



The Advocates' Society

Leadership Principles



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Overview

The Advocates' Society is Canada's leading organization for advocates. We are dedicated to promoting excellence in advocacy and the highest standards of professionalism within a fair and accessible system of justice.

Our continued growth throughout the country, and our standing within the profession, depends upon effective volunteer leadership that reflects the Society's values. As we continue to position advocates for leadership within our growing organization, it is increasingly important that we ensure there is a common understanding of what leadership means within The Advocates' Society. To promote that common understanding, the Board of Directors of the Society has adopted the following *Leadership Principles*.¹ Our hope is that these *Leadership Principles* will support and guide our present and future leaders in their important work for the Society, and that they will render all of us more effective in pursuing the Society's important mission.

Our *Leadership Principles* are intended to guide the conduct of every advocate who accepts a leadership role within the Society. Those leaders include not only members of our Board of Directors, but also our Committee members, Program Chairs, Faculty, Speakers, Practice Group Leaders, and Mentors. Leaders in all of these roles have an opportunity to significantly enhance the success of the Society in its mission, to increase the value of Society membership, to promote diversity and inclusion, and to identify, recruit, develop and promote the Society's future leaders.

Our *Leadership Principles* are aligned with the Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan that the Board of Directors approved in 2018. The *Leadership Principles* echo and reinforce the Society's mission to be an organization that: (1) is committed to being diverse and inclusive, (2) aims to provide members of all levels of experience with opportunities for mentoring, networking, and collegiality, and, (3) through its leaders, attracts members who aspire to be part of our community of best advocates.

Our *Leadership Principles* cannot prescribe specific expectations for every circumstance a leader might confront. Nor can they address every dimension of effective leadership. Leadership has multiple dimensions and the expectations for any leader will depend upon the specific role that leader has assumed. Instead, our *Leadership Principles* are focused on those core leadership values that we believe are essential to the success of the Society's important mission.

¹ The Board of Directors of the Society is indebted to the Society's Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee for its valuable work in developing these *Leadership Principles*.

PRINCIPLE 1 - Commitment

We honour our commitment to The Advocates' Society by diligently fulfilling the leadership mandates that we undertake.

The Society is the authoritative voice of advocates within the justice system, dedicated to promoting excellence and the highest standards of professionalism. Committed leaders are essential to effectively discharging that important mandate. As leaders, we undertake those responsibilities that we are confident we can fulfil, and we make the Society's work one of our priorities. Where circumstances prevent us from meeting a Society commitment, we promptly notify the Society's staff and, when asked, take prompt action to ensure that others can meet that commitment in our stead. As Committee members we come prepared to actively engage in the Society's work, to advance the quality and efficiency of our system of justice and to support a national culture of excellence in advocacy. As Program Chairs, Practice Group Leaders, Faculty and Speakers we strive to deliver a current and high quality skills-based curriculum.

PRINCIPLE 2 – Respect

As the face of The Advocates' Society, we encourage a collegial environment in all Society activities and promote respect for the profession and public confidence in the Society. In our work for the Society we treat every person with courtesy and respect.

As Board members, we act with dedication and professionalism. We aim for continuous improvement and we value diverse perspectives. We create and sustain a Board culture where respectful debate and ideas that challenge the norm are encouraged. We speak respectfully, keep an open mind and thoughtfully ensure all directors are included in discussions and valued for their perspective. As Program Chairs, Practice Group Leaders, Faculty and Speakers, we encourage mutual respect among participants and volunteers, and we promote civility. As Mentors we engage with all participants in a welcoming manner. As a leader in any role, we are respectful of others' personal space. We recognize that other advocates, particularly those who are early in their careers, may perceive Society leaders as influential in the profession, which makes it even more important that we treat all advocates with courtesy and respect.

PRINCIPLE 3 – Diversity

We embrace and promote diversity among our members.

Essential to our success is an openness to a diverse range of legal experience and expertise, along with diverse personal characteristics. We strive to create an environment that is open and welcoming to all advocates. More than openness is required, however, if we are to assemble a diverse group of leaders within the Society. We also recognize that an individual's contribution to the diversity of any group is itself an important consideration for any appointment. When considering new Board members, for example, we will consult with our partners and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds across the country to identify potential leaders. We recognize and honour excellence across practice areas and we are committed to ensuring our Board composition reflects a diverse community of advocates. As Practice Group Leaders and Committee Members, we understand that engagement by a varied group of committed volunteers leads to better outcomes in our work for the Society. For example, we consider the individual needs of committee members when scheduling meetings in order to ensure diverse perspectives that reflect the interests of all members. As Practice Group Leaders, Program Chairs and Faculty, we plan, develop and deliver our programs through the lens of diversity and inclusion. When selecting faculty, we look beyond our existing networks and identify individuals through different legal and equity seeking organizations to broaden our faculty pool. We also review the success of our programs through this lens. As Mentors, we are not afraid to talk about sensitive issues that our members may face, and we do our best to share perspectives and provide useful advice when asked.

PRINCIPLE 4 – Inclusive Leadership

We strive to be inclusive leaders, who make others feel their own perspectives and contributions are valued.

As Board and Committee members we are vigilant in upholding the highest standards of professionalism and demonstrating inclusive leadership in action. We are respectful of others in our meetings, we seek to ensure that all members feel welcome, we listen actively to others and we minimize external distractions. We welcome different viewpoints in meetings and we actively pursue diverse perspectives. We are willing to respectfully raise and discuss behaviours that are not inclusive, amongst ourselves, and with others. We seek to ensure that others feel welcome to contribute. We review our governing documents, our processes and our practices to ensure they are consistent with our values. We recognize that concepts of inclusive leadership are evolving, and we actively participate in training when it is offered by the Society to support these efforts. As Practice Group Leaders, Program Chairs and Faculty members, we seek views and voices from outside our network

of friends and colleagues. We are active and attentive listeners, using inclusive language when presenting and responding to questions. We are continuously striving to educate and inform ourselves and others about emerging legal issues and developments in specific areas of practice. Among other things, this should include the consideration of issues that may be of particular interest to advocates from equity-seeking groups. We consider barriers to membership and participation when setting strategic priorities and annual budgets, while maintaining our commitment to financial prudence. We actively consider the importance of reasonable access to our membership, programs and events.

PRINCIPLE 5 – Effective Mentoring

We strive to create meaningful opportunities for effective mentoring, so that we may cultivate a community of skilled advocates and a cohort of effective new leaders within the Society.

As Mentors we recognize that we play an important role in the Society's mandate to ensure that more experienced advocates teach, train and help less experienced advocates. As Practice Group Leaders, Program Chairs and Faculty members, we are vigilant in creating meaningful opportunities for mentoring, and we are open to hearing feedback and direction that may shape and inform future programs. We take active steps to diversify speakers and seize opportunities to elicit and listen to different perspectives. As Board members and Committee members we seek to create open pathways and opportunities for new leaders to emerge within the Society. We actively seek to mentor and encourage those with experiences and backgrounds that differ from our own. We acknowledge and reflect upon the position we occupy in the legal profession, and how it may differ from those whom we are mentoring. We also recognize that learning is a two-way street where we seek to understand and learn from those with fewer years of experience.

PRINCIPLE 6 – Vibrant Diplomacy

We consistently champion the Society, its mission, and one another.

All leaders within the Society seek to attract members who are or aspire to be a part of a community of best advocates. We share with others our passion for the mission and mandate of the Society. We encourage our professional colleagues to become members and to attend Society events and programs. We identify opportunities for the Society to be more active within our own local regions and communities. We seek opportunities for the Society to influence those who can effect positive change within the justice system. We

support and actively participate in the Society's Ambassador Program. We stay informed about Society events and encourage other advocates to attend those events. As Practice Group Leaders, Program Chairs and Faculty members, we are vigilant about creating opportunities for the profession to collaborate and contribute to the development of skills-based training programs. We promote our programs within our networks and our practice settings. We communicate authentically and passionately about the value of our programs. As Mentors we promote Society programs and events, we educate others about the value of engagement with the Society, and we provide guidance and encouragement to those who seek to become new leaders within the Society.