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## Lawyer funds new business law centre

Program aims to help understand corporate world better

Jim Middlemiss, Financial Post

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Aaron Lynett/National Post

Jay Hennick, left, CEO and founder of FirstService, seen with Hennick Centre associate director Poonam Puri and director Ed Waitzer, believes lawyers who have business education can make great ...

**CEO Jay Hennick is putting his money where his mouth is in a bid to help create better business lawyers in Canada.**

A former securities law partner at Fogler Rubinoff who now runs FirstService Corporation, Mr. Hennick is putting up \$3-million to create The Hennick Centre for Business and Law, an unusual joint venture between Osgoode Hall Law School and the Schulich School of Business at York University.

The goal is to help lawyers -- both those in private practice and those attending law school -- better understand the demands and needs of the corporate world.

"I feel strongly about this," says Mr. Hennick, who admits "it's a big commitment" for him and his wife, Barbara, a former chartered accountant, and comes at a "different time [in the economy] than I initially thought it was going to be."

However, he says, "I feel so strongly about this and the opportunity for lawyers to have a business education. I think that lawyers who do have a business education can be fantastic business leaders and bring so much more to the party than just being the traditional lawyer."

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He knows that first hand. While studying sociology at York, Mr. Hennick started a successful pool services company and today his business interests have grown into a \$2-billion publicly traded global empire, featuring companies in commercial real estate, residential property and franchise and property services.

Along the way, he obtained a law degree at the University of Ottawa and spent 13 years practising at Fogler, leaving to start FirstService in 1989. "I loved practising law and met a lot of great people," he says, but he liked business more and saw an opportunity to "build a great services business."

Critics say the problem with law schools is that they produce good technicians grounded in the law, but who lack business judgment. That's because there are few requirements that lawyers take any business courses during their education. Many law schools offer a combined law and masters degree in business, but it usually requires four years of school, as opposed to the three it takes to get a law degree. Those who opt for a joint degree complete a roster of business law courses and supplement their education with a one-year stint at the university's business school.

However, there's often a lack of integration between the two schools and the number of students choosing to do the dual degree pales in comparison to law school enrolment.

The Hennick Centre wants to change that and if the blueprint bears fruit, the model could find a home in other law schools, says Ed Waitzer, the Stikeman Elliott business lawyer and former head of the Ontario Securities Commission who has been tapped to get the centre off the ground as its first director.

Mr. Waitzer said the centre will be "focused at the intersection of law, business and public policy." It will be a teaching and research centre, but that's only part of the story.

It will also reach out to practising lawyers and other professionals, he said, and one of the primary objectives will be to launch a business certificate program for practising lawyers. Think of it as an executive MBA for lawyers.

Victoria Watkins, the professional development director for Osgoode Professional Development, said the certificate program, which will cost \$7,500, is the result of market research that suggests there is a demand for such educational opportunities at law firms. It will be an 11-week program featuring 40 hours of instruction and seven modules, touching on everything covered in an MBA, she said-- such topics as managerial and financial accounting, understanding risk management, and marketing and organizational behaviour, among others.

For students doing a joint degree, they will be able to obtain both a Juris Doctorate (formerly an LL. B.) and an MBA designation in three years.

Associate directors of the program are Osgoode law professor Poonam Puri and business professor Andy Crane from Schulich.

The centre launches this Friday at the Toronto Hilton with a morning seminar on World Markets in Transition, followed by a ceremony, with former Ontario premier Mike Harris introducing keynote speaker Finance Minister and lawyer Jim Flaherty. The centre is overseen by an as-yet-to-be-finalized blue-chip advisory board that comprises many successful lawyers turned entrepreneurs.

So far it includes commercial court honcho and now McCarthy Tetrault lawyer James

Farley, lawyer Marianne Harris, managing director and president of Merrill Lynch Canada Inc., lawyer Sandra Levy, director, human resources, North America and Asia, Decoma International Corp., David Robottom, group vice-president -law at Enbridge Inc., Edward Sonshine, CEO of RioCan, who is also a lawyer, Barbara Stymiest, COO at Royal Bank, lawyer Rob Willdeboer, executive chairman and secretary, Martinrea International and lawyer Mark Young, chair of law firm Cassels Brock & Blackwell.

Mr. Waitzer said, the time is right for such a program in Canada, which parallels a similar program at New York University, run by the former chancellor of the Delaware Court, William Allen, a confidante of Mr. Waitzer.

Mr. Waitzer said "it couldn't be a better time, in terms of the challenges for the markets and contributions the Hennick centre could make."

## TOP CORPORATE COUNSEL

Rev up those career bios and nomination forms. The 2009 version of the Canadian General Counsel Awards is now taking nominations. The highly successful event, entering its fifth year, is set to go on June 1, at its usual haunt, the Four Seasons Hotel in Toronto.

That's where National Post, along with its partner ZSA Legal Recruitment, will join with Canada's top law firms to honour the country's leading corporate counsel.

Law firms are encouraged to bring forward nominees and a blue-chip advisory panel comprising lawyers from some of Canada's top business law firms make the final selection for the six categories.

The top award, the Canadian General Counsel of the Year, acknowledges a lawyer who has the ability to deal with complexity across both issues and jurisdiction, according to the nomination criteria. Past winners have included William A. (Alf) Peneycad, formerly of Petro-Canada and now a Macleod Dixon lawyer; Patrick Garver of Barrick Gold Corporation; Gilles Pharand of Domtar Inc.; and Richard Leipsic of Canwest Global Communications Corp.

The Lifetime Achievement award honours a lawyer late in career or recently retired who "made a real difference -- both within their own company and in-house department, as well as with the external counsel who have worked alongside them during their careers." Last year's honoree was David McAusland, formerly of Alcan.

Other categories include: Business Achievement, which looks for a lawyer who has been involved in setting and implementing the overall strategy and success of the division or a company's business; Deal Making, Litigation Management; Mid-Market Excellence, confined to companies with less than \$1.5-billion of market capitalization; and Tomorrow's Leader, which honours a lawyer who has been called to the bar for 10 years or less.

Nominations forms and award criteria are available online at [cgca.ca](http://cgca.ca)

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