

ONCA Brief Bio

The Honourable Robert A. Blair retired from the Court of Appeal for Ontario in October, 2017, after fourteen years. Prior to his appointment to the Court of Appeal he had been Regional Senior Justice for the Toronto Region of the Superior Court of Justice since October 1999, and a judge of that Court since March, 1991.

Mr. Blair received his B.A. (Hons.) from Queen's University in 1965 and his LL.B. from University of Toronto Law School in 1968. He was called to the Bar in Ontario in 1970 and was designated a King's Counsel in 1982. He practiced primarily in the field of general civil litigation, with an emphasis on corporate/commercial litigation and administrative law, during his career at the Bar.

While a member of the Superior Court, Mr. Blair was Co-Chair of the Civil Justice Review, an initiative that conducted a broad review of the civil justice system in Ontario and made extensive recommendations regarding the implementation of an integrated series of reforms to that system in the mid 1990's. He was active in the development and implementation of alternative dispute resolution techniques both before and after his appointment to the Bench. He was a member of the Steering Committee which oversaw the implementation of a Court-connected ADR Centre in Toronto, the first of its kind in Canada, and was closely involved with the Mandatory Mediation project in Toronto and the introduction of case management and mediation into the court system in Ontario.

Mr. Blair has spoken at and participated in numerous legal and judicial education programs, both as a lawyer and judge. He has also participated in various judicial and legal education and reform initiatives internationally, including projects involving judges and lawyers in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Jamaica and Dubai.

As a lawyer, Mr. Blair was involved on the users' committee that helped formulate the Commercial List on the Superior Court in Toronto. As a trial judge of that Court, he was a frequent flyer on the Commercial List, presiding over a large number of high profile restructurings, shareholders' disputes and other complex commercial cases. While a member of the Court of Appeal, he continued to preside over similar matters as well as all types of civil and criminal cases.

In 2015 Mr. Blair was appointed Chair of the Copyright Board of Canada, a part-time position he held until his term expired in 2020. The Copyright Board is a federal administrative tribunal that sets royalties for the use of copyright-protected works when the administration of those rights has been entrusted to a collective society.

Following his retirement from the Court, he has joined Arbitration Place as a non-resident member arbitrator and mediator.