

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

FRANCES M. WOOD (PROGRAM CHAIR)

Frances M. Wood is a partner of Wood Gold LLP and practices Family Law, Civil Litigation and Appeals. Frances obtained her law degree at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland and a further degree at the University of New Brunswick. She was called to the Bar in 1998. Frances sits as a Deputy Judge of the Small Claims Court and as a Dispute Resolution Officer in the Region of Peel. She is a former President of the Peel Law Association, former Executive of the County and District Law Presidents Association and past Chair of LibraryCo. She is a member of the Advocates' Society, the Canadian Bar Association, the Peel Law Association and Mediators & Arbitrators of Peel, and is currently an executive member of the Family Law Section of the Ontario Bar Association. Frances regularly speaks at education events for other lawyers. Frances has a wealth of experience representing clients in the Ontario Court of Justice and Ontario Superior Court of Justice, and the Court of Appeal. Her strong reputation as a litigator has caused her to be sought after for trials and appeals. Frances also offers mediation and applies a settlement oriented, child-focused approach to Family Law cases. By entering into partnership, Frances Wood and Jennifer Gold, sought to create an alternative to the traditional law firm and thereby achieve work-life balance and a diverse workplace. Their efforts were noted by Carol Goar in her article for the Toronto Star entitled, "[Women Create Family-Friendly Law Practice](#)". When Frances is not pursuing her legal interests and managing a diverse law firm, she is a proud parent of two teenagers, creative quilter and optimist.

AFSANA ALLIDINA

Afsana Allidina is currently an associate at Burrison Hudani Doris LLP. Afsana's practice comprises of all areas in family law, including interjurisdictional disputes and child abduction, parenting, property division and support issues. She has acted as counsel on matters before the Ontario Court of Justice and Superior Court of Justice. Afsana works with Indigenous community members in various First Nations across Ontario as class counsel for the ongoing Sixties Scoop Settlement that was before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. She is a contributor to the chapter in *Wilson on Children in the Law* regarding the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. In the community, Afsana volunteers her time as an executive member of the Ontario Legal Professionals Alliance.

ALISON DENNIS

Alison has practiced exclusively in the area of family law since being called to the bar in 2012. Her practice encompasses all areas of family law including complex property and support issues and high conflict parenting disputes. Alison is an experienced litigator who appears in court on a regular basis. She has significant experience with jurisdictional and mobility issues and

represents international clients with legal matters in Ontario. Alison is also an advocate of alternative dispute resolution and minimizing conflict. She negotiates separation agreements, parenting plans, marriage contracts, and cohabitation agreements. Alison is a member of the Advocates' Society, Toronto Lawyers Association, and Family Lawyers Association.

MICHELLE DOUGLAS-CUMMINGS

Michelle is Senior Counsel with the Ministry of the Attorney General, Civil Law Division, Family Responsibility Office Branch. She has been Counsel to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Unit for over 20 years. Michelle has appeared in all levels of court in Ontario on behalf of the ISO Unit at FRO. Michelle represents Ontario as a member of the Federal -Provincial -Territorial (FPT) Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials – Family Justice (CCSO-FJ) and as a member of the FPT Interjurisdictional Support Sub-committee. She practiced Family Law in Guelph until 1989 when she joined the then Support and Custody Orders Enforcement Office as Regional Counsel in the Hamilton Office.

HEATHER PUCHALA

Heather Puchala has practiced family law with the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) and the Interjurisdictional Support Orders (ISO) Unit since her call to the bar in 1999 and also recently practiced as Client Counsel at the Public Guardian and Trustee for a one year secondment. Heather has appeared at all levels of court in Ontario for the FRO and ISO Unit. Heather provides advice to Ontario's Interjurisdictional Support Orders Unit and supervises FRO panel lawyers in the West court region.