public campaign that will be launched in the near future. We want to hear from all legal professionals!

In the meantime, please continue to show your pride and support for the AAPP. Register for our webinars, attend a networking event in your nearest city, register for the 2024 conference and awards gala, participate in the mentorship program. If you have an idea, we want to hear from you!

Let's keep showing the legal industry how amazing the AAPP really is! #AAPPStrong

- Heidi Semkowich



**ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF
PROFESSIONAL PARALEGALS**
YOUR ELECTED 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Alberta Association of
Professional Paralegals**

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The views expressed in articles published in Disclosure do not necessarily represent the views of the AAPP. For permission to re-print articles or advertising, please contact the Newsletter Chair.

COMMITTEE FORMATIONS—WEBINARS SERIES

A very special thank you to all of the volunteers that came forward when the call out was made – we were overwhelmed and thrilled at the numbers!

The AAPP Board is committed to continuing to provide high quality continuing education and professional development opportunities to our members. The expansion and growth of our membership has necessitated the creation of additional educational sub-committees to design and develop multi-part webinar series in: civil litigation, family law, real estate and wills & estates.

We would like to introduce you to these hard-working sub-committees.

Civil Litigation

Heidi Semkowich (Committee Chair)
Veronica McGuire
John McDonald
Shannan Hill
Crystal Li
Ruby Yao
Adam Anderson

Family Law

Ryan McDougall (Committee Chair)
Bailey Curtis
Andrea Galicia

Real Estate

Katherine Quantz (Committee Chair)
Andrea Galicia
Claudia Li
Ruby Yao

Wills & Estates

Michaela Russell (Committee Chair)
Darlene Kiss
Andrea Galicia

Lets Connect



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[aapp.aralegal.assn](#)



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Upcoming Webinars

Katherine Quantz



It has been an exciting start to the year on the Education and Professional Development front!

With the formation of the new Webinar Planning & Development Committee, we are pleased to deliver high quality and diverse webinar programming while simultaneously offering meaningful and engaging development opportunities to our member volunteers. This new Committee will collaboratively plan, coordinate, and host AAPP webinars; an experience which provides opportunity to connect with stakeholders across industry and gain exposure to facilitating live virtual sessions.

On behalf of the AAPP and the Committee Chair, Katherine Quantz, we would like to sincerely thank the hard-working volunteers of the 2024 Webinar Planning & Delivery Committee:

Christine Savoy
Mariya Mahalyas
Laura Curzio
Kira Lyseng
Kristie Mahieux

Coming up on April 10, 2024 we will welcome Eldor-Wal, who will share a demo of their new conveyancing software, "Resolve". Then later in April, we plan to host another mentorship related webinar, and hear from Dicta Court Reporting. In May, we welcome Jesse Singh and Jesse Khehra to present on Personal Injury Claims in Alberta, aiming to offer both a comprehensive overview of the area from a legal point of view and some practical insights and tips.

There are many more exciting sessions being planned, so please stay tuned for all the exciting upcoming webinars the Committee will be rolling out! Be sure to check the [events page](#) on the AAPP website frequently - this is where you can find all the information on upcoming webinars and the links to register.

As always, we welcome your questions, feedback, suggestions, comments, and ideas with respect to the webinar series and our professional development programming. Please feel free to contact us by reaching out directly to Katherine Quantz, Director of Education and Professional Development via e-mail: education@alberta-paralegal.com.



Membership Information and Updates

Thanks to every one of our members, we have increased our membership and are over 300 strong - the excitement and momentum is catching on!

The AAPP is finally getting noticed by stakeholders across Alberta, some of which have been in the industry as long as the AAPP has been, and are only now becoming aware of our existence. We are excited to announce our partnership with the Legal Education Society of Alberta. Members of the AAPP are now eligible to receive a 10% discount on LESA courses, up to full day offerings (multi-day programs are not included). Please contact Heidi at: president@alberta-paralegal.com for the discount code.

We are also happy to announce that members can now receive discounted phones and plans through Bell Mobility. Please watch your email for the upcoming holiday promotions being offered.

As mentioned above, our membership numbers are growing, but we want to see this number explode! Please chat with your firms/employers about the AAPP bundle pricing for organizations that have more than two members with the AAPP. The more members, the bigger the discount! The bigger our numbers, the louder our voice. The louder our voice, the more difficult it is to not hear us when we talk about regulation of our profession. Please keep up the amazing work promoting the AAPP!

Thanks to all who have joined and continue to participate in the development and promotion the Association.

Visit our site for more information: <https://www.alberta-paralegal.com/join-us>

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Discounted insurance through Johnson Insurance

Highlander Wine Club

Perkopolis Membership

Discounts at Sherwin Williams

Private Shopping events at Ricki's

Continuing Education/Professional Development - monthly webinars on soft skills and technical topics

Mentorship Program

ARP designation (for paralegal members)

Performance Excellence Awards

Job Postings

Salary survey

Member Newsletter

Networking Events

Discount on courses offered by the ADR Institute of Alberta

Discount on courses (up to 1 day) offered by LESA

Discounted phones and plans through Bell Mobility

And more to come as we grow!



PARALEGAL POST-DIPLOMA PROGRAM

INTAKE:

September 2024

PROGRAM LENGTH:

2 Years

DELIVERY METHOD:

Online

The Paralegal Post-Diploma Certificate program is a part-time program for those who are already working in the legal field as Legal Assistants. This is the only paralegal program endorsed by the Alberta Association of Professional Paralegals. This one-year certificate includes eight theory-based courses and one consolidated practicum course. This program will prepare graduates to focus on contract law, professional ethics, legal research, legal drafting, torts, rules of evidence and legal interviewing. The Paralegal Post-Diploma Certificate will allow graduates to take on more responsibility within the legal field under the supervision of a lawyer.

PRE-REQUISITES:

- High School diploma with English 20-1 or 20-2 with a grade of at least 60%
- Graduate of an approved legal assistant program
- Minimum of 3 years experience working as a legal assistant
- Candidates, where English is a Second Language (ESL), must meet the English Language Proficiency requirement in addition to the Academic English requirement. Equivalencies are as follows:
 - * Required Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) of a minimum of 7 in each of the 4 language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and not an average of 7; or
 - * By completing high school in Canada. Studies must have been in English at an approved Canadian high school (grades 9, 10, 11, 12) with at least three consecutive years of full-time academic study; or
 - * By completing a recognized post-secondary degree or diploma program in Canada.

The program must have involved at least two full years of full-time, consecutive academic study in English.

Follow the link for more information: <https://rdpolytech.ca/programs/extended-education/programs-and-courses/paralegal-post-diploma-certificate>.

A program for paralegals taught by fellow paralegals and lawyers

Alberta Title Talk—Alberta Land Titles and Surveys

Alberta Land Titles and Surveys remains committed to providing you with exceptional land titles services and welcome your questions, feedback, and suggestions. Alberta Title Talk is a newsletter tailored to meet the information needs of Land Titles and Surveys customers in Alberta. As frequent Land Titles system users, members of the AAPP are encouraged to subscribe to receive monthly updates from government on potential engagement opportunities, technology advancements, support materials as well as process improvements.

You can sign up to receive the newsletter straight to your inbox, as well as find previous issues of the newsletter on the [Land Titles website](#). You may unsubscribe at any time.





A career working in criminal law isn't just a job; it's an opportunity to work with the types of files that you have likely heard about on true crime podcasts or television shows. If this sounds exciting to you, then you might be a good fit for this role. However, if just thinking about it causes your stomach to turn, then this is not the career path for you, my friend.

Section 11 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* states that anyone accused of breaking the law is considered innocent until proven guilty. The burden of proof is held by the Crown to prove the Accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and a trial is conducted in an unbiased court without influence. The role of Crown Prosecutors and Defence Counsel is therefore incredibly important to our justice system. Any by extension, the work **YOU** do for your lawyers as support staff working in either the public or private sector is incredibly important, too.

Working in criminal law takes a certain personality and skillset due to the content of the files we work with. I am getting dangerously close to two decades of experience working with Paul Moreau (I know – I'm a dinosaur), and I can still vividly remember the first photo I saw from a homicide investigation. Murders, drugs, weapons, assaults, or worse (use your imagination) are the kinds of files you work with as a legal assistant in criminal law. This content is difficult to work with, but it is imperative to remember what is stated in s. 11 of the *Charter* – everyone deserves the right to a fair trial, even if the autopsy photos you see cause your stomach to turn. Autopsy photos alone do not equal murder; some clients are innocent for the crimes they are accused of.

Primarily a client-facing role, a criminal legal assistant in a law office works with individuals who are often in distress. No one hires a defence lawyer when they are having a good day; even the career criminals. Individuals are likely calling a lawyer from jail very upset, and in the middle of the night on a weekend. Luckily for us legal assistants, we almost never have to deal with *those* calls because clients have a habit of getting arrested in the middle of the night instead of in the middle of a workday, making those calls a 'lawyer problem.' However, past the "help, I need bail!" conversation, a significant portion of the communication between the client and the law firm, in addition to the file management duties throughout the course of a client's file, is overseen by the legal assistant.

Every day in a criminal law office is different, and there is no shortage of new things to learn, from the latest Alberta Courts processes to staying up to date with Legal Aid Alberta's Lawyer Billing Portal. You must have excellent communication skills, especially in tough situations (we're working with alleged criminals, here), and the ability to problem solve with efficiency are some of the skills required to succeed in working at a criminal law firm. And as with other areas of law these days – you need to be tech savvy. Not taking advantage of the efficiencies that new technology can bring is detrimental in any area of law, but your ability to leverage technology to streamline processes and establish efficiencies in client file management and communication is an advantage for your career, and for your firm.

The difficulty with transitioning to a career working in criminal law from a different area of law relates to the structure of criminal law offices, or rather, the lack thereof. Most criminal law firms are small,

with only one or a few practising lawyers with very few legal support staff. Lawyers are frequently attending court in full day or even month-long trials, leaving virtually no time to train new staff. Ideally, the lawyer has some involvement in the training process to ensure that the lawyer-assistant communication is developed; however, some firms will have senior legal assistants or managerial staff who can assist with the onboarding process. That being said, I feel comfortable stating from my experience that most criminal law offices do not offer as much onboarding support as would be ideal, which makes it difficult for new legal assistants to learn how to properly assist criminal defence lawyers with their practice and succeed in their role. This inevitably generates disconnect in the lawyer-assistant working relationship and creates significant stress for both parties, leading to missed deadlines or court dates, confusion, and, in worse cases, a toxic work environment.

As an educator in a legal professional program in Alberta, I am aware that many criminal law focused courses in Legal Assistant, Legal Studies, or Legal Assistant programs at a post-secondary level do not focus on procedural law (if there is a criminal law course offered at all). While some knowledge of substantive criminal law is important for a legal assistant, knowledge of the procedural law is absolutely necessary. For example, if your client has a bail hearing and needs an Order of Release filed, you need to have that Order drafted and filed quickly – your lawyer likely doesn't know how to do that, and they are relying on you to know how. They won't be asking you to discuss the merits of the bail hearing as defined under the *Charter* or discussed within the *Criminal Code*.

Recognizing the knowledge gap in post-secondary and the structural barriers that criminal law firms create for legal assistants to become successful, I, along with my co-author Paul Moreau, wrote a textbook specifically for criminal legal assistants in Alberta to support new legal assistants entering the field. The book is structured around three real-world scenarios, illustrating different processes and offering practical guidance for tasks like ordering disclosure, scheduling trial dates, or developing trial binders. [*Criminal Law and Procedure for Alberta Legal Professionals*](#) will release on March 25, 2024 in a digital format. More information about the textbook can be found on Emond Publishing's website. **AAPP members receive a discount of \$20 off by entering AAPP20OFF at checkout!** Discount expires April 30, 2024.

Each day in criminal law is different, it's fast paced, and I take comfort that I have a certain level of job security working in this area of law. So, have I convinced you to come to the dark side that is criminal law defence?

Questions, comments, or concerns about this article can be directed to stasiewicha2@macewan.ca.

2024 Conference & Awards Gala

Register now for the 2024 AAPP Conference and Gala, happening in Edmonton **October 1-3, 2024**. This is the biggest event of the year for legal support professionals in Alberta. More learning. More connecting. We've heard you and we've expanded our conference to two days of learning and networking.

Held at Edmonton's Fantasyland Hotel & Conference Centre, this year's event promises to be an enriching experience of career growth and development!

With 20 educational sessions to choose from, a pre-conference networking event and the annual awards Gala, this event caters to all legal support professionals. You'll gain valuable insights, learn emerging trends and meet other professionals you can connect with.

Registration Details:

Each registration includes:

- Ticket to the pre-conference networking reception
- Ticket to the AAPP Awards Gala banquet
- Access to all conference sessions
- Food and beverages during the conference

Pricing:

Don't miss out - our early bird pricing is available now!

Early Bird Member Pricing - \$450.00

Early Bird Non-Member Pricing - \$570.00

Standard Member Pricing (starting July 1) - \$500.00

Standard Non-Member Pricing (starting July 1) - \$620.00

Student Early Bird Pricing - \$300.00

Student Standard Pricing - \$350.00

Early Bird pricing is in effect until June 30, 2024. Register now to ensure you don't miss out!

<https://aapp.wildapricot.org/event-5550534>

Hotel discount:

Discounted rooms are available to conference registrants on a first-come, first-serve basis, and you can book additional nights before or after the conference at the discounted rate. Rooms include:

- Discounted Galaxyland or Waterpark passes during your stay; maximum of 4 passes per room per day.
- Wi-Fi High speed internet access and local calls & 1-800 access
- 24/7 use of the Business Centre and Fitness Centre (Crunch Fitness at West Edmonton Mall)
- In-room coffee, tea, iron/ironing board
- Surface, self parking

Please see additional information for information on booking your room.

2024 Conference & Awards Gala—Continued

Conference Speakers and Sessions:

| Session Name | Presenter |
|---|--|
| Paralegal Advocacy | Michael Kirk, Miller Thomson |
| Judgment Enforcement | D. Kim Beachum, Field Law |
| RTDRS Processes & Procedures | Crystal Hallett, Community Legal Clinic |
| Professional Ethics for Paralegals | Jessica Kyca & John Frame, Witten LLP |
| Practice Management for Paralegals | Brittany Koenig, Crossroads Law |
| AB Court of Justice Civil Procedures | Katherine Quantz, Government of Alberta |
| Legal Aid Billing | Lindsay Hoban & Leanne Fernando, Legal Aid Alberta |
| Family Violence | Ryan McDougall, McKenzie Legal Services |
| Emoji Law | Veronica McGuire |
| Dealing with Difficult Clients | Veronica McGuire |
| Corporate Filings Tips & Tricks | David Hiebert, Bishop McKenzie LLP |
| Land Titles Office Procedures & Processes | Ainsley Standish & Curtis Woolard, Land Titles Office |
| Conveyancing Tips & Tricks | Charlene Fehr, Field Law |
| Legal Research Refresher | Kristina Norman, Cassels |
| Know Your Value | Matthew Mowbrey, Woodbine Legal Services |
| So You Want To Be a Paralegal? | Paralegal Panel Discussion |
| Independent Practice & The Unauthorized Practice of Law | Jesse McKenzie, Law Society of Alberta & Heidi Semkowich, HMS Paralegal Services |
| Introduction to E-Discovery | Heather Mailman & Esther Trifan, Ricoh Digital Services |
| E-Discovery - Database Migration Planning | Heather Mailman & Esther Trifan, Ricoh Digital Services |

Watch the AAPP's website for details on the sessions and presenter bios!

2024 Conference & Awards Gala—Continued

Conference Sponsors

The AAPP would like to thank all of our confirmed sponsors for the 2024 Conference & Awards Gala. Please stay tuned for more sponsorship announcements!



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car and home - groups

VERITEXT
LEGAL SOLUTIONS
CANADA

The logo for Robertson. It consists of a red square containing a white, stylized letter 'R'. To the right of the square, the word "ROBERTSON" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font.

The logo for Alberta Counsel. It features a gold diamond shape with the letters "A" and "C" inside. Below the diamond, the text "ALBERTA COUNSEL" is written in a small, gold, sans-serif font, followed by "LAWYERS ◆ LOBBYISTS" in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font.

The logo for eldar.wal. It features the word "eldor.wal" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

The logo for Lormit. It consists of a blue square containing a white stylized 'L' shape. Below the 'L' is the word "LORMIT" in a white, sans-serif font, with "LEGAL SUPPORT SOLUTIONS" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font underneath.

The logo for Miller Thomson. It features a red six-pointed star shape to the left of the company name "MILLER THOMSON" in a black, sans-serif font.

The logo for Simplicity. It features the word "Simplicity" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The letter "i" has a light blue swoosh above it, and the letter "p" has a light blue swoosh below it.

The logo for McKenzie Legal Services. It features the letters "MLS" in a large, bold, black font. The "L" and "S" are gold-colored. Below "MLS", the words "McKenzie Legal Services" are written in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font.



ROBERTSON

Paralegal Diploma Program

8 MONTH PROGRAM / 4 WEEK PRACTICUM

BECOME A
PARALEGAL



ROBERTSON



Program Highlights

100% online program delivery: program is delivered completely online through their online learning platform, Brightspace — so you don't have to quit your day job while you study!

Unparalleled career service support: As a Robertson student or graduate, you gain free, lifetime access to employment services and job search assistance through our dedicated Workforce team.

Practical experience: Gain valuable real-world experience through a practicum and ensure you're job ready upon graduation.

Launch Your Legal Career with Robertson College's NEW Paralegal Diploma Program

Robertson College is a private post-secondary institution in Canada providing relevant career training for in-demand fields since 1911. Their focus has been on preparing learners to enter into a new world of work. Their programs are flexible and intensive, with a strong focus on helping learners develop and hone skills that are valuable, transferable and in-demand. Robertson College offers over 35+ hybrid and online diploma programs in the business, health, technology and community service industries.

According to the latest employment projection data from Job Bank Canada, 18,900 new Paralegal positions are expected to be created between 2022 and 2031, leaving a huge demand for qualified Paralegals to fill those openings. To meet industry demand, Robertson is proud to be launching a Paralegal diploma in Alberta.

Robertson College's NEW Paralegal Diploma Program will prepare you for a dynamic career within the legal field through a strong foundation in the Canadian legal system and focused theoretical courses in specific areas of the law and legal procedures. Developed in collaboration with the Alberta Association of Professional Paralegals (AAPP) and industry experts, the program will provide you with the most up to date knowledge, practical skills and real-world experience needed to excel in the legal field.

Throughout your studies, you will gain knowledge of Canadian law, with focus on specific areas including Commercial and Corporate Law, Criminal Law, Family Law, Property Law, and Contract Law. You will also explore areas relevant to the scope of paralegal practice including the Litigation Process, Legal Analysis and Legal Drafting.

Admission Requirements

- You must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident residing in Alberta
- A minimum of one year of experience working in a legal assistant role and successful completion of a legal assistant diploma program as verified by transcript.
- Successful interview with a Robertson Student Admissions Advisor

Admission requirements for students applying as a Mature student:

- Student must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident residing in Alberta
- A minimum of two years experience working in a legal assistant role
- Must be 19 years of age and one year out of high school

At Robertson College, we help students find ***meaningful work***. To learn more about our Paralegal diploma program and apply today, please visit www.robertsoncollege.com/programs/paralegal-professional