

# ARBOS AWARD

## REX BEATON CITATION

### ARBOS AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION



Classroom teachers might not know Rex Beaton personally but for the last several decades he has played a pivotal role in protecting and preserving the rights of teachers and the teaching profession in his role as legal counsel for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. To acknowledge this support Rex is being honoured

with the Arbos for Contributions to the Professional Organization.

Many of the legislative achievements and legal victories teachers have experienced is due to the depth and breadth of knowledge Rex and his colleagues at McDougall Gauley LLP possess. STF Associate Executive Director Milton Block says "there is not a lawyer in Saskatchewan who can touch Rex when it comes to education law."

Before becoming an education champion Rex received a bachelor of science (honours) from the University of Alberta in 1973. He then achieved a bachelor of laws from the University of Saskatchewan in 1978. He is a member of the Canadian Bar Association, the Law Society of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Bar Association. Since 2019 he has been recognized on the Best Lawyers in Canada website for his knowledge of education law.

Fred Herron, former executive secretary of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan, describes Rex as a humble but tenacious force in the courtroom due to how well-researched and prepared he is. He says Rex "fosters co-operation and collaboration and he did it in a quiet, reserved manner based on evidence."

To grasp the magnitude of accomplishments Rex has achieved one need look no further than the 2009 document *From Classroom to Courtroom: A Legal History of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation*. Rex was instrumental in drafting *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006* and the policies and bylaws that have shaped the teaching profession. He has assisted with clarification around noon-hour supervision, redundancy, corporal discipline, contracts of employment, grievance arbitrations, interpretation of sick leave, dismissals and boards of reference, cases related to personal injuries, the Supplemental Employment Benefits Plan and more.

Gwen Dueck, former executive director of the STF, describes him as a passionate and dedicated educational advocate who has made many personal and professional sacrifices to improve teacher working conditions in Saskatchewan. His true strength, she says, lies in his ability to preserve relationships involved in a dispute.

"If there was a dispute between teachers, their employer or with others in the community, Rex was always concerned about the relationship between the parties at the end," she says. "If you win a challenge but you lose the relationship, what have you gained? Reputational impact for the individual teacher and for the profession was always important to consider. Rex worked tirelessly to ensure that processes were fair."

Most recently, Rex helped the Federation transition to provide in-house legal counsel. For those who know him best Rex is more than a lawyer; he is a patient and trusted colleague, a strong teacher advocate and champion and, most importantly, he has become a friend and confidant to many.



# A CONVERSATION WITH REX BEATON

## How did you get involved in education law specifically?

My first involvement with education law occurred on my first day as an articling student with Gauley and Co. The STF legal counsel at that time, Harry H. Dahlem, QC, took me along to a teacher termination hearing. I found it both interesting and exciting and it gave me a glimpse into the world of education law. I have been involved ever since that day.

## Why is it important for teachers and the teaching profession to have access to legal counsel?

Teacher access to legal counsel is important, not only because legal representation is a part of the Federation mandate but also because teachers often feel that they lack control or that their voice is not being heard in the workplace. Federation legal representation can help give teachers a voice.

## In your role, what's been your biggest take-away or learning?

My biggest take-away from my role as legal counsel for the Federation is a better understanding of the impact

that teachers have on the lives of young people and that there is so much more that goes on behind the scenes that is not always seen or appreciated.

## What has been the biggest challenge you have faced?

My biggest challenge in the role of Federation legal counsel has been to keep pace with the volume and range of education-related legal issues that arise on a day-to-day basis.

## What impact has this work had on you personally?

Teachers have always played an important role in my world – as a student, a parent and the Federation's legal counsel. I developed a keen appreciation for what teachers do and accomplish, often without recognition. My involvement with teachers and my relationship with the Federation has brought me into the education world to the point that I feel as much a part of the teaching profession as the legal profession.