

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

December 9, 2020

Equality, diversity and inclusion (“EDI”) demand as their essence basic fairness and respect in all we do as individuals and as a law firm. EDI is essential to our relationships and our daily interactions with the lawyers, staff, administration and clients of our firm. Adherence to these principles is expected when we hire, expect to retain and hope to advance excellent people at every level of our firm. A commitment to EDI underlies our dealings with the profession and the judiciary. EDI is also important to our clients, our potential clients, and the public as a whole. It must be an intrinsic aspect of the character and reputation of our firm, of who we are, and who we strive to be.

Systemic discrimination exists in every organization, including our firm. There is nothing new about this, although society has become increasingly aware in recent months of the significance of equal treatment, and we have as well. It is vital to the health, safety and job satisfaction of everyone at our firm. It is essential to our success as a business and our excellence as a professional organization. It is our legal and professional obligation. And it is the right thing to do.

We must constantly demonstrate that each and every one of us is valued within our workplace culture and professional environment, regardless of differences of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or any other aspect of the richness of our society. Anti-Black racism, and all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women, racialized, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ persons, and persons with disabilities, must be eliminated. To achieve these important goals, our firm must better reflect that diversity in all aspects of our workforce.

Our firm recognizes that we must do better in all of these areas. Working to prevent harassment, bullying and discrimination in all forms is one of our highest priorities as a firm. To assist in that endeavour, we mobilized an EDI Committee that comprises almost thirty of our staff, administration, associates and partners. That Committee, with the support of the Management Committee, has been working diligently on the key areas of focus that require attention, review and action at our firm. The Committee meets every two weeks to take stock of the progress that is being made.

Putting this firm’s ideals into action requires thoughtful planning and implementation of a series of intersecting and complementary strategies. We are proud to publicly affirm the firm’s commitment to achieve measurable progress in five key areas, summarized below. This is not a complete or final list, but rather a snapshot of this initiative as it currently stands.

1. Accountability

- a. Disseminate a public statement by the firm affirming its commitment to a healthy, respectful and diverse professional and work environment, and informing the public of the steps the firm is taking to achieve the goals described in the paragraphs above. This firm statement is the first of several that we will release from time to time regarding our EDI work and progress.
- b. Complete the Law Society of Ontario’s bi-annual self-assessment and other aspects of compliance with the report on ending systemic racism in the legal profession.

c. Conduct an internal qualitative and quantitative diversity survey, which will be revisited as appropriate by the EDI Committee.

2. Education

a. Ensure that all firm policies comply with EDI principles.

b. Update currently available education materials and the firm's approach to training firm members on EDI.

3. Recruitment / Hiring

a. Ensure that hiring processes and policies (internal, external and hire-backs) are in accordance with the latest information and research on breaking down systemic barriers.

b. Develop an outreach strategy and engage with external stakeholders and educational institutions to attract a more diverse pool of candidates.

c. Implement mandatory unconscious bias training for all persons involved in hiring.

d. Increase the diversity of the persons involved in hiring.

4. Retention / Advancement

a. Update the firm's internal mentorship programs and support involvement in external membership programs.

b. Enhance the effectiveness of the performance review process.

c. Promote transparency and open communication across the firm with respect to expectations, performance, accommodations, promotions and advancement.

5. Inclusive / Equal Workplace

a. Support the work done by external professional and public associations promoting equality and breaking down systemic barriers, and explore the possibility of establishing partnerships with them

b. Encourage and support the creation of internal "affinity groups" within the firm

c. Establish a diversity calendar to guide internal and external recognition and celebration of significant events for equality-seeking groups

d. Review the firm's sponsorships and donations with an EDI lens

e. Consider gender and racial-inclusive infrastructure modifications

This is exciting, important and difficult work. Some of this work can be accomplished in the short term, but some of it will take more time and require continuous efforts. We are committed to making WeirFoulds a better place for everyone to work, and we have and will continue to devote appropriate resources to this undertaking. We will provide updates on our progress and as our EDI work moves forward on our website on an annual basis.

If you have questions about these initiatives, please feel free to contact [Raj Datt](#), Chair of the EDI Committee, or [Denise Baker](#) and [Wayne Egan](#), Co-Managing Partners.

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