

2026 CANADIAN REGION REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

by Mark Asbell (Aug 12, 2026)

Hello and welcome to our new dedicated webpage on the NAA site. First, a big thank you to President Walt De Treux and NAA staff Katie Griffin and Melissa Kelley for making this page a reality. My name is Mark Asbell and I'm the relatively new Chair of the Canadian Region. SFollowing in the footsteps of our esteemed now NAA Vice President Jules Bloch, I'm happy to reach out to provide an update on much of what's happened in the Region this past year. If you have future ideas for this kind of communication, please touch base. My contact information is at the end of the entry.

2025-2026 has been a strong year for the Canadian Region with significant changes accomplished regarding the Region's organizational structure; preparing and publishing the Canadian Labour Relations Report; planning for the upcoming Canadian Region Arbitrators' Conference; membership accomplishments, retirements, and ongoing recruitment efforts, and last but not least; looking ahead to Montréal 2027 – The NAA 80TH Annual Meeting and Education Conference. First, as the NAA is driven by its members, let's start with membership news.

Membership News

Kudos to Richard McLaren, LLD (hon)

At the recent spring convocation of Western University, Richard McLaren, a member of the NAA since 1980 and longtime Western law professor and counsel with McKenzie Lake Lawyers LLP received the honorary doctor of laws degree from the University. The honour recognizes a career that has taken him from local courtrooms, high profile arbitration cases, to the centre of international sport. Richard was bestowed the honour for leading the 2015 investigation for the World Anti-Doping Agency that uncovered a state-sponsored doping program in Russia leading to that country's ban from participating in amateur and professional sport competitions.

From London, Ontario, Richard's career has spanned decades in sports law and arbitration. McLaren has served with the Court of Arbitration for Sport, worked as an arbitrator in National Hockey League disputes, helped establish Canada's Sport Dispute Resolution Centre and chaired anti-doping tribunals for several international sports organizations.

Congratulations Richard! A well-deserved honour.

Retirements and Farewells

Several familiar faces tendered their resignations from the NAA this past year. We will miss seeing them all and wish them the best. We say farewell and thank you to:

From Alberta, John Moreau (member since 1994) and Andy Sims (2002)

From Ontario, Gordon Luborsky (2009), Marilyn Nairn (2009), Elaine Newman (2021), and Christine Schmidt (2018)

Welcome to our New Members

As a lead-up to next year's conference, the Canadian Region is actively recruiting new members. At this year's Chicago conference, the Canadian Region had the good fortune of welcoming several new people into the NAA. In addition to Jim Casey from Alberta and Daniel Randazzo from Ontario who were appointed last year but could not attend the Seattle conference for induction, this year's new members include Amal Garzouzi and Johanne Cavé – both from Québec, Ginette Brazeau from Ontario, and Sheilagh Murphy from Newfoundland and Labrador.

With the addition of our newest members, total Canadian participation in the NAA amounts to just shy of 8% of the total membership complement totalling 44 members out of 551 in total. More applicants are in the queue and currently in review and consideration by the Membership Committee. We hope to have additional announcements shortly.

Establishment of the NAA Canadian Region Advisory Board

Thanks to the work of the new Canadian Region Advisory Board, the organizational structure of the Region changed from a “one-man show” led by a Canadian Chair to a “many hands make light work” approach. We now have representation from across Canada on the advisory board with the composition consisting of the current Chair of the Region (Mark Asbell) together with any member of the NAA Board of Governors automatically being included (2025/2026 members included Chris Albertyn, Jasbir Parmar, and Steve Raymond), the past Chair (Jules Bloch), and representatives of Canadian Arbitration Associations (formally or informally organized) including Ontario – Chris, Jasbir, Steve, and Jules; Québec – Marc Mancini; Alberta – Jim Casey, and; B.C. – Koml Kandola. Marc and Koml are ad hoc representatives as neither is (currently) a member of the NAA). The Advisory Board did yeoman's work this past year formulating the upcoming Canadian Conference, providing assistance on the Canadian Labour

Relations Committee Report, as well as working hard at increasing our membership across the breadth of Canada. A very big thank you to all.

Canadian Labour Relations Report

Each year, the President of the NAA establishes a Canadian Labour Relations Committee with a mandate to produce a Report about significant Canadian events for the executive committee of the NAA. This year's Committee Chairs (Kevin Banks from Québec and Mark Asbell from Alberta), in consultation with the Region's Advisory Committee, expanded the mandate to create a Canada-wide, coast-to-coast-to-coast report accessible to all Canadian arbitrators covering relevant legislation, recent arbitration awards, and significant labour board decisions from all provinces and territories. Authored by Koml Kandola, Jim Casey, Colin Johnston, Marc Mancini, Sheilagh Murphy, and Ginette Brazeau with Mark Asbell serving as the chair, the Report was distributed to all Canadian NAA members and made available to non-NAA members across Canada. It will be discussed at the upcoming Canadian Region Conference (September 22-24 in Canmore, Alberta) and then again at a future Continuing Education Committee program. The Report has also been made available to all NAA members.

Canadian Region Conference: September 22-24 in Canmore, Alberta

The Conference, to be held in Canmore, Alberta from September 22-24, 2026 provides a rare three days of timely arbitrator-focused updates, practical insights, skills development, and meaningful connection with fellow arbitrators, including some of the leading voices in labour arbitration. Situated just minutes away from the iconic beauty of Banff National Park, Canmore also promises an opportunity to either kick-back and enjoy stellar scenery or active adventures of hiking, biking, white-water rafting, golfing or many other activities. Here's the program:

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

7 pm – Opening Night Reception

- Welcome Reception in the Highland Games Lounge at the beautiful Malcolm Hotel ([The Malcolm Hotel](#) | [A Canmore Luxury Hotel](#))

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Morning sessions (9am-noon) – Breakfast Served Edinburgh Castle Room

- Review of recent arbitral jurisprudence from across Canada Panel includes: Mark Asbell (Alta, Moderator), Koml Kandola (B.C.), Jim Casey (Alta), Colin Johnston (Ont), Marc Mancini (Que), Sheilagh Murphy (Nfld), Ginette Brazeau (Ont/Que)
- Amateur and Professional Sports Adjudication in Canada and Abroad. Panel: Steve Raymond (Ont, Moderator), Sarah Atkinson (Ont), Jim Oakley (Nfld), Allen Ponak (Alta/Ont), John Stout (Ont).

Evening

- Welcome remarks from Walt De Treux, President of the National Academy of Arbitrators
- Fire Side Chat with renowned Canadian arbitrator and mediator Andrew C.L. Sims, K.C. in conversation with Dean Emeritus Daphne Taras. Andy is a former Chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board and Public Service Employee Relations Board and part-time Vice-Chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. He chaired the 1996 Task Force to review the Canada Labour Code. In 2011 he received the Bora Laskin Award for his contribution to Canadian labour law and in 2019, he received the W.P. Kelly Award for Lifetime Achievement as a Labour Mediator.
- Dinner

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Morning sessions (9 am to noon) – Breakfast Served

- Perspectives from the Bench – Justice Kristan McLeod, Alberta Court of King’s Bench. Appointed to the bench in 2025, Justice McLeod is a former senior labour-side counsel who regularly appeared before both the Canadian and Alberta Labour Relations Boards and arbitrators. She represented clients at all levels of courts including appearances before the Supreme Court of Canada.
- Grievance Mediation: Perspectives, Practical Advice and Pitfalls to Avoid. Panel: Jim Casey (Alta, Moderator), Amanda Rogers (B.C.), Jules Bloch (Ont), Amal Garzouzi (Que)

Any questions can be directed to Mark Asbell, Canadian Conference Chair:

mark@asbellresolutions.com

Montréal 2027 – The NAA 80TH Annual Meeting and Education Conference

The 2027 Montréal conference promises to deliver unique flavours, tastes and experiences of Québec and Canada to all attendees. Being held at the Omni Hotel in Montréal **May 4-7, 2027**, the conference will infuse attendees with a truly wonderful exposure to French-Canadian culture and history. One of the great cities of the world, Montréal is a city that effortlessly blends European charm with North American energy with Its vibrant neighbourhoods, world-class festivals and renowned restaurants food scene, and rich French heritage create an atmosphere unlike anywhere else in North America. The city offers a unique mix of culture, creativity, and livability that continues to captivate residents and visitors alike! Don't miss it!

Contact Information

If you've got suggestions, comments, or want to get involved, please contact me at mark@asbellresolutions.com.

Look forward to seeing you in Canmore and Montréal. Be well and all the very best.

Mark