



THE CANADIAN
BAR ASSOCIATION
Saskatchewan Branch

2022 Distinguished Service Award

Presented January 12, 2022

Introduction of Michael Milani, Q.C. by Erin Kleisinger, Q.C.

It is my honour to be asked to introduce my dear friend Michael Milani, Q.C on the occasion of his receipt of the CBA's Distinguished Service Award.

In preparing for today I looked up some definitions of distinguished, and they included:

- Successful
- Commanding great respect
- Marked by eminence, distinction or excellence.

Mike has all of these qualities, and in this introduction I hope to do justice to his accomplishments, and articulate why he is so deserving of this award.

Mike was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick but spent most of his formative years in Saskatoon. Both his father, John, and his brother, Ian, served in the military, which I think accounts for the unparalleled work ethic and discipline that he has displayed throughout his career.

His mother Verna was a teacher, and she is likely the source of his passion (some would say obsession) for clear writing and good grammar. Many a junior has been the recipient of an edited document bearing Mike's red pen (years before we had track changes).

John and Verna were both avid and active volunteers. Verna volunteered at City Hospital for over 20 years, drove patients for the Canadian Cancer Society, and read to blind students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Following his retirement John devoted the next 21 years to volunteer work including: Corps of Commissioners, Saskatoon Housing Authority; Salvation Army; Kiwanis Club of Saskatoon, Royal Canadian Legion, and the United Services Institute.

Mike's parents clearly instilled that sense of service in him, which he has displayed throughout his career.

Mike is married to his lovely wife Diane Runge-Milani. They have two sons, Jonathan and Christopher. Jonathan followed his dad and became a lawyer. He joined McDougall Gauley several years ago and is proving to have many of the classic Milani traits that have made Mike the excellent lawyer, and gentleman, that he is. Mike and Diane welcomed Jonathan's wife Zina Scott to their family last year. Zina is also a lawyer at McKercher. Poor Diane and Christopher must never get a word in edgewise at a family dinner.

Mike attended the University of Saskatchewan for two years of undergrad studies in political science and history before being admitted to the College of Law. I never miss an opportunity to remind him that I have one more degree than he does, although the lack of letters has hardly hindered him, and my Honours Philosophy degree has hardly helped me. Mike graduated from the College of Law in 1980 and was admitted to the Saskatchewan Bar in 1981, obtaining the Law Society's Award for Highest Standing in the Bar Admission Course.

Mike has spent his entire career at what was, at the time he articulated, McDougall Ready Wakeling, and now McDougall Gauley LLP. Over the last 40 years he has carried on an intensely busy and varied commercial law and litigation practice, with an emphasis on banking law, secured transactions, insolvency and financial restructuring. He is the consummate lawyer – knowledgeable, practical, analytical, diligent, courteous and ethical beyond reproach. A sampling of the professional honours he has received over the years include:

- Being Named in the International Who's Who of Insolvency and Restructuring Lawyers
- Listed in Best Lawyers in Canada in six different categories, including Banking and Finance Law, Corporate and Commercial Litigation and Asset-Based Lending
- Being recognized as a Leading Practitioner in the Canadian Legal Expert Directory (LEXPERT) in 7 areas and as one of LEXPERT's Leading 500 Lawyers in Canada
- Being named as a Fellow of the Insolvency Institute of Canada
- Being ranked by Chambers and Partners as a Tier 1 practitioner in business law.

Throughout his career Mike has given back to the profession in a myriad of ways. What is notable is that in every case he rose to the top, to not only serve, but lead each entity for which he was appointed or elected:

- He was the President of the Regina Bar Association in 1993
- He was elected a Benchler of the Law Society for two terms, and served as the Law Society President in 2002
- He was a Board Member and Executive Committee Member of CanLII
- He was a board member of the Canadian Lawyers Insurance Agency for 14 years and Chaired that board from 2012 to 2014.
- He was a board member of SLIA for over 20 years, and served as its President.
- He was the Law Society of Saskatchewan's representative to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada from 2003 – 2009. The Federation is the national coordinating body of the 14 law societies across Canada. His term with the Federation included participation and leadership on numerous committees including the National Admission Standards Steering Committee, the Committee responding to the Competition Bureau's Report on Regulated Professions, and the National Committee on Accreditation.
- Mike ascended to the Presidency of the Federation in 2007, and served what I believe is the longest term of any Federation President, an exhausting 19 months. It was during his tenure that the Federation introduced the Model Code of Professional Conduct and the first client identification (anti-money laundering) model rules, and the Federation intervened in the *Blood Tribe* case before the Supreme Court of Canada in defence of solicitor-client privilege.
- Amongst all his other duties as President, he also served as a Committee Member for the review of applications for the first Director of Public Prosecutions in Canada; and appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety in respect of Anti-Terrorism legislation

- Mike's most recent professional service is as a member of the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan, for which he has served as Chair since 2014.

In the area of legal scholarship and continuing legal education Mike's contributions are innumerable:

- Member, Editorial Board of both the Banking and Finance Law Review and the Commercial Insolvency Reporter
- For 8 years he was a Member of the Organizing Committee and presenter at the CBA Annual Law Firm Leadership Conference
- He taught Commercial Mortgages at the Bar Admission Course
- His CV discloses more than 70 papers authored, or presentations made, including for SKLESI, the CBA, the Saskatchewan Law Review, the Banking and Finance Law Review, the STLA, the Insolvency Institute of Canada, the Annual Review of Insolvency Law, and the Canadian Institute.
- His latest and what may prove to be his greatest contribution is his recent appointment as the Estey chair in Business Law at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. His term begins this July, and he will spend 6 months teaching business law courses, conducting research, sharing his expertise with the faculty and students, and engaging in outreach activities with the legal community.

Mike's volunteerism, and service, also extends to the broader community. He spent many years on the Board of the United Way of Regina, including a two-year term as its President. He served as a member of the Mayor's Advisory Committee for the creation of the Regina Crime Prevention Council. And he was a Trustee, and ultimately Chair of the Board of the MacKenzie Art Gallery. Somewhere in there he also found time to coach minor hockey.

Perhaps the area where Mike has had the most impact, and probably the least recognition, is with his service to and leadership of our firm. Mike has been a guiding hand at McDougall Gauley for decades. No matter how busy he may be on a file, Mike is the first one to stop to help mentor an associate, reach out to a colleague in need, or delicately solve the latest HR or administrative problem. He has brought strategic vision to the firm, devoting countless hours to identifying and nurturing initiatives to grow and improve the firm's business and its culture.

He has worked tirelessly as a member of our Executive Committee, and Chaired that Committee during the past two years as we and others navigated the pandemic, and the upheaval it brought to our workplace and our practices. And his guiding principle was not necessarily what was in the best interests of the business, but ensuring the safety, wellbeing and compassionate treatment of every member of the firm.

I know that this recitation of his accomplishments is uncomfortable for Mike. He is private and humble. But he is also very deserving of having a light shone on his outstanding contributions.

Public service is not just a way of life, but a way to live life fully. Mike has filled his life with service and our profession, the community and our firm are the better for it.

Please join me in congratulating the 2022 CBA Distinguished Service Award winner, Mr. Michael Milani.