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Foreword

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Foreword

I am an unabashed admirer of John Willis; and I have credentials that entitle me to speak of his teaching and his writing. We were law school colleagues for some fifteen years and were close personal friends for an even longer period. We remain such close friends today.

What was remarkable about John Willis was the range of his teaching. I doubt that any other full-time teacher, at a time when the curriculum was limited and structured, exhibited his command of as many subjects. Let me list the important ones: administrative (and constitutional) law; history of English law; equity (including mortgage and sale of land); bills of exchange and promissory notes; statute law; taxation; wills and trusts.

Willis the teacher was a different person from Willis the writer. As a teacher he was, and quite properly so, often tentative, far from dogmatic, giving his students scope to express their opinions without being encased in a teacher's authority. As a writer, he was precise, incisive, and had little hesitation in exposition; the language flowed cleanly, without ifs and buts.

Quite a number of his articles are classics, and are so accepted by their readers. Take, for example, *Statute Interpretation in a Nutshell*, published in (1938), 16 Can. Bar Rev. 1. Take also the first Canadian examination of s. 96 of the British North America Act, now the Constitution Act, published in (1940), 18 Can. Bar Rev. 517. His writings have touched almost all reaches of a developing administrative law which he first considered in (1935), 1 Univ. of Tor. L.J. 53, under the title *Three Approaches to Administrative Law: The Judicial, the Conceptual and the Functional*. His admirable refresher lectures on taxation, given under the auspices of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1945, may no longer go to the substance of the subject, given the extensive changes made in it since the lectures were delivered, but principles in it still repay reading.

I am glad to be associated, through this short foreword, with the honour paid to John Willis by this special number of the Dalhousie Law Journal. We must not shelve, certainly not too soon if ever, our legal titans.

Right Honourable Bora Laskin
Chief Justice of Canada



John Willis
Professor Emeritus

