

# Denise Baker

Chair

**Toronto**

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**Practice Areas**

Arbitration & Mediation

Expropriation

Heritage Properties

Litigation & Dispute

Resolution

Municipal

Planning & Land Development

Denise Baker is Chair of WeirFoulds LLP and a Partner with a practice focused on municipal and land use planning matters and related litigation.

In her leadership role, Denise guides the firm's strategic direction while continuing to advise municipalities and land developers on complex land use planning and municipal finance issues. With more than two decades of experience, Denise has appeared on numerous occasions before the Ontario Land Tribunal and its predecessors, as well as the Ontario Court of Justice and the Divisional Court. While litigation is sometimes necessary, Denise emphasizes that mediation and negotiation often provide a more effective way to resolve disputes between parties with opposing interests.

Denise is widely recognized in her field, ranked by Best Lawyers in Canada, the Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory, and Chambers Canada. She has contributed to the profession through leadership roles, including serving as Co-Chair of the first generation Cambridge Forum on Land Use Planning and as Chair of the Ontario Bar Association's Municipal Law Section.

Denise currently teaches the next generation of planners on the Role of the Expert Witness before the Ontario Land Tribunal and previously taught planning law at the University of Waterloo.

She is a member of Lambda Alpha International (Simcoe Chapter) and frequently speaks at programs hosted by the Law Society of Ontario, the Ontario Bar Association, and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

**WeirFoulds LLP**

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Called to the Bar	Education	Affiliations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario (2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LL.B., Queen's University, Faculty of Law, 2002</li> <li>• M. Pl., Queen's University, 2000</li> <li>• B.A., Mount Allison University, 1997</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario Bar Association</li> <li>• Canadian Bar Association</li> <li>• Lambda Alpha International (Simcoe Chapter)</li> </ul>

## Notable Mandates

Denise has acted on:

- Numerous land use planning matters on behalf of the Town of Oakville, including the resolution of numerous appeals and ultimately approval of the Town's Livable Oakville Official Plan.
- Numerous Heritage Act matters including negotiating and preparation of heritage easement agreements.
- Appeals to municipal official plan "conformity exercises" in the Regions of Halton, Waterloo and Durham as well as several local municipalities in York and Halton
- Reviews of Educations Development Charge By-laws and By-law amendments
- Challenges to and approvals of interim control by-law matters in the City of Windsor and the Town of Oakville
- Infill residential zoning and subdivision matters in Oakville, Toronto and other GTA municipalities
- Employment and Commercial Development applications in Halton, Durham and Peel municipalities

## Awards

- Repeatedly recognized in the *Chambers Canada Guide* as a leading lawyer in Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use
- Repeatedly recognized in *Best Lawyers in Canada* as a leading lawyer in Municipal Law
- Recognized in the *Lexpert Special Edition: Infrastructure, 2023*
- Repeatedly recognized in the *Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory* as a leading practitioner in Property Development

## Professional Activities

- Past Chair, Ontario Bar Association, Municipal Law Executive
- Sessional Professor, Land Use Planning Law, University of Waterloo
- Instructor, Expert Witness seminars, Ontario Professional Planners Institute

## Community Involvement

- Oakville Hospital Foundation Board Member

## Speaking Engagements

- Speaker, OPPI & WeirFoulds LLP Annual Seminar 2025, Toronto, ON, December 12, 2025
- Speaker, OPPI & WeirFoulds LLP Annual Seminar 2024, Toronto, ON, December 6, 2024
- Faculty, "Thorny Leadership Challenge", The Managing Partner Forum 2024 Fall Symposium, Chicago, IL, October 9, 2024
- Speaker, "2024 Provincial Planning Statement: What you Need to Know", OPPI Adaptation Transformation Conference, Hamilton, ON, September 25, 2024
- Speaker, "Construction Law and Contracts", West End Home Builder's Association, Toronto, ON, June 20, 2024
- Speaker & Steering Committee Co-Chair, "Looking at What Has and Is Happening With Legislative Changes and Planning Reforms", Forum on Land Use Planning, Cambridge Forums, Cambridge, ON, May 23-24, 2024
- Speaker, "OPPI & WeirFoulds LLP Legislative and Case Law Update 2023", Toronto, ON, December 18, 2023
- Speaker, "The Six-Minute Advocacy Lawyer 2023", Law Society of Ontario, Webinar, May 30, 2023
- Speaker, "Plenary: Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022", Ontario Legal Conference - Municipal, Planning & Environmental Law, Toronto, February 10, 2023
- Moderator, "Bill 23 Explained", Building Industry and Land Development Association, Online, February 23, 2023
- Speaker, "Making Sense of Changing Growth Funding Tools", ULI Toronto, Online, March 11, 2022
- Speaker, "Amendments to the Planning Act and Development Charges Act, and updates on the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT)", Bill 189: The Coronavirus Support and Protection Act, 2020 and LPAT Update, OPPI, Webinar, April 24, 2020
- Speaker, "Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019", OPPI19: Beyond25, OPPI, Conference, October 1, 2019
- Speaker, "Bill 108 - More Homes, More Choice, 2019", OPPI & WeirFoulds LLP, Client Seminar, June 26, 2019
- Speaker, "Planning to be a better Planner under Bill 139: the impact of LPAT and changes to the Planning Act", 2018 OPPI Symposium, Sudbury, ON, October 11, 2018
- Speaker, "The Planning Justification Report and Municipal Staff Report: What Will They Look Like Under Bill 139", WeirFoulds LLP Municipal and Planning Law Practice 2018 Seminar, April 12, 2018
- Speaker, "5 Minute Advocacy for Municipal & Planning Lawyers", Canadian Bar Association, Toronto, ON, March 6, 2018
- Speaker, "What Would Thomas Adams Do\*? An Interactive Discussion about OPPI's Professional Code of Practice and OPPI's Complaint Process", Ontario Professional Planning Institute Conference, Collingwood, ON, October 3, 2017
- Speaker, "Review of Proposed Changes to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe", *WeirFoulds LLP Municipal and Planning Law Practice 2016 Private Sector Seminar*, May 18, 2016
- Speaker, "Site Plan Approval Process", *WeirFoulds LLP Municipal and Planning Law Practice 2016 Private Sector Seminar*, May 18, 2016
- Speaker, "Proposed Revisions to the *Development Charges Act, 1997*", *The Six-Minute Municipal Lawyer 2015*, Law Society of Upper Canada, May 28, 2015

- Speaker, "Education Development Charge", BILD, Mississauga, September, 2014
- Panel Member & Chair, "Navigating the Municipal and Planning Law Landscape", *Ontario Bar Association Institute*, Toronto, February 7, 2014
- Speaker, "Municipalities and Solicitor-Client Privilege", Ontario Bar Association Institute, 2011
- Speaker, "Municipal Agreements on Title-Practice Gems-Title and Off-Title Searching", Law Society of Upper Canada, 2011

### Additional Publications:

- Co-Author, [Planning Legislative Framework in Ontario Practice Guide](#), Ontario Professional Planners Institute (July 2025)

### Media Mentions:

- "[Denise](#)", The Globe & Mail (January 15, 2026)
- "[From a seat at the table to Chair: Denise Baker's 'just right' fit at WeirFoulds](#)", Canadian Lawyer (January 12, 2026)
- "[Denise Baker takes the helm as WeirFoulds' new chair](#)", Law Times (January 7, 2026)
- "[WeirFoulds LLP Appoints Denise Baker as Chair of the Firm](#)", The Precedent A List (January 6, 2026)
- "[Denise Baker, co-managing partner of WeirFoulds, on municipal law, work-life balance and AI](#)", Canadian Lawyer (July 30, 2024)

### Publications

- Building Faster and Smarter, at last? Province of Ontario Introduces Bill 17, May 21, 2025
- Out With the Old, in With the New Provincial Policy Statement, 2024, August 23, 2024
- Significant Changes to Planning: Bill 185, *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act*, June 13, 2024
- Bill 109: The More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022 Potential Changes to Land Use Planning in Ontario, April 04, 2022
- Policy, not law: the Divisional Court discusses the Clergy principle, May 10, 2021
- Proposed Regulation Update: *Ontario Heritage Act*, October 20, 2020
- Municipal Business in the Face of an Emergency: Ontario Enacts the *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020*, March 20, 2020
- Proposed Regulatory Matters Pertaining to Community Benefits Authority Under the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act*, and the *Building Code Act*, February 28, 2020
- Webcast: Bill 108 – More Homes, More Choice 2019 – What Will Change and What Will Remain?, September 26, 2019
- Streamlining Growth Management – Proposed Amendments to the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017*, January 16, 2019
- Summary of Bill 66 – Proposed *Planning Act* Changes , December 19, 2018
- Fact Sheet: Changes to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, May 23, 2017
- Ontario Announces Proposed Changes to the OMB and the Results of the Coordinated Review of Four Provincial Land Use Plans, May 18, 2017