

**Remarks of Chief Justice Deborah E. Fry
On the passing of John Francis Dawson
A Senior Member of the Law Society
Court of Appeal, Duckworth St., St. John's, NL
September 29, 2020**

The Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador:

Before commencing the regular business of Court this morning, I want to take the opportunity to recognize the passing of **John Francis Dawson**, a senior member of the Bar who passed away on May 20, 2020 at the age of 74.

Mr. Dawson was born in St. John's on October 3, 1945 and moved with his family to Bay Roberts just before his 6th birthday. Following his graduation from St. Francis High School in Harbour Grace, he went on to pursue post-secondary education, graduating from St Mary's University, Nova Scotia Technical College, Université de Haute Bretagne, and Ottawa University.

Mr. Dawson was called to the Bar on December 15, 1983 and was entered on the Barrister's Roll as # 608.

Mr. Dawson excelled at languages and spoke French and Spanish fluently. John was a friend to the entire Francophone Community of Newfoundland & Labrador and an advocate in seeking French language education rights in this Province. In the early 1980s, he acted as counsel for Francophone parents who were seeking a French school in St. John's. The President of the group remembered him as "a rock on whom we relied. He led us through the process of a constitutional challenge in the early days of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

He also served as one of the Legal counsel to former Chief Justice J. Derek Green when he sat as Commissioner of the *Review Commission on Constituency Allowances and Related Matters*, 2007.

Mr. Dawson had a distinguished career as a lawyer and was described by many colleagues as being known for his intellect, ability, integrity, care and compassion.

I had a personal experience with John Dawson when we were on opposite sides of a matter in Labrador. We were travelling by floatplane between Port Hope Simpson and Mary's Harbour when we were stranded by a storm. We spent several days snowed in at the Grenfell mission waiting on other court participants to arrive before finally concluding our matter. Needless to say, we spent many hours together and I was able to personally experience his quick wit and sense of humour, a big help in the circumstances.

A friend commented on his interest and support of music not only for his son, Francis, but also as a supportive audience member for the children of family friends. Travelling was another of Mr. Dawson's interests and he enjoyed many great family vacations, within the province and further afield. John Dawson was a part-time resident of Santiago, Chile, where his in-laws lived, and a frequent visitor to Easter Island.

Mr. Dawson will be deeply missed by his wife, Margarita, and his son, Francis James Dawson, as well as four brothers: Jim (Marnie), Vancouver; Michael (Denise), Holyrood; Bill (Maureen) Sudbury; and Steve, Toronto; three sisters, Rosemary, Eleanor and Joan Dawson. Also, his family in Santiago, Chile, and special family members in St. John's: Francisco, Melisa, Benjamin, and Maya.

On behalf of my colleagues at the Court of Appeal, I wish to extend our sincere condolences to the family on their loss of John Francis Dawson. The Bench and the Bar will miss him.

I direct that a transcript of these remarks be prepared and sent to his family.