

Legal practice and equity

A Conversation with the Bar, the Bench and the Faculties of Law

Sponsorship proposal



Saturday, November 2, 2019

Ted Rogers School of Management
Ryerson University
55 Dundas St W.
Toronto, ON Canada
ryerson.ca/law/events

About the conference

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) have become a central concern in the legal profession, including the judiciary. At the same time, law schools are striving to offer JD programs that appeal to the full spectrum of Canadian society and expose their law students to the diverse needs and perspectives of different Canadian communities. Furthermore, wide-ranging recruitment efforts, first by law schools as they attract incoming cohorts of students, act as a key step in advancing EDI goals.

As it prepares for its first incoming class in 2020, the Ryerson Faculty of Law has already set out a strong commitment to EDI. Given this commitment, it is collaborating with a range of legal associations to plan a conference on the role of EDI in various professional contexts. The conference will highlight the interactions between the bar and the bench, in terms of equity, advocacy and social justice, as well as the development of JD curriculum and recruitment into law schools and professional employment.

Inspired by the recommendations in the final report from the Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees Working Group and the EDI strategies being implemented by the LSO, the one-day conference will provide an on-the-ground look at the advancement of EDI within these various interconnected settings. To be held at Ryerson University in Toronto, it will welcome 150 lawyers, judges, academics and equity officers from across the country.

Your sponsorship support will position your organization as a champion of a more inclusive and diverse legal profession. Your support will further the discussion of equity, diversity and inclusion in the profession and judiciary, and be a demonstration of your active role in the work toward solutions. Please join us.





Conference themes

EQUITY AND ADVOCACY

More than 20 years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada released its reasons in the case of *R. v. S.* (R.D.). Although divided, the Court confirmed that the requirement for a judge to be neutral does not require judges to discount their life experiences. What role should a judge's particular life experience play when interpreting facts and the law? How can the knowledge and perspective of judges about the experience of marginalized persons be improved on a continuing basis? What types of education and outreach will promote better understanding?

ACCESS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Although their histories and the barriers they face are markedly different, Black, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities all find themselves overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Moreover, children from these groups are heavily overrepresented in child welfare systems across Canada. The causes of such overrepresentation for each of these groups are complex and systemic and should be part of the essential contextual matrix that a court must understand to arrive at a just decision. But for these factors to be considered they must be put before the court. What obligations do lawyers have to explore and advance arguments addressing racism, sexism and other issues where relevant? What obligations do judges have to consider the issues and arguments?

JD CURRICULUM

The bulk of EDI-related education as it involves the profession in future years will come from the curriculum found in JD programs. Should law schools across Ontario and the country undertake a range of initiatives to ensure that EDI-focused content is part of the core curriculum mandatory for all students? What are the main features and objectives of these initiatives? What core curriculum content historically has had gaps or omissions? How can law schools measure the effectiveness of EDI content? Law school representatives – administrators, faculty and students – will present their insights.

RECRUITMENT INTO LAW SCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Considerable evidence exists on the extent to which law schools and employers are succeeding in extending the diversity of the profession through EDI-related efforts. Academic administrators and recruitment officers from various employers will elaborate on where these efforts stand, as evidenced by the diversity of student enrollments and new hires within the province. What additional programs or strategies can be made to improve diversity?

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