

CAN-TECH'S DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP RELEASES ITS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Calls to action adopted by Can-Tech Board of Directors

MONTREAL, August 26, 2020 — The Canadian Technology Law Association (Can-Tech Law) is pleased to announce the recommendations of its Diversity and Inclusion Working Group. These recommendations, including several calls to action, have been unanimously adopted by the Can-Tech Law Board of Directors.

"Achieving diversity in the legal profession, particularly in the area of technology, is a process that requires continued effort and commitment—not just from regulatory bodies, but also from associations such as Can-Tech-Law," said Nancy Cleman, President of Can-Tech Law.

In 2016, the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) approved recommendations made by its Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees Working Group in its report entitled *"Working Together for Change: Strategies to address issues of systemic racism in the legal professions."* That report recognized that racialized legal professionals face longstanding and significant hurdles at all stages of their legal careers.

It was in this spirit, and in recognition that such hurdles apply in other provinces and territories, that, in January 2020, the Can-Tech Law Board of Directors created its Diversity and Inclusion Working Group composed of directors Elena Iosef, Andrew Alleyne, and Lisa R. Lifshitz.

The Working Group recognized that when discussing diversity and inclusion, it is also important to recognize the intersecting nature of equity issues and their compounding effects on individuals holding more than one identity. The underrepresentation of women in the legal field, for example, has been reported for decades. Sadly, little progress has been made in achieving gender parity in law.

The technology sector faces even more acute challenges. Reports show that women make up only a quarter of the high-tech workforce in Canada, and racialized professionals are still significantly underrepresented in both legal and technology fields when compared to the general population. When we look at the number of visible minorities and women working in law and technology in particular, we see an issue that demands immediate and concrete action. Further, while much more encouraged to openly participate in the profession than in the past, Canadian lawyers within the LGBT+ community still face wage gaps and other barriers, particularly with respect to retention and advancement.

"We feel it is imperative that Can-Tech Law take active steps to address diversity and inclusion in law and in its own operations and activities. In our view increased diversity can improve our strengths, capabilities and adaptability," stated Elena Iosef, chair of the Working Group.

Inaction risks perpetuating homogeneity and alienating talented lawyers from the legal profession and our organization,” added Working Group member Lisa Lifshitz.

Recommendations

In its report, the Working Group proposed several recommendations for the Can-Tech Law Board of Directors to adopt in order to advance diversity and inclusion goals, such as board nomination and panel diversity policies and initiatives to determine representation gaps in its membership. These recommendations are in line with policies of organizations such as the Ontario Bar Association and the American Bar Association, as well as being in line with the following main themes for actionable progress:

- accelerating a culture shift;
- measuring progress through quantitative analysis;
- ensuring diversity in board of directors representation;
- educating for change;
- building communities of support; and
- leading by example.

The Working Group has identified the implementation of a mentorship program as one of its suggestions for how Can-Tech Law could further its diversity and inclusion in the future.

“Our report is not merely an observation of the current status of diversity in technology law; rather, it is a call to action, one that our association intends to pursue in the coming months and years,” concluded Working Group member Andrew Alleyne.

Can-Tech Law intends to inform its members of its progress in this initiative on a regular basis.

About the Canadian Technology Law Association

Can-Tech Law promotes the development of Technology law in Canada and the discussion of all related subjects. The expertise of the Can-Tech Law membership helps to influence the shape of technology law as it evolves.

With approximately 350 members from across Canada, the Canadian Technology Law Association has become the must join association for any lawyer practising Technology law in Canada. We offer substantive learning opportunities through our annual conferences and quarterly roundtables, as well as invaluable networking opportunities to our members. To help our members stay current in this rapidly changing area of the law, Can-Tech Law distributes a newsletter in both English and French and we have a series of *ad hoc* forums on specific areas of interest to Technology law practitioners including: Privacy, Artificial Intelligence, Outsourcing, Digital Commerce & Internet Law, IT litigation and more.

For more information, please visit: www.cantechlaw.ca

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