

**Press Release**

**For Immediate Release**

**Martha McCarthy to Receive OBA Award for Excellence in Family Law**

**TORONTO** - The Ontario Bar Association's Family Law Section is pleased to announce that it will present its 2007 Award for Excellence in Family Law to Martha McCarthy. She will be honoured at an award ceremony to be held in Toronto on May 30, 2007. The selection of McCarthy is in recognition of her outstanding achievements and contributions to the practice of Family law in Ontario and across Canada.

"Martha's commitment to the equality rights of her clients and her passionate advocacy has left an indelible mark on family law in Canada and around the world," said Kelly Jordan, Chair of the OBA's Family Law Section. "There isn't a single case involving the recognition of same sex relationships in Canada in which Martha hasn't played a central and defining role. Her achievements make her the obvious choice for OBA's Award of Excellence in Family Law."

Martha has practised family law since her call to the bar in 1991, first in a large Bay Street firm, then with Epstein Cole, and now with her own firm, Martha McCarthy & Company.

Martha was counsel for M. in M. v. H. which after eight years and a decision from the Supreme Court of Canada resulted in widespread amendments to include same-sex couples as spouses in both federal and provincial legislation. In 2000, she commenced the equal marriage case Halpern, which resulted in the first decision in the country and internationally calling for immediate same-sex marriage, effective June 10, 2003. Martha later acted for the Hendricks couple in Quebec, and the Dunbar couple in the Yukon in cases that opened up equal marriage in those provinces as well. She was counsel to the Ontario and Quebec couples on the Supreme Court Marriage Reference and, just to complete the circle, was counsel to the applicant in the first same-sex divorce in Canada. In 2006, Martha acted for lesbian families who won the right to immediately register both mothers as their children's parents, and intervened on behalf of these families in AA v. BB v. CC, a case achieving legal recognition for a three parent family.

Martha is a frequent author, teacher and media commentator on issues of gay and lesbian equality and family law issues more generally. She is an Instructor in Trial Advocacy at U of T Law School and has contributed many hours to law school classes and family law education programs. She has taken her "how we won marriage in Canada" roadshow to bar associations, family law groups and law schools across Canada and the United States. McCarthy is a member of the Advocates' Society, a Fellow of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and is certified as a Family Law Specialist by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

The Family Law Award was created to recognize exceptional contributions and/or achievements by members of OBA in the following areas: teaching of family law and practice; development of family law including lecturing, scholarly writing and lobbying; enhancement of the practice of family law; and leadership in the Family Law Bar, the government, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the OBA in relation to Family Law issues, legislation and the operation of practice tools. The Award is dedicated to the

memory of the Professor James G. McLeod. The Award is sponsored by Navigant Consulting.

The awards dinner taking place on May 30<sup>th</sup> will be held at the Palais Royale beginning at 5:30 PM. For ticket information please call 416-869-1047 or visit [www.oba.org](http://www.oba.org).

The OBA is the voice of the legal profession in Ontario. As a branch of the Canadian Bar Association, the OBA represents more than 17,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and law students across the Province. The Family Law Section of the OBA is comprised of approximately 500 members.

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