CMLA: The Latest in Maritime Law

Deborah L.J. Hutchings, QC
CMLA Eastern Vice President



Debbie *was born in St. John's and grew up next to the Atlantic Ocean in the Town of Spaniard's Bay, NL. She is a graduate of Memorial University having attained the degrees of Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Education in 1978, and Masters of Physical Education (Adm.) in 1981. In 1989 Debbie attained the degree of Bachelor of Laws from the University of New Brunswick and was called to the Bar of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1990.*

Debbie has been in private practice for over 36 years. For nearly thirty-three of those years, she practiced with and as a partner of leading law firms in the province. For the past 3 years Debbie has been practicing under the banner of Deborah L.J. Hutchings Law.

Debbie is an experienced and respected commercial and maritime lawyer whose practice includes Civil and Regulatory Litigation, Maritime/Admiralty and Fisheries Law, Insurance Law, and Business/Corporate/Commercial Law.

Her practice experience in these areas bodes well in her representation of ports, P&I Clubs, charters, and fish harvesters (in buying, selling, and financing fishing enterprises, commercial fishing licenses, and fishing vessels). Debbie's practice in admiralty/maritime law, particularly, includes admiralty litigation, salvage and cargo claims, collisions and death at sea, oil pollution related incidents, regulatory issues under the Fisheries Act, and removal of derelict vessels. She has been involved in a number of interesting and high-profile maritime matters throughout her career. For a number of years, she has been named in the international publication "Who's Who Legal" as one of Atlantic Canada's preeminent maritime lawyers, as well as in the publications of Best Lawyers and LEXPERT for her practice in Maritime Law.

Since 1997 Debbie has been teaching the risk management course of "Legal Aspects of Leisure and Recreation", HKR 3535, at the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University. Debbie developed the curriculum, course outline, and materials for this course.
Finally, while a busy practitioner, Debbie makes time to play ice hockey year-round, and to spend time with her Miniature Schnauzer, Pippa. Debbie has recently picked up Pickleball.

CMLA Committee Highlights

Federal Acts & Rules Committee

- 2024 – 2025 Global Review of the Federal Courts Rules
  - Prioritizing the rules to accommodate electronic service, filing and broader digitization;
  - Removing references to outdated practices and technology

Arctic Issues Committee

- The Iqaluit hydro-electricity project
- Port of Churchill expansion and the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor
- The Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

Insurance Committee Report

- Elite Insurance Company (Aviva) v. Borgatti Estate, 2025
- At https://eve.tc.canada.ca/en a person can conduct an electronic validation (EVE) search to determine if a vessel has a TC “digital document”. It includes Wreck, Bunker and CLC certificates. It does not include proof of passenger insurance

CMLA Conference 2025

75th Anniversary

Ottawa, Ontario
June 16th – 18th
Save the Date



Upcoming CMLA 75th Anniversary Annual Meeting

June 16-18, 2026

Tariffs and Impact on Transportation	Simon Ledsham
Canadian Maritime Law Case Review	Marc Isaacs
Detention & Demurrage	Robin Squires & James Moseley Jr.
Shipping in the Arctic	Leona Baxter & Kyle Ereaux
The New Ship and Rail Compensation Canada Strategic Plan and What it Means for Claimants	Caroline Healey & Cameron Grant
Navy Response to Underwater Security	Capt. Rob Watt
Vessel Arrest, Bankruptcy/CCAA and Maritime Liens	Eric Machum & Andrew Stainer
MASS (Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships) - AI Issues, impact on port operations, navigation, crew roles, what courts will face, control, jurisdiction	Marel Katsivala
Pilotage Update	Tristan Laflamme
Ethics Panel - Young Lawyers	