

# Alberta Court of Appeal clarifies procedure for appealing an arbitration award

June 02, 2022

In a recent decision, *Esfahani v Samimi*, [2022 ABCA 178](#), the Alberta Court of Appeal settled the procedure for appealing an arbitration award under the Alberta Arbitration Act.

## Appealing an arbitration award

Appealing an arbitral award is a difficult task. The goal of arbitration is to obtain a fair resolution of a dispute by an impartial tribunal without unnecessary cost or delay. Since the parties to an arbitration agreement have agreed to resolve their disputes by way of arbitration, it is rare for the courts to interfere with a decision of an arbitral tribunal.

Under the Arbitration Act, an appeal of an arbitral award depends on the language in the arbitration agreement. Parties may agree to allow appeals on question of law, questions of fact, or questions of mixed law and fact ([see s. 44\(1\)](#)). However, if the arbitration agreement is silent on the question of the right to appeal, the Arbitration Act requires a party to seek permission of the court to appeal the award and may only do so on a [question of law \(s. 44\(2\)\)](#). It should also be noted that the Arbitration Act requires that the court be satisfied that the appeal is sufficiently important to the parties and that the issue will significantly affect the rights of the parties.

## Clarification of the procedure for appealing an award

In Alberta, the procedure for obtaining permission to appeal an arbitral award has been inconsistently applied in the case law.<sup>1</sup>

In *Esfahani v Samimi*, the Alberta Court of Appeal considered the proper procedure for appealing an arbitration award. In that case, the chambers judge had directed that the application seeking permission to appeal would be heard at the same time as the appeal on the merits. The chambers judge implied that there was an established practice of hearing the application for permission to appeal concurrently with the appeal. The Alberta Court of Appeal reviewed the case law and took the opportunity to settle the procedure to be undertaken when an arbitral award is appealed under s. 44(2) of the Arbitration Act.

The Court of Appeal made it clear that section 44(2) “...is a screening provision which restricts appeals to questions of law alone. This statutory restriction is a serious one, as **is the attendant court gatekeeping role.**” The Court of Appeal reiterated that the stated goal of arbitration is to produce a finality of the dispute in an efficient and economical way and to minimize judicial involvement. The Arbitration Act clearly requires a bifurcated process when seeking leave to appeal an arbitration award.

In an effort to provide guidance to litigants seeking to appeal an award, the Alberta Court of Appeal stated the law and procedure regarding a section 44(2) appeal is as follows:

1. An appeal does not exist unless permission to appeal is granted.
2. If parties do not make the required election, permission to appeal is required and will be granted on questions of law only, subject to s 44(3) of the Arbitration Act.
3. An application for permission to appeal must be heard and decided first, and separately, not contemporaneously with the appeal of the arbitral award.

While the subject matter of this case related to an appeal of an arbitration award in the family law context, it still provides guidance to appeals of all arbitration awards in Alberta where there is no express right set out in the arbitration agreement. It is noteworthy that **this matter has been before the Court of Queen’s Bench once and the Court of Appeal twice** and there is still more litigation to come before a court makes the final decision on appealing the arbitration award. In this situation, the aim of unnecessary cost and delay related to arbitration is all but eliminated due to the wording of the arbitration agreement in relation to appeal rights.

[BLG’s Construction lawyers](#) are familiar with appeals of arbitral awards and can help navigate the process of appeal. We can also provide front-end assistance with drafting arbitration agreements to clarify the language with respect to appeals of arbitral awards.

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent overview of previous Alberta cases dealing with the procedure for obtaining permission to appeal pursuant to the Arbitration Act, see Justice Slatter’s comments in the related decision: *Esfahani v Samimi*, [2021 ABCA 290](#).

By

[Jason Buttuls](#), [Rodney A. Smith](#)

Expertise

[Construction](#), [Construction Disputes](#), [Commercial Arbitration](#)

## BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

[blg.com](http://blg.com)

## BLG Offices

### Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower  
520 3rd Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, AB, Canada  
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500  
F 403.266.1395

### Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza  
100 Queen Street  
Ottawa, ON, Canada  
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160  
F 613.230.8842

### Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre  
200 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744  
F 604.687.1415

### Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West  
Suite 900  
Montréal, QC, Canada  
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555  
F 514.879.9015

### Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower  
22 Adelaide Street West  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000  
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing [unsubscribe@blg.com](mailto:unsubscribe@blg.com) or manage your subscription preferences at [blg.com/MyPreferences](http://blg.com/MyPreferences). If you feel you have received this message in error please contact [communications@blg.com](mailto:communications@blg.com). BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at [blg.com/en/privacy](http://blg.com/en/privacy).

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.