

CONFERENCE

DEMOCRACY, THE RULE OF LAW, AND INDEPENDENCE



Program

NOVEMBER 18-20, 2025 | KANATA (OTTAWA) & EN LIGNE

CONFERENCE

Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Independence

The rule of law is a foundational principle of society, essential for the flourishing of democracy. It creates an environment where governance is just, transparent, and accountable, fostering public confidence. However, when this confidence erodes, the community's willingness to engage with the legal system diminishes, threatening the very fabric of democratic institutions.

CIAJ Conference on Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Independence is a multidisciplinary event designed to bring together actors from civil society—including legal, political, and social stakeholders—to critically examine the principles that uphold social stability and the rule of law. Our goal is to deepen understanding of these essential tenets and identify actionable strategies to enhance public trust in legal institutions.

The conference will address the rising tide of global authoritarianism and its impact on democratic governance. By bringing together diverse perspectives and fostering open dialogue, we aspire to cultivate innovative solutions that promote transparency, accountability, and resilience in the face of emerging challenges. Join us in this critical conversation to strengthen our commitment to democracy and the rule of law on a global scale.

START TIME ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT TIME ZONES IN CANADA

Note: The time zone used in the program is Eastern Time.

PT: 06:00 am	MT: 07:00 am	CT: 08:00 am	ET: 9:00 am	AT: 10:00 am	NT: 10:30 am
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[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

LANGUAGE, ACCREDITATION AND COMPENSATION

Bilingual program with simultaneous interpretation.

Participation in this program is accredited in provinces where CLE requirements for lawyers are mandatory.

- Substantive hours: 15h
- No EDI hours

Participation in this program is approved under Section 41 (1) of the *Judges Act*.



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HONORARY CHAIR

The Right Honourable Richard Wagner, P.C., Chief Justice of Canada

The Right Honourable Richard Wagner has been Canada's chief justice since 2017. He also chairs the Canadian Judicial Council and the National Judicial Institute. Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court in 2012, he practised law for more than 20 years and then served on the Quebec courts. An advocate for access to justice and judicial transparency, he has initiated several reforms to bring the courts closer to the public. He is recognised for his commitment to the rule of law and has received numerous awards, including the Medal of the Bar of Montreal and the Legion of Honour.



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Jason Stanley, American Philosopher

A renowned philosopher, Jason Stanley has dedicated over two decades to studying power, language, and their susceptibility to corruption. An expert on authoritarian regimes, he is the author of seven influential books, including *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (2018) and *Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future* (2023), where he examines the mechanisms of extremism and political manipulation. A professor at Yale University since 2013, he decided to leave not only the institution but also the United States in response to political pressures on academic institutions. In the fall of 2025, he will join the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto as the Bissell Hyatt Chair in American Studies.

CO-CHAIRS

- **The Honourable Justice Peter Willcock**, Court of Appeal for British Columbia, CIAJ upcoming president (Vancouver, BC)
- **The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil**, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec, QC)

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- **The Honourable Justice Clayton J. Conlan**, Superior Court of Justice of Ontario (Milton, ON)
- **The Honourable Justice Thomas J. Crabtree**, Supreme Court of British Columbia, Chief Judicial Officer of the National Judicial Institute (Ottawa, ON)
- **The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil**, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec, QC)
- **Yves Faguy**, Executive Director, Canadian Bar Association (Montreal, QC)
- **Keiran Gibbs**, Director of Policy of the Office of the President, Treasury Board of Canada (Ottawa, ON)
- **Stephanie N. Lockhart**, CAE, CMP, Executive Director, Canadian Superior Courts Judges Association (Ottawa, ON)
- **Parand Meysami**, M.Sc., P.Eng., LL.B., Hearing Commissioner (Full-time), Alberta Energy Regulator (Calgary, AB)
- **Brian Peebles**, Director of Outreach and Engagement, Law Commission of Canada (Ottawa, ON)
- **The Honourable J.C. Marc Richard**, Chief Justice of New Brunswick (Fredericton, NB)
- **The Honourable Justice Karan M. Shaner**, Court of Appeal of Alberta (Edmonton, AB)
- **The Honourable Justice P. Colleen Suche**, Court of King's Bench of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB)
- **Martine Valois**, Professor, Faculty of Law, Université de Montréal (Montreal, QC)
- **Christine O'Doherty**, Lawyer and Executive Director, CIAJ (Montreal, QC)
- **Vicki Gondek**, Project Manager of Judicial Programs, CIAJ (Montreal, QC)
- **David Lazzam**, Articling Student, CIAJ (Toronto, ON)

8:00–9:00 AM Registration and Breakfast

Badge Pick-Up

9:00–9:15 AM Welcome Remarks and Introduction

Master of Ceremony:

CIAJ's Upcoming President:

- *Stephen Bindman, Visiting Professor and Executive in residence, Faculty of Law (Common Law Section), University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)*
- *The Honourable Justice Peter Willcock, Court of Appeal for British Columbia, CIAJ upcoming president (Vancouver, BC)*

09:15–10:15 AM Presentation

Keynote Speaker:

- *Jason Stanley, American Philosopher and Author of "How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them" (New Haven, CT, USA)*

Moderator:

- *The Honourable J.C. Marc Richard, Chief Justice of New Brunswick (Fredericton, NB)*

10:15–10:30 AM Health Break**10:30–12:00 AM Panel 1 | Overview of the Conference Topics: Opening the Discussion**

This introductory panel will set the stage for the conference by exploring the ecosystem of democracy, defining essential concepts such as trust, legitimacy, the rule of law, and judicial independence along the way. Multidisciplinary panelists will outline the pillars of a healthy democracy and discuss how their respective professions have weathered recent challenges to the rule of law.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice P. Colleen Suche, Court of King's Bench of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB)*

Speakers:

- *Ian P. McDougall, President at LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation, Adjunct Professor at IE University Law School (Chelmsford, England, United Kingdom)*
- *Stewart Prest, Lecturer in political science, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC)*

12:00–1:00 PM Lunch

1:30–3:00 PM**Panel 2 | How did we get here? Understanding the Present: The Roots of Authoritarianism, Polarization, and Populism**

How did we get here? Around the world, democracies are grappling with rising authoritarianism, deepening polarization, the spread of disinformation, and the resurgence of populist movements. This discussion will take a step back to examine the social, political, and historical forces that have led to this moment. Panelists will reflect on long-term trends and recent accelerants, offering insights into the erosion of consensus, trust, and dialogue in public life. The goal: to better understand the roots of our current challenges and how we might begin to respond.

Moderator:

- *Megan Longley, Executive Director, Legal Aid Clinic, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS)*

Speakers:

- *Heidi Tworek, Professor & Director, Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC)*

3:00–3:15 PM**Health Break****3:15–4:30 PM****Panel 3 | Administrative Tribunals: Life on the Front Line**

For many Canadians, justice is primarily experienced through administrative tribunals. So how do tribunals create a sense of trust and legitimacy in users? This session will use case studies to demonstrate how tribunals engage with issues of fairness and create democratic buy-in, offering practical examples of how users can participate effectively in a fair, transparent administrative process. The session will also discuss how tribunals can evaluate their own ability to deliver access to justice and identify paths to improvement.

Moderator:

- *Parand Meysami, M.Sc., P.Eng., LL.B., Hearing Commissioner (Full-time) for the Alberta Energy Regulator (Calgary, AB)*

Speaker:

- *Paul Aterman, Former Chairperson of the Social Security Tribunal, Consultant in plain language, A2J design and tribunal process improvement (Ottawa, ON)*
- *Melissa Luhtanen, Senior Legal Counsel to the Tribunal and to the Chief Commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission (Calgary, AB)*
- *Virginie Masse, Coordinating Administrative Judge, Quebec Administrative Tribunal, Social Affairs Division (Montreal, QC)*

5:00–7:00 PM**Reception**

8:00–9:00 AM Registration and Breakfast

9:00–10:00 AM Conversation | How to Counter the Impact of Disinformation on Judicial Independence

Moderator: • *The Honourable Marianne Rivoalen, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal for Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB)*

Speaker: • *The Honourable Justice Marie-Josée Hogue, Court of Appeal of Quebec (Montreal, QC)*

10:00–11:35 AM Panel 4 | Democracy and Media: Understanding and Confronting Disinformation

A healthy democracy relies on an informed populace, one with access to sufficiently reliable information and the capacity to sort facts from falsehoods. Panel 4 examines how that balance has been damaged in recent years, with the erosion of traditional media coinciding with the rise of social media and online discourse. Panelists will explore the methods through which parties aiming to attack democratic values and the rule of law have used media as a vector for disinformation, as well as how those strategies can be confronted.

Moderator: • *Yves Faguy, Executive Director, Advocacy, Canadian Bar Association - CBA (Ottawa, ON)*

Speaker: • *Yves Boisvert, Columnist, La Presse (Montreal, QC)*
• *Sabreena Delhon, Chief Executive Officer, The Samara Centre for Democracy (Toronto, ON)*

11:35–12:30 PM Lunch

12:30–1:45 PM

Panel 5 | Restoring Trust: Legitimacy of Democratic and Judicial Institutions

This multidisciplinary panel will examine the erosion of trust in democratic and judicial institutions, exploring the factors that have led to this decline and potential avenues for rebuilding legitimacy.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Julie Dutil, Court of Appeal of Quebec, CIAJ's President (Quebec, QC)*

Speakers:

- *Darlene Carreau, Chief Administrator and Chief Executive Officer, Courts Administration Service (Ottawa, ON)*
- *The Honourable Lucie Rondeau, former Chief Justice of the Court of Quebec (Quebec, QC)*
- *Martine Valois, Professor, Faculty of Law, Université de Montréal (Montreal, QC)*

1:45–3:00 PM

Panel 6 | Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Decay

Panel 6 turns our gaze beyond Canada's borders, drawing together panelists who offer insights into countries without strong democratic institutions. Experts from around the world will discuss how liberal democracies decay into authoritarianism, highlighting specific strategies which aim to dismantle the rule of law such as judicial reforms, populism, and majoritarianism.

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Clayton J. Conlan, Superior Court of Justice of Ontario (Milton, ON)*

Speakers:

- *Aziz Z. Huq, Frank and Bernice J. Greenberg Professor of Law, University of Chicago Law School (Chicago, USA)*
- *Zamilah Sangar, Former Judge at the Public Security Appeal Court, Primary Criminal Court and the Traffic Accident Crimes Court of Kabul Province (Afghanistan), Research Associate at Peter Allard A. School of Law, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC)*

3:00–3:15 PM

Health Break

3:15–4:15 PM

Fireside Chat

Speaker:

- *TBC*

Interviewer:

- *TBC*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025

8:00–9:00 AM Registration and Breakfast

09:00–10:15 AM Panel 7 | Justice and Democracy in the Americas — A Region Under Pressure

Across the Americas—from Canada and the United States to countries throughout South America—democratic institutions are facing unprecedented challenges. This panel will explore the erosion of public trust in the judiciary and other institutions, the rise of authoritarian rhetoric, and the increasing polarization affecting access to justice and the rule of law. Panelists will examine the regional dynamics undermining democratic resilience, with a focus on institutional responses, civil society engagement, and legal reforms.

Moderator:

- *Pierre Gilles Bélanger, Lawyer & Auxiliary professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)*

Speaker:

- *TBC*

10:15–10:30 AM Health Break

10:30–11:45 AM Panel 8 | Canada's Role in Strengthening the Rule of Law Abroad — Judicial Engagement and Technical Cooperation

Moderator:

- *The Honourable Justice Mary T. Moreau, Supreme Court of Canada (Edmonton, AB)*

Speaker:

- *Marc A. Giroux, Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Canada, Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Canada (Ottawa, ON)*

11:45–12:15 PM Presentation | Where Do We Go From Here?

Host:

- *The Honourable Justice Peter Willcock, Court of Appeal for British Columbia, CIAJ upcoming president (Vancouver, BC)*

Honorary Chair:

- *The Right Honourable Richard Wagner, P.C. Chief Justice of Canada (Ottawa, ON)*

12:15–12:30 PM Closing Remarks

Co-Chair:

- *The Honourable Justice Peter Willcock, Court of Appeal for British Columbia, CIAJ upcoming president (Vancouver, BC)*

DECADES OF EXCELLENCE

CIAJ IN 2025

CIAJ marks more than 50 years of leadership in the advancement of the administration of justice in Canada. Since 1974, the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice has brought together legal professionals through its annual events, webinars, and publications, reaching a diverse and influential audience.

OUR MISSION

To promote excellence in justice through knowledge, learning and the exchange of ideas.

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independent, pan-Canadian,
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analysis to
contribute to
a more
efficient
justice system.



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Planting the Seeds of Justice

Imagine a space where concrete solutions emerge to address the complex challenges of our Canadian justice system. This is what the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice (CIAJ) is all about.

Founded in 1974, CIAJ's mission is to promote excellence in justice through knowledge, learning and the exchange of ideas.

CIAJ acts as a conduit for change. As a non-profit and independent organization, we bring together individuals and institutions from diverse expertise—judges, lawyers, academics, policymakers, as well as social workers, law enforcement, and engaged citizens— to improve the administration of justice across Canada. Our multidisciplinary approach enables us to break down silos and mobilize diverse perspectives across a wide range of sectors, tackling fundamental issues in depth. Together, we develop concrete solutions tailored to the real needs of Canadians.

We are much more than event organizers: we are a driving force for change. At CIAJ, we build bridges where none existed before, ensuring that the justice system reflects the complexity, diversity, and aspirations of our society.

Join CIAJ: develop yourself, shape a better world, and make a difference.

By becoming a member of CIAJ, you join a community committed to transforming justice. Together, we have the power to influence policy, improve access to justice and build a more equitable system. Join us today to be part of this essential change.

JOIN CIAJ

Contact us

Please contact us for more information about our organization, the benefits of membership and how you can assist us with our mission.

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ABOUT CIAJ

JUNE 2-6, 2025 | OTTAWA, ON

National Administrative Law Week 3rd Edition



Join your colleagues from across Canada in person or online for this third edition of the National Administrative Law Week, organized jointly by the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice (CIAJ) and the Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals (CCAT). This cutting-edge training program offers a variety of activities on topical administrative law issues.

OCTOBER 28-30, 2025 | VANCOUVER, BC

49TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Environment and the Law: Protect or Develop—Is There a Choice?



CIAJ's annual conference will highlight the dilemmas between **the need to protect the environment** and **the necessity to support economic development**. How can we reconcile the demands of resource protection with those of development?

Between the perspectives of Indigenous communities and those of Canadians, questions of justice and sustainability are pressing.

The Honourable Leonard Marchand, Chief Justice of British Columbia, will be our keynote speaker. A member of the Syilx Nation, he brings unique expertise in the integration of indigenous knowledge and environmental law, which is essential for rethinking the balance between protection and development.