



Law Society
of Ontario

Barreau
de l'Ontario

Tab 7

Equity and Indigenous Affairs Committee

Appointments to the Equity Advisory Group

October 28, 2021

Committee Members:

Dianne Corbiere (Chair)
Etienne Esquega (Vice-Chair)
Atrisha Lewis (Vice-Chair)
Catherine Banning
Robert Burd
John Fagan
Julian Falconer
Murray Klippenstein
Nancy Lockhart
Jorge Pineda
Julia Shin Doi
Megan Shortreed
Alexander Wilkes

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Purpose

The Equity and Indigenous Affairs Committee (“EIAC”) submits the appointment to the Equity Advisory Group (“EAG”) to Convocation for information.

Context

1. In January 2021, the Equity Advisory Group began the recruitment process for new members in accordance with its Terms of Reference. The advertisement for applications was posted on the EAG webpage on the Law Society of Ontario (“LSO”) website in March. It was also included in the March and April Licensee Updates and in the Ontario Reports throughout April. Additionally, the invitation was shared across the LSO’s social media platforms and with select stakeholder organizations and associations. The LSO received a total of 153 applications that complied with the application instructions.
2. The 153 applications received included:
 - a. 81 applications from individual lawyers;
 - b. 22 applications from individual paralegals;
 - c. 14 applications from law students or paralegal students;
 - d. 20 applications from licensing candidates;
 - e. 1 application from “other”; and
 - f. 15 applications from legal organizations or associations.
3. There were 12 individual positions and 12 organizational positions available on EAG.
4. A Selection Committee was formed to review the applications and create the shortlist of candidates recommended for membership. The Selection Committee was comprised of two non-returning members of EAG and eight non-EAG members of the legal professions. The members of the Selection Committee were:
 - 1) Non-returning EAG member Jeffrey Adams
 - 2) Non-returning EAG member Leonard Kim
 - 3) Michael Charles
 - 4) Naveen Mehta
 - 5) Katherine Pollock
 - 6) Christiane Saad
 - 7) Asfrah Syed-Emond
 - 8) Sandeep Tatla
 - 9) Rudy Ticzon
 - 10) Renford Thomas Jr.

5. During the selection process, the Selection Committee was cognizant of the need to reflect diversity including, but not limited to, race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, identification as an immigrant / refugee, and regional representation and experience. The Selection Committee considered an applicant's involvement in, commitment to and experience with matters of access and equity for members of equity-seeking communities.
6. On October 14, 2021, a two-thirds majority of the EIAC approved the following individual applicants for individual membership on EAG:
 - 1) Krishna Badrinarayan (reappointment)
 - 2) Prasanna Balasundaram
 - 3) Jacqueline Beckles (reappointment)
 - 4) Fatema Dada
 - 5) Kyle Elliott
 - 6) Kate Forget
 - 7) Romona Gananathan
 - 8) Sasha Hart
 - 9) Nima Hojjati (reappointment)
 - 10) Michelle Liu
 - 11) Njeri Damali Sojourner-Campbell
 - 12) Djawid Taheri
7. A two-thirds majority of EIAC also approved the following organizational applicants for organizational membership on EAG:
 - 1) L'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO) (reappointment)
 - 2) Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (reappointment)
 - 3) ARCH Disability Law Centre (reappointment)
 - 4) Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (reappointment)
 - 5) Canadian Association of Nigerian Lawyers
 - 6) Canadian Hispanic Bar Association (reappointment)
 - 7) Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (reappointment)
 - 8) Law Students' Society of Ontario (reappointment)
 - 9) Ontario Association of Black Paralegals
 - 10) Roundtable of (Legal) Diversity Associations (reappointment)
 - 11) South Asian Bar Association of Toronto (reappointment)
 - 12) Women's Law Association of Ontario.
8. Background information on the appointed individuals and organizations can be found at **Tab 7.1.**

BACKGROUND OF RECOMMENDED APPOINTMENTS

INDIVIDUALS

1. Krishna Badrinarayan (reappointment)

Krishna is a partner in the paralegal firm Saich & Badrinarayan in Woodstock. His firm specializes in disability and human rights issues and Small Claims Court and provincial offences matters. He is trained and certified in alternative dispute resolution. Krishna is a former member of the Equity Advisory Group and a current member of the Region of Waterloo's Anti-Racism Advisory Working Group. He completed Seneca College's Court and Tribunal Program in 2003 and is currently enrolled in law school at the University of Essex School of Law in the United Kingdom.

2. Prasanna Balasundaram

Prasanna is the Director of Downtown Legal Services at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, a legal clinic that provides free legal assistance to low-income communities. In 2020, he was awarded The Law Foundation of Ontario's Community Leadership in Justice Fellowship aimed at creating a lasting access to justice legacy. Since 2018, he has served as the Co-Chair, Litigation Committee for the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. He received his LL.M. from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2008, his LL.B. from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2006, and his B.A. from Queen's University in 2003.

3. Jacqueline Beckles (reappointment)

Jacqueline is General Counsel in the Department of Justice Canada's International Assistance Group. Jacqueline served as the Vice-Chair of EAG from 2018 to 2021. She is the Secretary of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) and the Vice President of CABL's Ottawa Chapter. Jacqueline previously served as a member of the Law Society's Women's Equality Advisory Group. She received her LL.B. in 2002 and her LL.L. in 2001, both from the University of Ottawa, and her B.A. from Concordia University in 1994. She is fully bilingual in French and English.

4. Fatema Dada

Fatema is Counsel at the Ontario Human Rights Commission. She is also a member of the board of SMILE Canada where she has been involved in creating accessible and inclusive events for children with disabilities. Fatema also sits on the boards of the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association and the Canadian Association of Muslim Women in Law, where she has worked on a number of equity issues. She received her LL.M. from Tufts University in 2011, her LL.B. from the University of Windsor in 2007, and her B.A. from the University of Waterloo in 2004.

5. Kyle Elliott

Kyle is the Manager of Diversity, Inclusion & Outreach Initiatives at Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP in Toronto. He has been a member of the board of CABL since 2017, where he serves as the Director of Communications. As a law student, he acted as a caseworker at two community legal clinics. He received his LL.B. from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2016 and his B.A. from Carleton University in 2013.

6. Kate Forget

Kate is Legal Counsel in the Indigenous Justice Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General. She acts as Coroner's counsel on inquests involving the deaths of Indigenous persons and represented Ontario at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. She has extensive experience working with Indigenous organizations and communities on justice matters affecting Indigenous people. Kate is also a facilitator of Bimickaway, a training program dedicated to topics such as treaties, anti-colonialism and anti-racism. She received her J.D. from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2013 and her B.A. from the University of Western Ontario in 2008.

7. Romona Gananathan

Romona is Vice Chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. Her legal experience is focused on human rights, refugee and immigration, disability, and labour and employment law. She was previously a member of the Ontario Social Benefits Tribunal where she adjudicated disability and income-security related appeals. Romona also acted as a staff lawyer at two community legal clinics. She received her Doctor of Philosophy (Education Policy) from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education in 2015, her J.D from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2009, and her Master of Environmental Studies from York University in 2009.

8. Sasha Hart

Sasha is Legal Counsel at the Canadian Human Rights Commission. She is a member of the National Association of Women and the Law and CABL. She was named as an expert to the UN Women Ending Violence Against Women Expert Roster. Sasha acts as a mentor via the University of Ottawa's Black Law Students Association Mentorship Program. She received her Master of Studies in International Human Rights Law from the University of Oxford in 2018, her LL.B. and B.C.L. from McGill University in 2012, and her B.A. from Carleton University in 2008.

9. Nima Hojjati (reappointment)

Nima is a lawyer at Swadron Associates in Toronto where his human rights practice focuses on civil, administrative, and appellate litigation mainly in the areas of mental health law, police law, and constitutional law. In 2018, he was appointed as an individual member of EAG and elected Chair. As a law student at Queen's University, he was the President of the Law Students' Society, the Equity Officer of the Law Students' Society of Ontario and the President of OUTlaw, where he participated as an intervenor on behalf of LGBTQ+ law students at the Supreme Court. He received his J.D. from Queen's University in 2017 and his B.A. from McGill University in 2014.

10. Michelle Liu

Michelle is a law student at the University of Ottawa and expects to receive her J.D. in 2023. She is the Vice-President of Communications at the University of Ottawa's 2SLGBTQ+ Law

Student Society and the author of two forthcoming publications related to equality. As a member of the University of Ottawa Students' Union Board of Directors, Michelle presented a motion for the union to adopt a policy encouraging pronoun usage for all union leaders and staff members in an effort to create a more inclusive environment. She is also the President of the Common Law Student Society and the Faculty of Law Representative on the University of Ottawa Senate. Michelle received her MASc in 2020 and her BASc in 2018, both from the University of Waterloo. She expects to receive her PhD in Civil Engineering from the University of Ottawa in 2024.

11. Njeri Damali Sojourner-Campbell

Njeri is a lawyer at Hicks Morley Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP in Toronto where she represents employers in complex human rights, labour and employment litigation files and advises on sexual violence policies, equitable hiring, and accommodation issues. She is the founder of a mentorship organization for Black female and trans law students and junior lawyers. She delivers an annual seminar to the Critical Race Theory course at Osgoode Hall Law School. She received her J.D. from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2014, her MEd from York University in 2008, and her B.A. from York University in 1999.

12. Djawid Taheri

Djawid is the founder of Taheri Law Office where he represents clients in refugee, immigration and criminal matters. He works with the Afghan Women's Organization and the Afghan Association of Ontario to educate immigrants about domestic abuse, gender equality, youth violence and child discipline. Djawid spearheaded the formation of the Afghan-Canadian Bar Association. He has written extensively on legal issues in various community newsletters and appeared on TV and radio shows as a spokesperson for non-profit organizations serving the community. Djawid received his LL.M. in 2019 and his J.D. in 1999, both from Osgoode Hall Law School. He received his M.A. in 1996 from Brock University and his B.A. from York University in 1995.

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO) (reappointment)

AJEFO is a non-profit organization that works to promote the French language within the Ontario justice system and aims to promote access to justice in Ontario to ensure equitable access to justice in both official languages. AJEFO and its partners are developing and implementing several initiatives to increase access to justice for the Franco-Ontarian population. In advancing its mission and objectives, AJEFO is dedicated to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion through its advocacy, programming, internal policies and governance structures.

2. Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA) (reappointment)

ACLA is a national association committed to providing professional support for the Arab legal community and advocating on behalf of the Arab community in Canada. ACLA assists newly called lawyers, students and foreign trained lawyers by matching them with mentors working in

their areas of interest. Their lawyer referral roster assists community members who require legal assistance by connecting them with a professional who can assist them. ACLA advocates on behalf of the Arab community in Canada and abroad by writing position papers and media briefs on domestic and foreign policy, meeting with stakeholders and decision-makers, and supporting non-legal organizations in the community with their work by providing advice and guidance.

3. ARCH Disability Law Centre (reappointment)

ARCH is a specialty legal clinic dedicated to defending and advancing the equality rights, entitlements, fundamental freedoms and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ontario. ARCH provides a range of legal services to persons with disabilities who live in Ontario, disability advocacy organizations, and the legal profession. In particular, ARCH engages in law reform and policy initiatives, community development, legal advice and referrals, public legal education and litigation. ARCH conducts test case and systemic litigation before administrative tribunals and at all levels of court.

4. Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) (reappointment)

CABL is a national network of law professionals committed to reinvesting in the community. CABL works to remove systemic barriers within the legal profession and to promote the advancement of Black lawyers within the profession through a number of mechanisms, such as establishing support systems for law students and young lawyers, providing positive role models, and cultivating and fostering diversity within the profession with an emphasis on mentoring, networking and outreach.

5. Canadian Association of Nigerian Lawyers (CANL)

CANL is a non-profit organization made up of more than 100 active Nigerian lawyers in Ontario who are engaged in diverse areas of legal practice and education. CANL's mandate is to enhance its legal and ethnic community by uniting Nigerian-Canadian legal professionals, Black and African professionals and professionals in academia across Canada. CANL's activities include hosting and delivering continuing professional development programs, mentorship programs, community outreach, free information sessions, and socio-political advocacy.

6. Canadian Hispanic Bar Association (CHBA) (reappointment)

CHBA represents Canada's Hispanic legal community with the goals of helping its members to grow their businesses, develop connections, access peer support from like-minded legal professionals, prepare for an ever-changing legal environment, and celebrate the uniqueness of the Hispanic and Latin American legal community. The CHBA achieves these goals by delivering educational and social events, advocating for its members and participating in organizations that promote equity and diversity in the legal profession.

7. Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (FACL) (reappointment)

FACL Ontario's mission is to promote equity, justice and opportunity for Asian Canadians in both the legal profession and the wider community. FACL does so through advocacy, community involvement, continuing education, professional development, and mentorship. FACL Ontario has over 150 active lawyer members and over 500 active student members. FACL Ontario has representation on the Equality Committee of the Ontario Bar Association and is a founding member of the Roundtable of Diversity Associations.

8. Law Students' Society of Ontario (LSSO) (reappointment)

LSSO is the primary advocacy body for law students in Ontario. LSSO represents the voices of more than 4500 law students across Ontario and has over 3,500 followers on social media. The LSSO advocates on issues common to law students, such as building relationships with governmental and regulatory stakeholders, engaging with employers in the legal profession on issues such as recruitment and articling, and engaging with equity-seeking student organizations to inform the LSSO's policy development and advocacy efforts.

9. Ontario Association of Black Paralegals (OABP)

OABP's goal is to provide mentorship, improve access to justice and combat systemic racism in the justice system by: providing mentorship opportunities for Black paralegals to help build capacity within the Black legal community and promote career equality and advancement; equipping Black paralegals with the tools to navigate systemic injustice in the workplace; eliminating the economic barriers which inhibit racialized Ontarians' ability to pursue civil matters related to racism, discrimination, diversity and inclusion; and recognizing, denouncing and combating systemic inequality in the justice system.

10. Roundtable of (Legal) Diversity Associations (RODA) (reappointment)

RODA is an umbrella organization that brings together a coalition of 21 equity-seeking, Canadian legal associations with the goal of fostering dialogue and promoting initiatives for the advancement of equity, diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, the judiciary, and the broader legal community. RODA monitors and provides input on policy developments in the profession and legal system. RODA has an established record of engaging in many significant initiatives within the legal community, such as providing input to the Law Society on issues and programs affecting the diverse bar; promoting and supporting candidates from racialized and equity-seeking groups for leadership positions; and exploring ways to offer outreach and mentoring to diverse members of the profession.

11. South Asian Bar Association of Toronto (SABA) (reappointment)

SABA is dedicated to promoting the objectives of South Asian members of the legal profession. SABA serves as an advocacy group, a networking forum and an employment resource and intervenes in legal proceedings of importance. SABA's activities include: advocating for diversity, anti-racism and greater South Asian representation in the judiciary; interacting with the Law Society on the licensing and accreditation process; mentoring law students; promoting the cause of South Asian legal professionals in positions of responsibility; and engaging in discussions with the provincial bar association and corporations to promote the needs of its members.

12. Women's Law Association of Ontario (WLAO)

WLAO is dedicated to empowering women in the legal profession by providing a collective voice and advocating for equality, diversity and change. Since 1919, WLAO has been providing leadership and support to advance the status of women in the legal profession. WLAO discusses issues affecting women lawyers (such as pay equity), taking into account intersectionality. WLAO organizes events that appeal to its diverse membership and has a mentorship program that connects women at all stages of their careers