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## On The Docket

Special congratulations to two standout members of our Bar Brief team, **Morgan Gallagher**, Editing Manager and **Connor Sutherland**, Legal Consultant, on their graduation from StFX! We are so proud of everything you've achieved during your undergraduate degrees. Your hard work and dedication to the Bar Brief have been vital to our team's success! We can't wait to see what you do next!

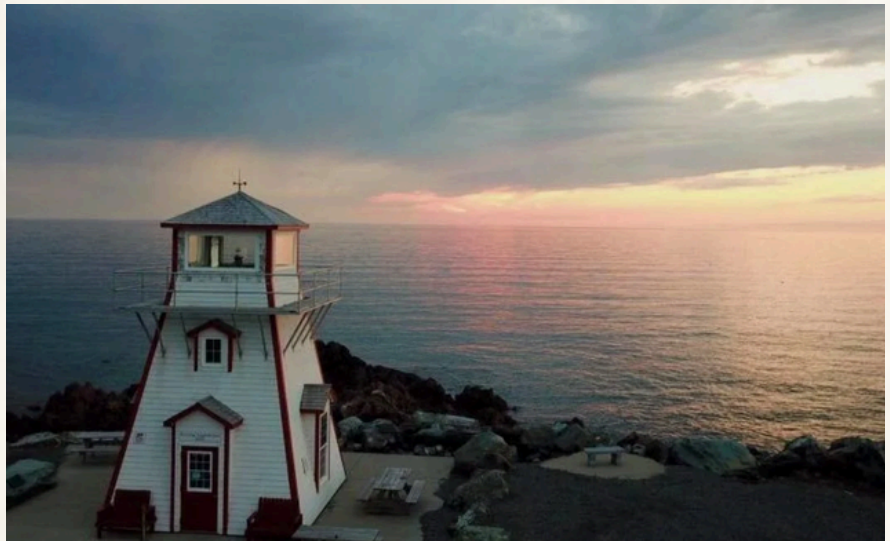
Congratulations, Morgan and Connor!

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# THE BAR BRIEF

Issue 4, May 2026

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## THE SUMMER SURVIVAL GUIDE

### From The Briefcase

I hope you've all had a wonderful school year and are enjoying a well-earned summer break! The Bar Brief team has curated this special edition summer issue to help inform and inspire your upcoming summer activities, wherever they may take you.

I also want to send a huge thank you to our incredible Bar Brief writers. Your hard work and brilliant contributions have truly made this inaugural year a success. Enjoy the sun and have a safe summer! I look forward to seeing you back here soon.

Happy reading!  
- Charlie Nault, Editor-In-Chief

# THOSE WHO KNOW: OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

By Cameron Preyra

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## Overview

The ways that choices shape our lives far surpasses our understanding. But what is within our purview is the understanding that choices can be scary, and that, for students, the choice to pursue a career in law can feel like the scariest one they'll ever make. But this doesn't have to be the case.

The root of fear is often referred to as the unknown. I believe that by taking steps to make informed decisions, by learning, we can target fear at its roots, relieve the worst of our worries, and ultimately, illuminate a choice that is right for us.

For all aspiring lawyers, judges, and legal-minded individuals who frequent The Bar Brief, I hope to alleviate your anxiety by providing you with insight into the practice of law and the vast opportunities and experiences that may lie ahead. Surely, there is no better way to do this than by learning from Those Who Know.

## **Veteran Counsel for Legal Aid | Mary-Ann Cocchetto | BA-H | Major Business |**

Mary-Ann Cocchetto (Queens Class' 94) is a veteran legal practitioner who, throughout her life, has displayed a deep commitment to justice and to supporting those in need. After graduating from Queen's University, Mary-Ann completed her articling in Toronto, at Shibley Righton LLP, and was called to the Bar in 1996. During law school, she undertook a summer internship at the Toronto Crown Attorney's Office, where she gained an understanding of Criminal Law from the prosecution's perspective. Although Mary-Ann enjoyed this experience, she found the practice of Criminal Law to be ill-suited to her personality. This experience, as well as articling at a full-service firm, where she gained exposure to a range of areas of law, strongly influenced her decision to begin practicing Family Law at MacVicar & MacLean LLP after her call to the Bar.



*"Family Law enabled me to support people... I liked that, but it was very difficult emotionally."*

## THOSE WHO KNOW: OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

After several years with the firm and a few years off to be home full-time with her children, Mary-Ann took a new position as a Staff Lawyer at Legal Aid Ontario in 2004.

*“Most of my career was spent at Legal Aid... It was very meaningful work. I spent lots of time representing people who couldn't afford to hire their own lawyers. To empower disadvantaged people was very rewarding.”*

For eighteen years, Mary-Ann dedicated herself to the Legal Aid program. During her tenure with the institution, she moved away from providing legal services to clients and held a variety of roles on the leadership team. She would maintain a leading Executive position until her departure in 2022.



*“[Executive Leadership] was different from working 1 on 1 with people... we focused more on improving and raising the bar for services. But, it was also very rewarding as you were making changes to the system as a whole.”*

Although Mary-Ann enjoyed her position at Legal Aid and had dedicated her career to serving people, she felt called to embark on a new journey.

*“I ended my time at Legal Aid on the Senior Leadership Team... The CEO had brought in Leadership Coaches to work with us... It reminded me how much I liked client work, and how much I missed it. Coaching offered me [an] opportunity to directly support others again... Working with [those coaches] inspired me to change careers.”*

*“I liked the law; it was also a framework to [support people], but it was too adversarial. Some come alive in those environments, I did well, but it wasn't in my nature.”*

*“Law pushed me out of my comfort zone and enabled me to do a lot of meaningful work. I went into law to make a difference and help people; all in all, I'm glad I did.”*

Mary-Ann now owns and operates her own Executive Coaching firm — Mary-Ann Cocchetto Coaching — where she advises a wide range of leaders at different stages of their respective careers.



*“I work with VPs, Directors, Entrepreneurs [etc]. I help them with setting their own goals and achieving their leadership vision. I serve, in some sense, as an objective third party. I help keep them accountable.”*

*“It's very satisfying. Senior leaders can feel isolated from being heard or encouraged. I like helping them find that courage, and work towards their goals.”*

## **THOSE WHO KNOW: OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!**

On the surface, Mary-Ann's current position is vastly different from her previous career; however, the lessons that she learned continue to underpin the impact she has. When asked if her experiences in the legal system affected her current occupation, Mary-Ann said this.

*"Absolutely. While I was duty counsel for Legal Aid, I was there to talk to anyone who [couldn't afford] a lawyer, and I met many people each day. [I learned to] Get good at asking questions... [and get clients] to feel safe enough to provide the info [I] needed [quickly]. Building trust, listening well, and operating under constraints were all skills from Legal Aid that helped significantly in my current career."*

*"I love coaching, it's very generative, positive, and focused on where we will go and what we can build. With law, it was sometimes very emotionally challenging, especially when you're helping people through what can be the most difficult part of their lives. Even the best possible outcomes weren't perfect. If I had rolled back to my undergrad, I would've probably gone into psychiatry."*

At Western University, Mary-Ann obtained an Honours degree in Business Administration. Although time has ultimately shifted her focus towards other means of supporting people, Mary-Ann had this to say about the effect of her degree.

*"[Firstly], the Business Law course I took at Western was what pushed me to go into Law. The professor was extremely engaging and really made me interested in understanding it. [Secondly], learning the case method was a very useful part of my degree. It helps to efficiently and effectively weigh various pros and cons and really helped in my later career at Legal Aid... especially when needing to work under pressure."*

Wrapping up our Interview, I asked Mary-Ann if she had any final advice for undergraduate students; She did.

*"Always remember to trust your instincts. It's easy to get caught up in what others think you should do. Sometimes people see themselves in you, and they tell you that. But only you know what's right for you. Be alive to what your instincts are telling you, and don't be afraid to follow them."*

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### **Advice At-a-Glance |**

#### For Law School Admissions |

- Ensure you're involved in your Community.
- Work hard to keep your grades competitive.

#### For the LSAT |

- Simulate taking the LSAT Exam using official time constraints.
- Practice Logic Puzzles.
- Connect with others and compare study practices.

**\*Disclaimer: As of August 2024, Analytical Reasoning [Logic Games] has been removed from the LSAT. However, Logical Reasoning is still incorporated.**

# A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO FLIGHT DELAYS

By William Ellis

Whether you're heading home for reading week or have your sights set on a sunny destination during winter holidays, nothing dampens the excitement of travel quite like a cancelled flight or missing luggage. No matter the case, facing off against a multi-billion-dollar airline can feel incredibly daunting for any student. However, by familiarizing yourself with the Air Passenger Protection Regulations (APPR), you might be shocked to find that the law is surprisingly on your side.



When a flight is delayed or cancelled, your entitlements largely depend on whether the disruption was within the airline's control and not required for safety. If the airline is at fault for a delay lasting three hours or more, they are legally bound by a "duty of care". This mandate requires the airline to provide reasonable quantities of food and drink, access to communication, and, if necessary, overnight accommodations, along with any required transportation<sup>1</sup>.

Beyond basic care, you may also be entitled to standardized financial compensation for delayed arrival. General payout amounts for small and large airlines are as follows<sup>2</sup>:

## Large airlines must pay:

- \$400 if the passenger arrives three or more hours late, but less than six hours;
- \$700 if the passenger arrives six or more hours late, but less than nine hours;
- And \$1,000 if the passenger arrives more than 9 hours late.

## Small airlines must pay:

- \$125 if the passenger arrives three or more hours late, but less than six hours;
- \$250 if the passenger arrives six or more hours late, but less than nine hours;
- And \$500 if the passenger arrives nine or more hours late.

## A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO FLIGHT DELAYS

Alternatively, passengers who choose to have their ticket refunded rather than make alternative travel arrangements must still be compensated for the inconvenience if the disruption was within the airline's control. Large airlines must pay them \$400, and small airlines must pay \$125.

Airlines have historically pushed back against these mandatory payouts. However, in a 2024 decision regarding *International Air Transportation Association v. Canada* (Transportation Agency), the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously upheld the validity of APPR<sup>3</sup>. The Court confirmed that standardized compensation does not conflict with international treaties, effectively cementing the airlines' obligation to pay passengers for these inconveniences.

Luggage disputes operate under a slightly different framework. If your suitcase fails to appear on the carousel upon arrival, you mustn't leave the airport without filing a Property Irregularity Report (PIR) at the airline's baggage desk. For delayed bags, passengers can claim reasonable interim expenses, so it's very important to keep every receipt for essential purchases like toiletries or a change of clothes during that time. If a bag has not arrived after 21 days, it is legally classified as lost. If your case reaches this point, under both the APPR and the Montreal Convention<sup>4</sup>, an airline's liability for lost or damaged luggage is currently capped at 1,519 Special Drawing Rights (SDR), or approximately \$2,800 CAD. Furthermore, the airline is legally required to refund any checked baggage fees you paid.

The most important takeaway for any student experiencing travel disruptions is to document everything and act promptly. Under the APPR, passengers have exactly one year from the date of a flight disruption to file a compensation request directly with an airline. For lost baggage claims, acting promptly also includes filing the appropriate forms before leaving the airport. In the case that an airline wrongly rejects a valid claim, you also have the right to escalate the issue to the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA). So next time you travel, remember that you are not just a confirmation number; you are a legally protected consumer backed by statutory protections. With any luck, what might start as a travel headache could turn into some extra getaway money in your pocket.

# ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC: PARKS, BEACHES & BYLAWS

By Claire Thatcher

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Picture a typical summer day: friends spread out on towels on the beach, music playing from someone's speaker, and a cooler getting passed around. Someone cracks open a beer, then pauses, "Wait, are we actually allowed to drink here?" If you're thinking "probably, it's just the beach", you're not alone. The truth is, it's a lot less straightforward. For most students, once the weather gets nice, parks and beaches become a go-to spot for hanging out. While it might feel normal to bring a drink to the hangout, the law around drinking in public spaces is surprisingly confusing; what's legal in one city could land you a fine in another.



In Canada, the rules for drinking in public spaces vary widely. Provinces, territories and municipalities each set their own bylaws for drinking in public spaces<sup>5</sup>. Most bylaws state that drinking is prohibited in parks, beaches and city streets<sup>6</sup>. However, some bylaws do make exceptions in certain parks or beaches. For example, in Vancouver, drinking is allowed at 31 designated public parks as long as you are above the legal drinking age<sup>7</sup>. So while most bylaws state that drinking at parks and beaches is illegal, there are exceptions where drinking alcohol in public spaces is perfectly legal.

So what happens if you decide to drink where it is illegal? In some cases, it may start with a warning from the police. However, you can also be hit with a fine ranging from 100 to 500 dollars<sup>8</sup>. In Nova Scotia, where open alcohol is illegal at all parks and beaches, getting caught drinking will cost you a fine of 467.50 dollars<sup>9</sup>. Police also have the authority to confiscate your drinks on the spot<sup>10</sup>. Suddenly, the beach day with friends doesn't seem quite as relaxing when there's a chance it could cost you 500 dollars, a lecture from the police or an empty cooler.

Few things ruin a summer hangout faster than a run-in with the law. Fortunately, there are ways to enjoy a drink with friends while staying within the law. Before planning a beach day, check the local rules; most cities have a list of parks and beaches where alcohol is allowed. Festivals, patios, beach bars and licensed events are always a safe bet if you want a cold drink in hand. If you are still unsure, you can always call municipal services or check your local municipal website to double-check.

# FIRE & FIREWORKS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU LIGHT UP

By Christie MacNeil

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There is something undeniably Canadian about a summer night in Nova Scotia: a crackling bonfire, friends gathered close, and fireworks lighting up the sky over the Atlantic. But before you strike a match or light a fuse, it's worth remembering that these classic summer traditions come with legal boundaries. In Nova Scotia, both bonfires and fireworks are regulated, not to ruin the fun, but to prevent a very real risk: wildfires.

In Nova Scotia, bonfires fall under provincial wildfire regulations that are stricter than many people realize. During wildfire risk season (March 15 to October 15), burning rules change daily— and sometimes hourly.

The key rule: no domestic brush burning or campfires are allowed between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. This is a blanket restriction across the province. Even if your backyard feels safe, the law assumes midday conditions—heat, dryness, wind—make fires more dangerous. After 2:00 p.m., things depend on the province's daily burn maps.

- Red: No burning at all
- Yellow: Burning allowed only between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.
- Green: Burning allowed between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

These are not just guidelines; they are enforceable rules. Violations can lead to fines, and if your fire sparks a wildfire, the consequences escalate dramatically, potentially including liability for damages.

Municipal bylaws still matter. Some towns and counties in Nova Scotia impose stricter rules than the province, including permit requirements or complete bans during dry periods. In short: that spontaneous afternoon bonfire? Probably illegal. Your best bet is a carefully planned evening fire, after checking both the provincial burn status and your local bylaws.

Fireworks are another summer staple—but they come with their own legal framework. Under Canada's Explosives Regulations, you must be at least 18 years old to buy and use consumer fireworks, such as Roman candles, fountains, and volcanoes. However, while fireworks are federally regulated, when and where you can set them off is usually determined at the municipal level.

## **FIRE & FIREWORKS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU LIGHT UP**

In Nova Scotia, many municipalities restrict fireworks to specific dates—such as Canada Day or Natal—or ban them altogether during periods of high fire risk. Importantly, fireworks are often included in fire bans. Because they produce sparks, using them during dry conditions can be treated the same as lighting an illegal fire.

There are also storage limits:

- Up to 10 kilograms of fireworks can be stored in your home without a licence
- Larger amounts require specific storage conditions, and possibly a federal explosives licence

Oh, and if you're thinking of bringing fireworks back from a trip to the U.S.—don't. Many are not approved in Canada, and importing them legally is far more complicated than it sounds. This falls under basic tort principles: if you fail to take reasonable care and cause harm, you can be sued. Lighting a fire during a known ban or ignoring safety rules would likely be seen as a breach of that duty.

Similarly, improper use of fireworks that leads to injury or property damage can result in both civil liability and regulatory penalties. Courts tend to emphasize foreseeability here—it is well known that fireworks are dangerous if misused.

In extreme cases, charges under provincial fire legislation or even the Criminal Code could apply, particularly if the conduct is reckless.

### **The Bottom Line: Know Before You Glow**

Nova Scotia's fire and fireworks laws aren't about stopping summer fun. They're about managing risk in a province where wildfires are a growing concern.

So before you light that bonfire or launch that firework:

- Check the daily burn restrictions (updated at 2:00 p.m.)
- Look up your municipal bylaws
- Follow federal safety and age rules
- And always think twice in dry or windy conditions

Because the best summer nights are the ones that end with memories, not fines, lawsuits, or a call to 911.

# Notes

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3. "International Air Transport Association v. Canada (Transportation Agency) - SCC Cases." 2016. Scc-Csc.ca. Supreme Court. 2016. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/20674/index.do>.
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