

has handled cases that have taken her to provincial court, the BC Supreme Court and the BC Court of Appeal.

“Not a lot of first-year associates get the opportunity to appear in the BC Supreme Court for a bail review in a criminal case,” she says. “I am a lot more confident in court today because of my pro bono work.”

Farris allows lawyers who perform pro bono work to count those hours towards their annual billable hour tally. “Quite a few of the law firms are doing this,” Salter says, acknowledging that some firms place a cap on the hours allowed. But the practice also ensures that lawyers doing pro bono are recognized for their efforts, rather than penalized.

Salter spends approximately 15 hours a month on pro bono files both inside and outside

of Farris and serves as a supervisor for LSLAP’s Chinatown clinic. She has also participated in PBLBC’s duty counsel project.

“There is an overwhelming need for this kind of service,” she says. Salter also runs a blog called Rights & Remedies aimed at helping those who can’t afford legal advice (<http://rightsandremedies.blogspot.com/>).

“The rewards for pro bono work can’t always be tallied in a financial ledger at the end of the day,” she says. “But they are tangible and real.”

NOTE: Pro Bono Students Canada enables law students to work side-by-side with lawyers involved with organizations. Lawyers willing to work with a student can contact ubc@probonostudents.ca, visit the web site www.probonostudents.ca or call the office at 604-822-8009. ●

British Columbia Law Institute (BCLI)

by Joe Wiebe

According to Executive Director Jim Emmerton, the BC Law Institute’s “core function is to improve and amend and reform the law.” Founded in 1997 as a successor body to the Law Reform Commission of British Columbia, the Institute focuses its efforts on three areas: general law, international law, and elder law.

Ongoing undertakings in general law include a project on commercial tenancy, a study on five discrete topics within real property law, and a just-completed review of the *Society Act*, which Emmerton says, “hasn’t been amended for about 30 years and is somewhat out of step with the for-profit *Corporations Act*.”

In terms of international law, the BCLI recently completed a project on unincorporated associations that span international borders, which might include “everything from a book club, something that simple, up to an organization like the NHL.”

The BCLI began studying issues of elder law in 1999, and then founded the Canadian Centre for Elder Law (CCEL) within its own organization in July 2003. Recent CCEL activities include a project on powers of attorney shared between the four western provinces, ongoing work on elder abuse issues, and a Family Caregiving Project.

The BCLI may spearhead a specific project itself and then bring it to the appropriate ministry’s attention, or the government might ask the BCLI to look at an issue. But Emmerton emphasizes that “we are independent of government and we’re non-partisan.”

Funding comes from the provincial government, the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and, on a project basis, organizations such as the Notary Foundation and the Real Estate Foundation, as well as donations from individuals.

Housed in the UBC law school, the BCLI maintains strong ties with UBC Law including a formal

mentoring program, senior research projects that involve professors, and student research assistants. Staff lawyer Kevin Zakreski ’01 is also a UBC Law School graduate.

On October 28, the BCLI held its second annual Great Debate at the Law Courts Inn, which pitted a team from UBC Law against one from UVic. This fundraising dinner was hosted by CBC Radio’s Rick Cluff. The topic of debate was “Be it resolved that the hourly rate for lawyers is comparable to the asteroid for the dinosaur.” Team UBC emerged the winner of this year’s debate. Visit www.bcli.org for more information. ●