

## NAMES IN THE NEWS

## MOVES

■ In Montreal **Janique Forget** has joined *Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP's* technology and intellectual property practice group. Forget specializes in the fields of biotechnology and pharmaceutical, and holds a doctorate in molecular biology. She is also a patent agent in Canada and the United States. The *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP* (BLG) Montreal office has added four associates to its ranks, including: **Nicola Corbo**, **Julia Pomeroy**, **Patrick Plante** and **Marjolaine Hémond Hotte**.

■ In Toronto **Jennifer Hefler** joins BLG as an associate with the competition and marketing law and corporate/commercial groups. Previously she articulated with *Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP*.

■ In Ottawa **Kim Dullet** joins BLG as an associate in family and estates litigation. She previously articulated with the firm.

■ In Calgary **Dan Baxter** joins BLG as counsel in the securities and capital markets and structured finance and leasing practice areas. He was previously with *Schinnour Matkin Baxter & Pichette* in Calgary.

## NEWS

■ **John Jones** and **Thomas Harley** have opened the aptly named *Jones Harley LLP* in downtown Toronto. The small firm focuses specializes in defending insured litigation for insurers and self insured corporations directly in all areas including property, engineering and construction, personal injury, professional liability, products liability, trucking and transportation as well as motor vehicle and accident benefits. Before forming their own firm Jones and Harley worked at *Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP* in the nineties, then became consulting partners, and now law firm partners.

## EVENTS

■ The first annual "Bar and Bench" fundraiser for Olympic athletes will be held Oct. 2 at The Monk's Table in Toronto. Special guests include: Justice **Coulter Osborne**, wine critic Tony Aspler and skater Josée Chouinard. For tickets visit: <http://thebarandbench.eventbrite.com/>.

## Starting over, helping other immigrants

MICHAEL RAPPAPORT TORONTO

Sergio Karas is a top immigration lawyer with personal experience of the immigration system.

In 1980, when Karas was 19, he immigrated with his family from Buenos Aires to Toronto. "The political situation and the economy in Argentina was deteriorating rapidly," Karas recalls. "We felt that we'd be better off looking for greener pastures in Canada."

"Moving from one country to another is not an easy transition, unless you already speak the language and have a job lined up," Karas says. "We had to start again from scratch."

For Karas moving to Canada meant learning English — one of the five languages he now speaks. It also meant losing the two years he spent in law school in Argentina and doing a B.A. in political science at York University before being accepted into Osgoode Hall Law School of York University.

Although Karas did not begin his career practising immigration law, he quickly grew bored of administrative and municipal law and seeing a need for multilingual immigration lawyers, he switched fields. "It pained me to see clients ripped off by unscrupulous immigration consultants simply because they spoke Spanish or Portuguese."

When Karas founded his Toronto-based immigration boutique, Karas & Associates, in 1990, he served mainly refugees from Central America. Today, his clientele is primarily highly skilled workers and multi-national corporations. Karas & Associates is a member of VisaLaw International, an alliance of immigration lawyers from 22 countries around the world, who work together to assist each other with immigration and visa issues.

While the focus of his firm has always been immigration law, between 1995 to 2002 Karas represented 50 Canadian families of Holocaust survivors and victims in a class action against Swiss banks



LAWYER OF THE WEEK

Sergio Karas

to recover funds deposited with the banks during World War II. For Karas, whose father was a Holocaust survivor, the case was very personal. His seven-year successful legal battle with Swiss banks was chronicled in the books, *Hitler's Secret Bankers: The Myth of Swiss Neutrality During the Holocaust* by Adam Lebor and *Hitler's silent partners: Swiss banks, Nazi gold, and the pursuit of justice* by Isabel Vincet.

"The class action helped bring a sad chapter of world history to a close," Karas says.

Karas has also been a staunch advocate for reforming the immigration and refugee system as the

chair of the Ontario Bar Association's citizenship and immigration section, the past chair of the International Bar Association's immigration committee and past vice-chair of the American Bar Association's Canadian committee on international law.

After the terrorist attack on 9-11, Karas wrote to the U.S. Embassy and members of Parliament in Ottawa and spoke to the media about security lapses in the Canadian visa rules.

"Saudi Arabia was one of the few countries whose citizens were not required to apply for a visa to enter Canada. Given that 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi

**Name:** Sergio Karas  
**Law school:** Osgoode Hall Law School of York University  
**Called to the Bar:** 1988

## Career highlights:

**1990** Established Karas & Associates

**1999** Listed in "Who is Who in Corporate Immigration Law" as a leading immigration legal practitioner

**2005** Elected vice-chair of the Ontario Bar Association's citizenship and immigration section

**2007** Elected co-chair of the International Bar Association's immigration and nationality committee

Arabia and the country had a history of financing terrorists, I thought the policy was misguided," Karas explains. Thanks in part to Karas' vocal campaign, the Canadian government corrected this oversight.

In regards to current immigration policy, Karas has advocated to make the system more business friendly. "The federal government should ensure that immigration is used as an economic tool, not as a political tool," Karas says.

In respect to Canada's policies on refugees, Karas says that refugee claimants should continue to be treated separately, but drastic changes need to be made regarding who should be allowed to make refugee claims and how the system processes claims.

Karas warns that the current immigration and refugee system is in danger of collapsing.

"There are far too many people who procure false passports and show up on Canadian shores, while legitimate claimants languish for years waiting for approval." ■

## Got news?

Contributions to *Names in the News* can be e-mailed to [names@lexisnexis.ca](mailto:names@lexisnexis.ca)

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## HOW TO REACH US

Phone: (905) 479-2665  
Toll-free: 1-800-668-6481  
Fax: (905) 479-3758  
e-mail: [tlw@lexisnexis.ca](mailto:tlw@lexisnexis.ca)

**Main Office**  
123 Commerce Valley Drive East  
Suite 700, Markham, ON L3T 7W8  
Phone: (905) 479-2665

**Ottawa Bureau**  
c/o Parliamentary Press Gallery  
Rm 350-N, Centre Block  
Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Phone: (613) 820-2794  
Fax: (613) 995-5795

**Website:** [www.thelawyersweekly.ca](http://www.thelawyersweekly.ca)

**Member, Ontario Press Council**  
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1706, Toronto ON  
(416) 340-1981; Fax: (416) 340-8724

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**Manager, Advertising Sales**  
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