



JUSTICIA THINK TANK – LAW FIRM COMMITMENT

Statement of Principles

1. The Law Society of Upper Canada and the signatory law firm acknowledge the challenges faced by the legal profession in general and law firms in particular in the retention and advancement of women.
2. We also recognize that women in private practice are diverse by virtue of, but not limited to, ethnicity, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, race, religion or creed, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, age and/or family status. We will take into account this diversity when implementing this project.
3. The signatory law firm commits to the following principles and pledges to participate in the Law Society Justicia Think Tank for the retention and advancement of women.

Project Description

4. In 2008, the Law Society will create a Managing Partners Network Group and will coordinate a first summit meeting of the Group. A Gender Diversity Officers Working Group will also be created to serve as liaison with the Law Society.
5. Between 2009 and the end of 2011, signatory law firms will develop and implement programs, with the collaboration and assistance of the Law Society, focusing on the following four core areas: tracking demographics; parental leave programs and flexible work arrangements; networking and business development; and mentoring and leadership development skills for women. The development and implementation of programs will be staggered to ensure that appropriate resources are in place in each signatory law firm and to optimize the effectiveness of the programs.
6. At the end of the project, the following activities will be undertaken:
 - a. an assessment of the programs to identify best practices and develop model policies and guidelines;
 - b. communication of best practices to the legal profession as a whole;
 - c. identification of other law firms that may wish to implement best practices; and
 - d. establishment of next steps with signatory law firms.

Signatory Law Firm - Commitment

7. The signatory law firm commits to the following:
 - a. participating in this project for three years, from 2009 to the end of 2011;

- b. ensuring that the managing partner participates in the Managing Partners Network Group, and attends a minimum of two summit meetings of the Justicia Think Tank in each calendar year;¹
- c. nominating a partner and/or a director of students and associates with the expertise and knowledge of issues related to diversity and the advancement of women in the firm, to have operational responsibility for the Justicia Think Tank (“Gender Diversity Officer”);
- d. ensuring that the Gender Diversity Officer participates in regular meetings of the Gender Diversity Officers Working Group as are required to advance understanding of issues affecting women and develop best practices and programming, and serves as a liaison with the Law Society and other signatory law firms;
- e. monitoring and measuring the firm's experiences with the programs and, on a voluntary basis, sharing these with the Law Society and other signatory law firms in order to develop best practices for the profession;
- f. considering the needs of women from Aboriginal, Francophone and/or equality-seeking communities.

Details of Commitment

2009 - Launch of Tracking Demographics and Flexible Work Arrangements Programs

- 8. The signatory law firm will collaborate with the Law Society in its collection of best practices in parental leave programs and flexible work arrangements in Canadian and U.S. law firms, with a goal to creating an Ontario Flexible Work Arrangements Model Policy.
- 9. The signatory law firm will review its existing written policies relating to maternity, parental and adoption leave, flexible work arrangements and accommodations; consider developing its own written policies relating to those topics; and have written policies or templates in this area by the end of 2011, based on its individual law firm’s needs and culture.
- 10. The signatory law firm will collaborate with the Law Society and other signatory law firms to develop a template to track gender demographics and it will develop a system to maintain statistical data about gender in the composition of the firm and track gender demographic information once the system is in place and before 2010.

2010 - Launch of Networking and Business Development Initiative

- 11. In 2010, the signatory law firm will continue to build on existing programs, develop its own strategic business development plan and consider allocating appropriate resources to implement effective business development and networking opportunities focused on women lawyers’ needs and women clients.

¹ It is anticipated that summit meetings will last between 1 and 2 hours.

12. The signatory law firm commits to collaborating with the Law Society to share information about business development and networking opportunities and programs specifically tailored for women lawyers and women clients.

2011 – Launch of Mentoring and Leadership Skills Development for Women

13. In 2011, the signatory law firm will collaborate with the Law Society to assist it in developing various models of mentoring and leadership skills development programs, identify through consultation what women in the firm need and want regarding mentoring and leadership development opportunities, and allocate the resources to support those programs.
14. The signatory law firm will consider whether women lawyers are well represented throughout the firm, as group leaders, committee members and other positions of leadership, and will identify gaps and develop strategies to enhance women's participation in the leadership of the firm.
15. The signatory law firm will implement mentoring programs for women based on identified need.

The Law Society of Upper Canada's Role

16. The Law Society of Upper Canada commits to the following:
 - a. coordinating the Justicia Think Tank and providing expertise, advice and administrative support for the project;
 - b. coordinating a Managing Partners Network Group, arranging two Justicia summit meetings in each calendar year and providing administrative support to the Managing Partners Network Group;
 - c. coordinating regular meetings of the Gender Diversity Officers Working Group with the objective of advancing understanding of issues affecting women, developing best practices and programming, serving as a forum for information sharing between participating firms and the Law Society, and providing administrative support to the Gender Diversity Officers Working Group;
 - d. coordinating teleconference meetings of an advisory group of women from Aboriginal, Francophone and/or equality seeking communities;
 - e. providing advice and expertise to assist signatory law firms in the implementation of programs.
17. The following are the types of activities that the Law Society will undertake:
 - a. collecting and disseminating to the signatory law firms examples of flexible work arrangements policies and seeking input with respect to best practices with a view of developing an Ontario Flexible Work Arrangements Policy;
 - b. providing the signatory law firms with models of networking and business development activities tailored for women lawyers and clients, to identify best practices with respect to business development training for women;
 - c. providing the signatory law firms with models of mentoring and leadership skills development models for women;
 - d. promoting best practices in the legal profession as a whole;
 - e. assessing the effectiveness of the project and identifying next steps with signatory law firms and in the legal profession;

f. developing guidelines and templates on recording demographic data.

We hereby commit to participating in the Justicia Think Tank project. We allow the Law Society to release the name of our firm as a participating firm in the Justicia Think Tank project.

Managing Partner Name:

Contact information

Signature

Date