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BAR ASSOCIATION
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Distinguished Service Award Winner

THE HONOURABLE MADAM JUSTICE FREDA STEEL

*By Lisa LaBossière, Myers Weinberg LLP,
Co-Chair of the Mid-Winter Organizing Committee*



The Manitoba Bar Association and the Mid-Winter Conference Organizing Committee are honoured to announce the recipient of the 2015 Distinguished Service Award, The Honourable Madam Justice Freda M. Steel. The award is presented to a member of the Manitoba Bench or Bar who exemplifies the ideals of service to the legal profession and the community. Freda Steel's selection for this award is based on her distinguished and impressive career and her many outstanding contributions, not only as a long standing member of the Manitoba judiciary, but also in the areas of legal education and volunteerism.

Freda Steel received her LL.B. from the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba in 1975 and was called to both the Manitoba and Ontario Bars in 1976 and 1980, respectively. She went on to receive her Masters of Law from Harvard Law School in 1978.

Freda Steel taught at the Faculty of Law first at the University of Ottawa from 1978-1982 and then at the University of Manitoba as Associate Professor of Law from 1982-1989. She also served as Associate Dean of Law in 1983-1984. Between 1989-1992, while on leave from the Faculty, she acted as the Director of Professional Education at the Law Society. Eventually Freda Steel resumed her position at the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba as Professor of Law until she was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench in 1995. In 2000, she was appointed to the Court of Appeal.

Freda Steel taught many areas at the Faculty of Law, including complex issues in tort law, contract law and most substantially, family law. While teaching as a law professor, she not only authored law books and scholarly articles, she served on many committees addressing issues such as admissions, curriculum, ethical research and student aid. During this time, she also volunteered her time on boards and presented at many conferences.

Her professional experience also includes acting as an arbitrator pursuant to the *Labour Relations Act (MB)*, acting as an adjudicator pursuant to the *Human Rights Act (MB)*, providing opinions as an expert in family law matters and serving as counsel to the Office of the Children's Advocate.

Once appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench and subsequently to the Court of Appeal, her contributions to not only the legal profession but the community continued. In addition to decades of judicial decisions, Madam Justice Freda Steel has lectured at countless legal conferences and presented at other public forums on a broad and impressive array of legal topics. In 2011, she chaired the Winnipeg Round Table on Access to Justice and Legal Empowerment of the Poor.

Madam Justice Steel has also been very active sitting on and chairing many Judicial Committees, including the Canadian Judicial Council Committee on Judicial Education, the Canadian Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges, the Canadian Judicial Advisory Committee on Study Leave, the Montague Israels Prize Committee, the Court of Appeal Rules Committee and the Canadian Judges Conference. She has served on many National Committees, including the National Judicial Institute Organizing Committee for the Annual Criminal Law Program, National Judicial Institute Steering Committee for Appellate Education, National Institute Appellate Courts Seminar Review Committee and the Canadian Association of Law Teachers.

Again, there is no question that the numerous and outstanding contributions of Madam Justice Freda Steel make her a fitting recipient of the Manitoba Bar Association Distinguished Service Award. As described in her nomination submission: "On the national stage, her judicial decisions and leadership in judicial education is well known and very highly regarded".

It is with great pleasure that the Manitoba Bar Association and the Mid-Winter Organizing Committee recognize the contributions of the Hon. Madam Justice Freda M. Steel to the legal profession and community with the Distinguished Service Award for 2015. The award was formally presented at the MBA Mid-Winter Awards luncheon on Friday, January 23, 2015 at the Fairmont Winnipeg.