



FACL States its Principles

The Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (FACL) stands for equality, diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. In 2017, we were heartened to see the Law Society of Ontario take steps, albeit modest ones, to combat systemic discrimination in the profession by adopting the recommendations in the *Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees Working Group's Final Report*. In the lead-up to the 2019 Benchers elections, some are campaigning on the basis that they will roll back these recommendations. We pledge to strongly resist these efforts.

One of the 13 recommendations accepted by the Law Society requires lawyers to adopt and abide by a statement of principles acknowledging their obligation to promote equality, diversity and inclusion generally, and in their behaviour towards colleagues, employees, clients and the public. This represents an important first step in creating a culture of greater awareness of the human rights laws that we, as lawyers, have a special duty to respect.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are not merely “political” beliefs. They are foundational values in our constitutional democracy. They are constitutional values. Requiring lawyers to acknowledge their obligation to promote these values is no different than requiring lawyers to promote the rule of law and maintain confidence in the administration of justice. Justice does not exist without equality. Equality does not exist without inclusion.

Canadian society is becoming increasingly diverse. The legal profession, however, continues to lag behind. This has nothing to do with merit. It has much to do with the institutional and attitudinal barriers that we have been too slow to remove.

Systemic racism in the legal profession is real. We know this because, as racialized lawyers, we encounter it regularly. The data also bears this out. If we are to solve this problem, we must first acknowledge that it is a problem. And we must then acknowledge that with the privilege of being lawyer comes the responsibility of levelling the playing field and not simply indulging in the status quo.

In the 2019 Benchers elections, let's elect those who understand this. Let's elect those who are committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. Let's elect those who are not afraid to state their principles.