

Committee: **London Public Library Board**

Organization/Sector represented:

Name: **Chelsea Smith**

Occupation: **Lawyer**

Work experience: **I currently practise as a bilingual associate lawyer at McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP in London, Ontario, where I specialize in class action, mass tort, and complex multi-party litigation. I work on many high-profile cases, including the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre class action, the Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal class action, the 2011 Manitoba flood class action, and some of the largest pharmaceutical and consumer class actions in Canada. Committed to enhancing the bilingual capacity of Ontario's future and current legal professionals as an essential step in improving access to justice in French, I also work as an adjunct professor at Western Law, where I teach two upper-year Juris Doctor courses and one LL.M. course in French. Before joining McKenzie Lake, I worked at the UN in Geneva, briefing the Canadian Ambassador and First Secretary, Legal Affairs on a variety of public international law issues. I have also previously worked as a Teaching Assistant for Professor Gillian Demeyere at Western Law; as a Research Assistant for Professors Michael Coyle and Berend Hovius at Western Law; as a Pool Manager for the City of London Aquatic Services Unit; and, as an Odyssey English Language Assistant in North-Eastern Quebec.**

Education: **I earned an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English and French from Huron University College at Western University in 2011. After graduating from Huron, I went on to complete the Western-Laval Joint Law Program, earning three law degrees over the course of four years: a Juris Doctor and a Diplôme de français juridique from Western Law in 2015, and a LL.B. in Quebec civil law from Université Laval in 2016. During my eight years of university studies, I participated in many extracurricular activities and earned 14 academic awards, including a gold medal and the David H.M. Stewart Memorial Award from Huron, and the prestigious Richard J Schmeelk Canada Fellowship. I was admitted to the Ontario bar in June 2017 and am in the process of applying for admission to the Barreau du Québec.**

Skills: **My professional and leadership experiences have equipped me with a unique set of skills, specialized knowledge, competencies, and abilities that will enable me to make valuable contributions as a London Public Library Board Trustee. During my time at Western Law, I demonstrated great initiative and self-motivation. A highlight of my first year was when I founded the Western Law French Society to connect students wanting to improve their French proficiency during law school. Over the years, I have also demonstrated a strong commitment to success and the ability to handle multiple tasks. During law school, I successfully balanced full-time studies with part-time jobs and many extracurricular activities. My demanding academic program and schedule combined with my dedication to producing my best work at all times improved my time management, flexibility, organization skills, and ability to thrive under pressure. Today, I continue to fine-tune these skills as I balance my work as a lawyer, my work as an adjunct professor, and my volunteer work. I am fiercely loyal to my community and to the causes and organizations that I support. I volunteer extensively in the London community and I am always looking for more opportunities to give back. I currently volunteer with the London Public Library READ Program, the Huron Alumni Association Board, London Lawyers Feed the Hungry, Western University's Pre-Law Society, the Ontario Justice Education Network, and the United Way School Breakfast Program. I also volunteer as an Ontario Artistic Swimming competition judge and official, promoting women in sports and physical activity in youth. Working as a lawyer has greatly strengthened my ability to see things from different perspectives and approach people and problems with an open mind. It has also equipped me with very strong advocacy skills; very strong interpersonal and networking skills; very strong written and verbal communication skills; very strong problem-solving skills; and, specialized knowledge, including knowledge with respect to interpreting legislation and regulations. Working as a class action lawyer at McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP has allowed me to develop very strong teamwork skills, as the lawyers and law clerks on my team work together on all of our files, taking advantage of each team member's particular strengths, and actively participating in team discussions and deliberation to attain positive outcomes. Finally, I have gained leadership experience and experience with governance and successful strategic planning in my current role as a**

**director on the Huron Alumni Association Board; in my previous role as a director for the Schmeelk Canada Foundation; by attending London Public Library Board meetings to observe over the past three years; and, by participating on or chairing several committees at McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP.**

**Interest reason: I grew up benefiting from the London Public Library's wonderful programs and services. My home branch as a child was the Pond Mills Branch. It has played a very important role in my life, as it was essential in developing my love for reading and my sense of belonging in and attachment to the London community. Desiring to give back, I have been a long-time donor to the London Public Library and just completed my second year of volunteering as a READ Program mentor at the Central Branch. I would like to serve the London Public Library in whatever way I can. I have never felt a stronger connection to and/or passion for a community organization. I am extraordinarily dedicated to helping people and to making a difference. This is why I wanted to practise as a class action lawyer. Just as class actions are a great equalizer, providing access to justice for those who might otherwise be unable to pursue their claims, the London Public Library is a great equalizer, providing access to literacy and enriching lives and expanding possibilities for all Londoners regardless of their socio-economic background. Over the years, my professional and leadership experiences have allowed me to develop a unique set of skills, specialized knowledge, competencies, and abilities. I would now like to use these skills, specialized knowledge, competencies, and abilities to give back to the London Public Library as a London Public Library Board Trustee. As I am passionate about the London Public Library and its importance to the London community, and, as I am interested in its governance and successful strategic planning, I have been attending London Public Library Board meetings to observe for over three years now. I always enjoy hearing updates at these meetings about all of the wonderful experiences the London Public Library is providing to Londoners. I have been encouraged by a few members of the current Board and administration to apply to be a Board Trustee and I am very excited about taking on this new role and responsibility.**

**Contributions: I care deeply about the London Public Library and its success. For this reason, but also because I am interested in the London Public Library's governance and successful strategic planning, I have been attending the London Public Library Board meetings to observe over the past three years. I have a genuine passion for the London Public Library and its importance to the London community. If selected for the Board, I will work as hard as I can to help in whatever ways I can and to achieve my best work on all of the Board's projects and initiatives. I will lead by example and strive to inspire my fellow Board Trustees to achieve their best work for the Board. One of the ways I plan to do this is by engaging with the community at London Public Library events. I will attend as many London Public Library events as I can so that I am accessible for community members. This will allow me to maintain an open dialogue with the community and build strong relationships with community leaders. I am a trained advocate and will use my skills, specialized knowledge, competencies, and abilities to advocate the London Public Library's role in the community and to establish and secure the London Public Library as an essential community service. Finally, I believe that my legal background and strong ties to the community will be assets to the London Public Library Board.**

**Past contributions: In my undergraduate and law school years, I was on the executive of many student clubs and organizations: the University of Western Ontario Synchronized Swimming Team; the Huron University College French Club; the Huron University College Students' Council Orientation Committee; the Western Law Criminal Law Students' Association; the Western French Club; and, the Western Law French Society. One particular highlight of my time serving on the executives of student clubs and organizations during my undergraduate and law school years was when I was Assistant Orientation Chair on the Huron University College Students' Council Orientation Committee. In this role, I directly supervised and coordinated the work of over 40 student volunteers; helped to organize and implement Western's 2010 Orientation Week program, which was the largest university orientation week in Canada with over 800 student volunteers; and, improved attendance and participation at Huron's Frost Week program in January 2011. As I mentioned earlier in this application, another highlight of my time serving on the executives of student clubs and organizations was when I founded the Western Law French Society in my first year of law school to connect students wanting to improve their French proficiency. As a former director for the Schmeelk Canada Foundation, I worked to raise more awareness of the fellowship offered by the Foundation**

as well as to further the mission of the Foundation, namely, to promote intercultural awareness and interprovincial studies. In my current role as a director on the Huron Alumni Association Board, I work to provide opportunities for alumni to participate and contribute to the continuing life and growth of the Huron University College community. I bring forward programs, policies and initiatives to the Board for consideration; represent the Board at special events; and, work closely with the University Advancement team to prepare Alumni Association events, meetings, and activities. As mentioned earlier in this application, I sit on or chair several committees at McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP. These committees include the Lawyers Retreat Planning Committee, the Women's Integration Network, and the Christmas Party Planning Committee. On these committees, I am working (i) to build a large network of varied community contacts; (ii) to keep the committees on budget; and, (iii) to improve their transparency and communication with members of the firm. In all of my work on these executives, boards, and committees, I tried and try to lead by example and to lead with heart and compassion. I cannot expect people to engage if I, myself, do not engage; so, I strive to actively participate in all discussions and events. I work as hard as I can to help as much as I can and to achieve my best work at all times. Many of my colleagues on these executives, boards, and committees have told me that they find my dedication and work ethic to be inspiring.

Interpersonal: I am very skilled in exchanging my views with others and in appreciating and respecting the skills, abilities and knowledge of others. These are skills that I use every day in my practice as a class action lawyer at McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP. As a class action lawyer, I work on very large and complex files. It would be impossible for any lawyer to do this work on his/her own; so, teamwork is essential. At McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP, all of the class action lawyers (myself and four others) and our five law clerks work together as a team on all of our files. This allows us to take advantage of each team member's particular set of skills, abilities and knowledge. We are much stronger working as a team than we are as individuals. I have a great appreciation and respect for the skills, abilities, and knowledge of my colleagues. I have learned so much from each of them. As we work on all of our files as a team, the lawyers and law clerks on the McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP class action team, myself included, are constantly exchanging our ideas and views with one another. Every day in my practice as a class action lawyer, I communicate with my colleagues with respect to the strengths of our cases; weaknesses or concerns in relation to our cases; deadlines; priorities; delegating tasks; opinions with respect to taking on a new file; etc. Working this way every day has allowed me to greatly improve my communication and listening skills. My legal practice has very much benefited from my active participation in team discussions and deliberations.

Interview interest: Yes