

Honourable Members of the Court

Distinguished Guests

Good afternoon Chief Justice Moreau. My name is Rob Armstrong and I am the President Elect of the Law Society of Alberta. It is my privilege and a true honor to be here today to make an application to admit the following exemplary young men to the Law Society of Alberta:

Thoburn Stephens Allan;

Herbert Joseph Ball;

Francis Benedict Barnes;

Percy Douglas Sinclair Broad;

Bernal Benjamin Brown;

John Francis Costigan;

Henry Humphreys Dinning;

Albert Graham Eakins;

John Norris Eaton;

Nelson Rankin English;

John Ogilvy Fairlie; and

Thomas Harold Fennell.

My Lady, a call to the bar ceremony is typically a joyous occasion where the past achievements of a student being admitted to the profession are recognized and celebrated by family and friends. It provides the student being admitted to the bar an opportunity to contemplate the opportunities and challenges associated with a career in the law and it is a time where the court can address the student personally and offer words of advice for the new member of the profession.

Today's ceremony is somewhat different. While we are here to recognize and remember the achievements of those who are being called to the bar, we must also mourn the loss of those whom we honor. There is not only the personal loss to the families and friends of the fallen but there is also the loss to the greater society that occurs every time a young person's potential is not realized. Today we honor that unrealized potential in those who studied the law but were unable to practice due to the sacrifice they made to protect our country and its institutions, including the independent and impartial courts that we are so fortunate to have in Canada. Admitting these students to the bar of Alberta will ensure they are remembered for their achievements and perhaps give back to their families a small part of what was taken away from them.

The Legal Professions Act permits the admission of persons to the profession if the person has satisfied the academic requirements specified by the Rules of the Law Society and is of good character and reputation. The requirement of good character is the foundation upon which the public's trust and confidence in the profession is built. While the students for whom we seek admission to the bar may have been at various stages of completing their academic qualifications, all of them meet the requirements of integrity and good character so fundamental to the admission to the profession.

Much has been written on the concept of good character as it relates to a precondition for admission to the profession. It has been described as moral or ethical strength including attributes such as integrity, candor, empathy and honesty. Another definition is that good character includes the moral fiber to do what is right, no matter how uncomfortable the doing may be, and not to do wrong no matter what the consequences may be to oneself. Good character is about putting your self-interests behind those of the greater good and that is exactly why we honor the young men who left their lives in Canada to go and fight in WWI. They put what is right and the greater good ahead of their own ambitions, ahead of their own career aspirations, ahead of their own comforts, ahead of their own safety and, ultimately, ahead of their own lives. For all of that we remember them.

The character of the young men being honored here today can be illustrated in a brief example: The second battle of Ypres.

The battle took place just north of the French town of Ypres near Kitchener's Wood and St. Julian. The Canadians formed part of the fighting line alongside French and Algerian Soldiers. The Germans held the high ground and therefore the advantage. This was the first battle of the war in which the German soldiers employed chlorine gas and it had devastating effects in the battle. Because this was the first-time gas had been used as a weapon in the war, none of the allied soldiers were equipped with gas masks. The gas killed most of the French and Algerian soldiers leaving a 6 km gap in the French front. It was the Canadians who took it upon themselves to cover that gap. The soldiers fought for three days, often without sleep, adequate water or supplies. With courage and sheer strength of character the Canadian soldiers fought hard and fought steadily and ultimately, they persevered taking the woods and taking St. Julian.

The second battle of Ypres was a defining moment for many Canadian soldiers. It is the battle that inspired Canadian John McRae to write those famous lines: In Flanders fields the poppies blow; Between the crosses, row on row. It is the battle that Private Barnes on whose behalf I seek admission to the bar today was killed.

My Lady, the Law Society of Alberta will be very proud to have these 12 young men among its members and so I ask that you grant this application and admit them as members of the Alberta bar.

Thank you.