

## STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF RICHARD ASHOK COUTINHO

I am a senior Counsel with the Ministry of the Attorney General's Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, practising in the fields of guardianship and civil litigation, family law and mental health law. I am seeking a **one-year term** on SABA's Board of Directors.

I have been involved with SABA for over five years and am especially interested in strengthening ties between lawyers from the public sector and private sectors, enhancing mentoring opportunities both for articling/ law students as well as lawyers seeking admission to Canadian jurisdictions. I am committed to seeking ways to retain women in our profession and address and overcome barriers faced by indigenous, LGBTIQ and racialized licensees and persons with both mental and physical disabilities.

I am a South Asian born in Uganda. After law school, I spent 18 months in Karachi and Khairpur, Parkistan, as an intern for the Aga Khan Foundation. Having been called to the Ontario Bar in 2001, I graduated from the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law. I also hold a Bachelor of Arts (Hon.) in Comparative Religion from McGill University, a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a Master of Laws from Harvard Law School. I was formerly a Junior Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge.

My present work at the Public Guardian and trustee provides me with the opportunity to deliver a unique, needed and diverse range of legal services that safeguard the legal, personal and financial interests of mentally and physically vulnerable individuals and estates. My work necessitates a strong degree of advocacy, policy development as well as creative thinking to better serve the needs of vulnerable and diverse communities. Prior to the Public Guardian and Trustee, I worked in the field of aboriginal law for the Constitutional Law Branch and the Crown Law Office Civil within the Ministry of the Attorney General.

I have also fostered links with communities, agencies and groups through my professional outreach as a speaker and panelist for several education-oriented gatherings in the community. I regularly speak on panels relating to equity and diversity issues, careers in the law, advocacy, and the ethical obligations involving those who represent and individuals with mental disabilities. I serve as an elected Board Member of the **Association of Law Officers of the Crown**, an association that represents over 500 provincial government lawyers and articling students. I am also a member of the Federation of Canadian Lawyers. Previously, I served for six years as a Board Member for the **Alliance for South Asian AIDs Prevention**, a Toronto grass-roots agency providing education and health services for individuals affected by HIV, and was appointed from 2014-2017 on the **Alumni Council of Harvard Divinity School**, an advisory body to the Dean and other members of Harvard's faculty and administration, where I strengthened mentoring opportunities for students and alumni by initiating an Ambassadors Program.

If elected, I will bring my diverse experiences and outlook to the SABA Board to help the organization proudly thrive and continue its history of representation and advocacy.