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LSUC working group report a 'baseline' for advancing diversity



Recommendations set out by a new Law Society of Upper Canada (LSUC) working group report that aim to address systemic racism in legal workplaces are a commendable starting point to advance the cause of diversity in the profession, Toronto employment lawyer Lai-King Hum tells the *Toronto Star*.

As the *Star* reports, LSUC's The Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees Working Group has spent four years studying the issue and holding consultations. It will present its final report and recommendations to LSUC Convocation this week, with a final vote expected on Dec. 2.

The report, obtained by the *Star*, calls on the Law Society to “take a leadership role in giving legal workplaces reasonable deadlines to implement steps that are important to bring about lasting culture change.”

“It is clear from the working group's engagement and consultation processes that discrimination based on race is a daily reality for many racialized licensees; however, many participants stated that they would not file a discrimination complaint with the Law Society for various reasons, including fear of losing their job, fear of being labeled as a troublemaker, and other reprisal-related concerns,” the *Star* quotes the report as saying.

Another recommendation calls for providing equality and inclusion education programs for Law Society staff on a regular basis, as well as compiling and publishing the results of an internal diversity assessment of the bench composition.

“The working group is of the view that the Law Society must take a leadership role and model the change it is seeking to create in the professions,” says the report.

As Hum, an employment lawyer who is also national president of the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers and chair of the Roundtable of Diversity Associations, says in the article, the recommendations “are a baseline to what we would consider absolutely necessary to advance the cause of diversity in the legal profession.

“There could be improvements, but my understanding is they reached consensus. The conversation has been going on for a couple of decades. It’s time, and we need something implemented, and this will at least meet our baseline considerations. I commend the group for having been able to advance this and come to a consensus,” says Hum.