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The trite election question – “what have you done for me lately” – does deserve an answer. Before I go there, please consider how strategic placement of your vote can enhance Convocation’s capacity to develop policies that would best serve our increasingly diverse public. I strongly believe that the best policies are created after a full consideration of a multiplicity of views. To achieve those results lawyers with those voices must be in the Convocation room and participating in the day-to-day work of its committees.

Focus on how the candidates of your choice will strengthen our decisions. For example, Benchers who are recent calls will enhance our discussions on Bar Admissions and speak directly to the expectations of the ever-increasing diversity flowing from our law schools. I am not advocating for more people to populate the Equity and Aboriginal Issues Committee (EAIC), which I Chair. In fact, my goal is quite the opposite. More persons committed to these issues will ensure a greater consideration of how specific communities of our members and clients can be better served by our policies and avoid the reinforcement of systemic barriers. The value-added contributions of a Francophone practitioner would go well beyond deepening our discussion of language rights issues. An organization which is over two centuries old, should be concerned that we still celebrate “firsts,” such as the first Aboriginal Bencher, the first Chinese Bencher and on it goes with many “firsts” yet to come. It speaks to a woeful lack of full participation for many communities and perspectives.

I have been privileged to serve as the Chair of EAIC for the past four years. My underlying focus has been to contribute, in every way I can, to the greater integration and acknowledgement of equity in all aspects of the work of Convocation. Much of my initial efforts have been structural. The Equity Advisory Group has been welcomed more directly into our meetings and provides much needed independent advice. We have ongoing working groups specifically tasked with mandates around disability issues, Aboriginal issues, faith and religious tolerance, French Language Services and retention of women in the legal profession. We also have ongoing research looking at the impact of the articling process on equity students and the career choices of the Bar Admissions cadre including the impact of tuition fees.

If I have the opportunity to continue to serve as a Bencher, I will advocate for greater integration of Equity principles in the work of other committees and the various task forces we establish. All too often, matters bounce back to EAIC or recommendations fail to give sufficient consideration to equality principles. The other issue that I will continue to pursue vigorously is the challenge faced by law students from all communities in the articling process. I also believe the Law Society can do more to reduce the vulnerabilities of sustaining a private practice, particularly for our newest members.