

Raj Anand tells The Toronto Star that controversial Law Society initiative is an important part of culture change, “not a burdensome requirement”

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WeirFoulds partner Raj Anand has joined with others in the legal profession to urge the Law Society not to backtrack on addressing systemic racism in the legal profession.

One of 13 recommendations from the [report](#) by the Working Groups on Challenges Faced by Racialized Lawyers and Paralegals has caused a lot of controversy.

It asks lawyers to adopt and abide by a [Statement of Principles](#), acknowledging their obligation to promote equality, diversity and inclusion towards colleagues, employees, clients and the public.

The requirement will be challenged at the Law Society's next board meeting in December, while a law professor has gone to court seeking an injunction to stop the law society from enforcing it.

Some argue that the recommendation is a violation of freedom of expression, while others say the recommendation is not about politics.

“People seem to consider the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion as being an issue of political belief or political speech,” said Tina Lie, a Toronto lawyer.

“I actually think it goes to the core of the administration of justice.”

Raj, who co-chaired the working group, wrote the statement of principles recommendation, describing it to The Toronto Star as “not a burdensome requirement.”

He said it's an important part of changing a culture that too often is driving away good lawyers and paralegals.

“The first goal is culture change, and that's what the statement of principles is about,” he said.

“It's simply to force people to recognize that [where] there are barriers,... they are creating difficulties which affect them because they don't get the best people, or the people leave, and needless to say it's harming the people who don't get good jobs because they don't find the working environment in certain firms to be hospitable.”

To read “Law society initiative to improve diversity is about justice not politics, lawyers say”, please [click here](#).

To read the full “Working Together for Change: Strategies to Address Issues of Systemic Racism” report, please [click here](#).

Pictured, Raj Anand speaking at the 11th Annual Conference and Gala of FACL Ontario, November 2017

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