



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDMONTON, JULY 29, 2022 – After 30 years as Chief Justice of Alberta, the Honourable Catherine Anne Fraser, who is also Chief Justice of both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Courts of Appeal, is retiring effective July 30, 2022.

Her appointment as Alberta’s Chief Justice on March 12, 1992 marked the first time a woman had been appointed chief justice of a province in Canada.

“I have been humbled, and grateful, to have had this unparalleled opportunity to serve the citizens of Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut,” said Chief Justice Fraser.

“I have been fortunate to have worked with talented colleagues on the Alberta and Northern Courts of Appeal and the Canadian Judicial Council dedicated to achieving the highest level of justice for those we serve. I am confident that I leave the Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Courts of Appeal well positioned to continue to inspire public trust in our justice system.”

Supreme Court of Canada Justice, the Honourable Sheilah Martin, said this about her former colleague: “In her 30 years as Chief Justice, Catherine Fraser has worked tirelessly and effectively to provide first-class justice to the citizens of Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Known for her brilliant judgments, inspired leadership, administrative acumen and forward thinking, she has been a judicial superstar whose many contributions will also benefit future generations.”

The Chief Justice of the Court of Queen’s Bench, the Honourable Mary Moreau, noted: “Chief Justice Fraser accomplished so much in her many years in office, most recently overseeing the digitization of the operations of the Court of Appeal, while penning key decisions in all areas of the law. In her work as a member of the Canadian Judicial Council, she advocated strongly for the independence of Canada’s courts and the value of education on social issues for judges. She is a trailblazer whose vision and leadership will be missed by her fellow Chiefs and Albertans alike.”

Commenting on Chief Justice Fraser’s retirement, the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court, the Honourable Derek Redman, said: “It is too bad that we can’t bottle up all of her energy and experience, her passion and intellect, her clarity of thought and humanity, and then have it at hand when an issue arises and we ask ‘what would Catherine have done?’ In that regard, those of us

who have known her, worked with her and seen her in action will miss her. But she has led so well that it will be easy to apply her principled approach to all matters involving the justice system.”

Chief Justice Fraser graduated from the University of Alberta in 1970 with a Bachelor of Laws with Distinction. She received her Master of Laws from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1972. Following her return to Edmonton, she practised law, focussing on corporate and commercial law. She also served as Chair of the Public Service Employee Relations Board for several years.

Chief Justice Fraser was appointed to the Queen’s Bench in 1989. Two years later, she was appointed to the Court of Appeal. Then, in 1992, she was appointed Chief Justice of Alberta and Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of the Northwest Territories. On the creation of Nunavut in 1999, she was also appointed Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of Nunavut.

The dominant theme of Chief Justice Fraser’s career has been her devotion to the rule of law and the delivery of fair and equal justice for all. As she has explained: “Since judging fairly requires that judges understand the world around us, one of my initial priorities was to ensure that judicial education included education on social issues, such as gender equality, racial equity and Aboriginal justice. I am pleased that today, social context education is a key component of a judge’s education.”

A long-time proponent of court administration reform in Canada, Chief Justice Fraser’s primary message is that modernizing the governance model for court administration improves responsiveness and accountability to the public.

Chief Justice Fraser has been involved in a number of initiatives provincially, nationally and internationally to promote key democratic principles: the rule of law, constitutionalism, the delivery of fair and equal justice and the protection of human rights and freedoms. She has participated in judicial education initiatives in Australia, New Zealand, England, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Croatia, Taiwan, Zimbabwe and the Palestinian Territories.

Chief Justice Fraser has been awarded honorary doctorates of law from the University of Alberta, University of Windsor, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge.

For more information, please contact the Executive Director and Registrar of the Alberta Court of Appeal, Heidi Schubert, QC, at Calgary.Registry@albertacourts.ca.