Bencher Election: Getting to Know You Questionnaire

PATRICK HEINSEN, KC

1. What is your favourite song, movie or book & why?

Depends on genre – if were given only one song for the rest of my days, it would be "Soave sia il vento" from Mozart's opera "Cosi fan Tutte". It is a song that simply says "farewell" set to the most beautiful music I've ever experienced. The rest of the time, give me "She Sells Sanctuary" by the Cult.

2. What was the most inspiring or rewarding volunteer activity you have performed?

BLG ran a pro bono project to assist Afgans who had assisted Canadian forces or other western organizations escape from the country 2021 during the Taliban take over. I was on the phone with Aghans seeking to escape for several months. It was the most profound experience I have ever had, as the people we were assisting were quite literally fleeing for their lives. We were able to have several get out to Pakistan, and at least two made their way to be with relatives in Canada. I'm very proud of the work the BLG team did on this project.

3. How do you deal with stress?

I work at a large firm and there are many pressures. I'm probably not the "poster child" for stress management techniques, but I do make efforts to take time out of the office to be with family or spend time in nature. We are generally blessed in this province to have first rate natural wonders at our doorsteps – I'll do my best to get out skiing during winter, and I really enjoy hiking in the summers. When I'm not able to get away, I am lucky to have a temperament that assists with lessening stressful situations. I do my best to put myself in the shoes of others to understand their motivations and try to work with people (be they clients, counsel or the court) to help everyone get to where they need to be. I think that reduces stress on all parties.

4. What does lawyer well-being mean to you?

Lawyers as a group have statistically high levels of anxiety, burn out, stress (etc.). This can lead to destructive habits. Lawyer well-being is a concept that is individual to every practitioner. Thankfully, there are several resources that can offer assistance, and I encourage lawyers to access the assistance best suited to their circumstances. Personally, I seek well-being by trying to stay centered and build up those around me.

5. Do you believe mental health should be a priority?

Yes. There will always be balances that lawyers will have to maintain, but at the end of the day, if you let you ignore your mental health, you will see decreased performance, decreased client satisfaction and decreased firm satisfaction, all of which will simply serve to increase stress.