



# The Advocates' Society

## La Société des plaideurs

June 24, 2019

Malcolm M. Mercer  
Treasurer  
Law Society of Ontario  
Osgoode Hall, 130 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N6

Dear Treasurer:

**RE: Deferral of Vote on Motions related to Statement of Principles**

As you know, The Advocates' Society, established in 1963, is a not-for-profit association of more than 6,000 members throughout Canada. More than 5,000 of our members practice in Ontario. The mandate of The Advocates' Society includes, among other things, making submissions to governments and others on matters that affect access to justice, the administration of justice and the practice of law by advocates. We ask that you provide this letter to the members of Convocation before the meeting of June 27.

The Advocates' Society values equity, diversity and inclusion. We continuously strive to foster a welcoming environment for our members. These are important values for our own organization, and for the legal profession and the justice system as a whole. We recognize the significance of hearing multiple, diverse perspectives on issues that affect our profession. These perspectives are particularly important where the issues go to the very heart of diversity and inclusion in the profession.

We understand there are divergent views among members of Convocation with respect to the requirement that lawyers abide by a statement of principles acknowledging their obligation to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. We recognize that there is room for a thoughtful debate on whether, and to what degree, this requirement should form part of a lawyer's professional obligations.

In our view, any debate to repeal or modify the existing requirement – enacted by Convocation only 18 months ago – should occur only after Benchers have had a meaningful opportunity to hear from affected stakeholder groups. We strongly endorse the LSO Equity Advisory Group's suggestion in its letter of June 12, 2019 to defer a vote on the motions currently before Convocation until a broader consultation has taken place. That consultation should include stakeholders and the profession at large.

We urge the members of Convocation to table these motions and develop a consultation plan that will permit a well-informed decision-making process, grounded in a diversity of perspectives.

Yours truly,

Scott Maidment  
President