

Introduction of the Keynote Speaker

Cecilia I. JOHNSTONE, Q.C.*

I have the distinct pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker who will address the topic of crime, punishment and public expectations.

On November 4th, 1993, the Honourable Allan Rock, Member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre was sworn in as the new Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Many of you are fully familiar with his numerous credentials that led him to this position. Therefore, I would like to speak to you in a more personalized fashion about the man behind the title.

I must tell you that I felt blessed to have the honour and the rewarding challenge of working with the Minister during my tenure as President of the Canadian Bar Association. The Bar was asked to respond in a meaningful way to the many initiatives that this Minister had advanced — we did not always agree but we were certainly given the opportunity to respond and provide input.

I recall my first meeting with you, Minister — I was warned by my staff to be prompt — for those who know me well now that is not a solid character trait. I was in fact early and felt like I had been waiting an inordinate length of time when this young, enthusiastic man came bounding into the lobby greeting me in his shirt sleeves, extending his hand and saying, Cecilia. My first thought was — how inappropriately familiar he was with me as Allan Rock's aide. He should have shown a deference that was to be afforded me as President of the Canadian Bar. So therefore I looked stunned and he said "you are Cecilia?" and I said yes, and I was just about to say, and who are you? when he said Allan Rock. I almost fainted. That degree of congeniality and unpretentiousness has been a bench mark of our Minister throughout his tenure.

I believe I speak for many of my colleagues when I say, that the profession could not have a better person at the helm. The incredible leadership, focus, vision and enthusiastic sincerity of purpose is usually not embodied in one person.

This enterprise and impudence was demonstrated at an early age. As a summer student at a major Toronto law firm, Allan was employed as a mail clerk. This caused him much consternation so he approached the Managing Partner and indicated that the title to this position should be changed from Mail Clerk to Vice President of Postal Services. I do believe you have never looked back since that anointment.

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The test of one's mettle comes with performance in times of great adversity — not during times of comfort. Your mettle, Minister, has been tested over and over again as you have grappled with extremely difficult issues. We admire and respect your ability to embrace not only your supporters but your detractors.

Never before has the legal profession and the judiciary been under such public scrutiny — we risk as a profession the loss of collegiality, the tarnishing of our image in the eyes of both our clients and the public at large. The public is also demanding a transparent system of justice. The responsibility remains with us to reshape the administration of justice. This challenge has been assumed by you Minister and we must assist.

There is an old Judaic saying which states : *"You are not required to complete the task; neither are you free to desist from it."*

We are blessed to have a person of your stature as Minister of Justice and I ask that colleagues warmly welcome the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Allan Rock.