



March 24, 2009

Mr. Rajesh Sharma  
#204, 1228 Kensington Road NW  
Calgary AB T2N 3P7

Dear Mr. Sharma:

I am pleased to inform and congratulate you on being chosen as the 2009 recipient of the Legal Aid Alberta Access to Justice Award for the Calgary region. Your award will be presented during Legal Aid Alberta's Access to Justice Week (April 14-17).

Nominations were collected from the public, fellow roster lawyers, judges, the LAA Board of Directors and staff. On March 23, award selection was decided on by an external Selection Committee.

The criteria for award selection stipulated that the recipient must:

- i.) Be a member of the Law Society of Alberta and an active member of the LAA roster.
- ii.) Have demonstrated a high level of commitment to providing quality legal services to LAA clients.
- iii.) Have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the profession.

We would be honoured if you would accept your award by joining our Calgary region celebration where local government representatives, fellow roster lawyers, members of the media and Legal Aid Alberta staff members will be present. (When your award is presented you will have the opportunity to speak to the audience if you wish.)

**Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**Westin Calgary (Nakiska Room)**  
**320 - 4th Avenue SW**  
**5:30pm – 7:30 p.m.**

Please RSVP to Sarah Florio (Communications Assistant) on or before April 8<sup>th</sup> by either telephone (780) 644-8116 or by email at [sflorio@legalaid.ab.ca](mailto:sflorio@legalaid.ab.ca).

Once again, congratulations on being chosen for recognition as a legal professional who is dedicated to improving access to justice for Albertans in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JS", is written over a light grey circular stamp.

Jacqueline Schaffter  
President and CEO

encl.

Provincial Office  
400, 10320 – 102 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4A1  
Tel. (780) 644-4971 Fax. (780) 415-2618

**SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Diane Young (President - CBA)  
Peter Michalyshyn (President - Law Society of Alberta)  
Assistant Chief Judge Allan Lefever (Provincial Court of Alberta)  
Justice Neilson (Court of Queen's Bench)  
Kirk MacDonald (LAA Board Director)  
Simon Yu (2008 Edmonton Region Recipient)  
Jacqueline Schaffter (LAA President & CEO)  
Deborah Miller (Senior Counsel - Family Law Office)  
Greg Francis (Senior Counsel - Youth Criminal Defence Office).

**Nomination Comments**

*"I am aware that Mr. Sharma provides exceptional service to immigrants. While maintaining a busy private practice he makes time to take on Legal Aid clients. The obstacles in accessing our justice system for such impecunious clients are difficult, sometimes impossible, however I am aware that Mr. Sharma has successfully argued complex matters such as a war crimes/crimes against humanity application for judicial review to the Federal Court for a legal aid client; other appeals included a successful removal order appeal for someone facing deportation to Afghanistan. Mr. Sharma's past experience as a former refugee protection officer, and his education (completing his LLM in Administrative Law), allow his clients access to an exceptionally trained and educated lawyer at a reduced rate. As a result of Mr. Sharma affording time to legal aid clients, those clients have access to his specialized knowledge, and would not otherwise be able to access or afford. He has made an obvious commitment to the principle of access to justice which should be recognized."*

*"I am aware that:*

- Raj Sharma was recently published in the Alberta Law Review (Volume 46, No. 1, November 2008) "Deference, the Universe of Discourse, and the Standard of Review" and has, because of his academic input has made a contribution to the profession*
- Raj is a member of the Continuing Professional Development LSA committee*
- Raj is a member of the Legal Aid Regional Appeals Committee*
- Raj is pursuing his LLM at Osgoode Hall in Administrative Law*
- Raj has taken on a number of Legal Aid clients, representing their interests before every division of the Immigration and Refugee Board and the Federal Court of Canada*
- Raj's contributions allow Legal Aid clients to be represented by a lawyer with significant experience in this niche area"*

*"I rejoined private practice in October 2008 and am in an independent association of practice with Raj. Raj has mentored me, and I have been able to observe his interactions with his clients. Access to Justice is very important to him, and while he has a busy practice, he nonetheless takes on Legal Aid matters. I have also seen him assist other junior lawyers. He is on a number of committees and is generous with his time for his profession. He is a published author, has an informative blog, and handles difficult cases for his Legal Aid clients, including representation before the Federal Court of Canada. His clients are lucky to be represented by him."*

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## NOMINATION COMMENTS CONT'D

*“Raj Sharma has been practicing law since 2004; since that time he has been taking on Legal Aid matters. Over the last 5 years, he has been on a number of committees with LESA, the LSA, and on the Legal Aid Society of Alberta (Regional Legal Aid Appeals Committee). He is recently published in the Alberta Law Review and is currently completing his LLM at Osgoode Hall Law School. His Legal Aid clients have included individuals who have mental health issues, are facing a risk to their life in the countries of nationality, are separated from their families, or are facing removal from Canada. He has provided high end legal services at a reduced rate for those that face the most obstacles in accessing justice. He is a credit to the profession.”*

*“As a MLA, I have frequently assisted individuals from my constituency in seeking affordable and experienced legal assistance. Raj Sharma has provided excellent legal services both to Legal Aid clients and others on a pro bono basis. Those clients have contacted me and advised of their happiness and satisfaction with Raj's services. Access to Justice is a very important concern, and Raj Sharma shares this concern but more importantly, acts on it by giving back to his community. I know that Raj sits on a number of committees, including for the Law Society of Alberta. He has an impeccable reputation, and is always willing to help, especially the marginalized individuals in our society. I can wholeheartedly, and without reservation, recommend Raj for this distinction.”*