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Year in Review 2020-2021

In 2020-2021, the Supreme Court Advocacy Institute completed its fourteenth year of activities, during which it provided counsel appearing before the Supreme Court of Canada with rigorous practice sessions. The Institute's advocacy program aims to increase the effectiveness and quality of advocacy by simulating for counsel the experience of oral argument before the highest court. A panel of seasoned Supreme Court advocates hears counsel's argument and offers candid and constructive feedback to assist counsel in making their oral submissions effective and helpful to the Court.

Demand for the Institute's advocacy program continues to be very high. Over the past year, the Institute provided free, non-partisan advocacy sessions in 68% of cases before the Court. Participation rates were especially high in British Columbia, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces (where all but two appeals benefitted from the Institute's services across the three regions) and in Manitoba and Ontario (where two thirds of appeals benefitted from the Institute's services). The Institute's advocacy program was used for a wide range of appeals in civil and criminal matters, by counsel working in private practice as well as in government, and by seasoned advocates as well as by those appearing for the first time before the Court.

Sixty-four (64) lawyers donated their time as advocacy advisors for the Institute, offering advice to counsel based on their own experience before the Court. Many participated in more than one session, illustrating once again the dedication of our advocacy advisors to the bar, to the public, and to access to justice. The Institute continues to receive extremely appreciative feedback from counsel who have used the advocacy program. Counsel are grateful for the time and effort the advisors devote to the sessions, and note that the mock hearings are a highly valuable aspect of their preparation.

In line with public health advice to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Institute has continued to host virtual advocacy sessions. This allowed for some inter-provincial panels, with advocacy advisors from different cities coming together to participate in an advocacy session.

The Institute's advocacy sessions are organized by session coordinators in each province. For their invaluable assistance in delivering the Institute's services, we thank Aubin Calvert (British Columbia), Julie G. Hopkins (Alberta), Shoshanna Paul (Saskatchewan), Sacha Paul (Manitoba), Erin Dann (Ontario: Toronto), Colleen Bauman (Ontario: Ottawa), Fran ois Goyer and Pierre-J r me Bouchard (Quebec), and Michael Marin (Atlantic provinces).

As part of its continuing legal education mandate, the Institute's executive director Shantona Chaudhury and National Committee member Michael Feder, Q.C., spoke in May 2021 at the Advocates' Society CLE on *Supreme Court of Canada Advocacy*. Several of the panels emphasized the value of the Institute's advocacy program for counsel preparing for oral argument before the Court.

This year, the Institute was delighted to welcome the Honourable Rosalie Abella as Honorary Chairperson following her retirement from the Supreme Court. She is the thirteenth former Supreme Court Justice to join the Institute in this capacity.

A number of Institute members were appointed to the bench in the course of the 2020-2021 year. We congratulate former advocacy advisor Justice Mahmud Jamal on his appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada, where he joins former advocacy advisor Justice Suzanne Côté. We also congratulate former advocacy advisors Justice Theodore Bock (Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench), Justice Alexander Pless (Quebec Superior Court), and Justice Jill Presser (Ontario Superior Court of Justice).

We congratulate Barbara McIssac on her retirement from practice and thank her for her many years of service as an advocacy advisor with the Institute. Mila Shah has joined the roster of advocacy advisors in British Columbia after serving as session coordinator for the province for a number of years.

We estimate that in the 2020-2021 year, the Institute's advocacy advisors, committee members, and executive directors contributed approximately \$726,000 in *pro bono* services to the benefit of parties and their counsel before the Supreme Court of Canada, bringing the Institute's total *pro bono* contribution since 2006 to approximately \$6.85 million.

The Institute's ability to provide its advocacy program to all counsel without charge is made possible by the generous funding provided by the Advocates' Society, the American College of Trial Lawyers Canadian Foundation, the Canadian Bar Association, the Law Foundation of Ontario, and the Ontario Bar Association Foundation. The willingness of all participants to donate their time on a *pro bono* basis allows the Institute to maintain low-cost operations. We thank Torys LLP for continuing to provide the Institute with *pro bono* services in support of our charitable status.