

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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In 2014-2015, the Supreme Court Advocacy Institute completed its eighth year of service, during which it continued to provide counsel appearing for argument before the Supreme Court of Canada with rigorous practice sessions. The Institute's advocacy program aims to increase the effectiveness and quality of advocacy before the Court by simulating for counsel the experience of oral argument before the highest court. A panel of seasoned Supreme Court advocates listens to counsel's argument and offers candid and constructive feedback to help maximize counsel's opportunity to present informative and effective oral submissions.

During the past year, the Institute provided free, non-partisan advocacy sessions in approximately 49% of cases before the Court, including in 74% of appeals from Quebec, 61% from Ontario, and 27% from British Columbia. Counsel from both government and private practice used the Institute's advocacy program in a wide range of civil and criminal appeals. They included both seasoned advocates and first-time counsel before the Court.

Sixty-six (66) lawyers donated their time as advocacy advisors for their colleagues, offering advice based on their own experience before the Court. Many participated in more than one session, illustrating again the commitment of our advocacy advisors to the bar, the public, and access to justice. The Institute continues to receive exceptional feedback from counsel who have used the advocacy program, highlighting the level of preparation our advisors undertake for practice sessions and the assistance the session provides for argument before the Court.

In addition to the Institute's two executive directors, Shantona Chaudhury and Grégoire Webber, the advocacy program is administrated by session coordinators in each province and region. For their service, we thank Michael Feder (British Columbia), April Grosse (Alberta), Sacha Paul (Manitoba), Colleen Bauman (Ontario: Ottawa), Erin Dann (Ontario: Toronto), Pierre-Jérôme Bouchard (Quebec), and Jula Hughes (Atlantic provinces).

As part of its continuing professional development activities, the Institute attended the annual Osgoode Constitutional Cases Conference in April 2015. In addition and further to discussions with the Law Society of Upper Canada, an advocacy advisor's participation in an advocacy session is now recognized as an eligible teaching activity for the purposes of that Law Society's annual CPD requirement.

During the past year, we were delighted to welcome as Honorary Chairpersons the Honourable Louis LeBel and the Honourable Marshall Rothstein, Q.C., following their retirement from the Court. In addition, the Institute was delighted to welcome co-founder Owen Rees back to the National Advisory Committee as Member at Large, following the end of his term as Executive Legal Officer to the Chief Justice of Canada.

The Institute congratulates the Honourable Justice Suzanne Côté on her appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada. Prior to her appointment, Justice Côté was a member of the Quebec Regional Committee and an active advocacy advisor, assisting a great many counsel in Montreal to prepare for argument before the Supreme Court. The Honourable Louise Mailhot, Ad.E., formerly of the Quebec Court Appeal, has filled the vacancy on the Quebec Regional Committee. The Institute also congratulates former advocacy advisors Justice Marie-Josée Hogue on her appointment to the Quebec Court of Appeal, Justice Serge Gaudet on his appointment to the Superior Court of Quebec, Justice Michal Fairburn and Justice Robert Charney on their appointment to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, and Justice Jill Copeland to the Ontario Court of Justice.

We estimate that in the 2014-2015 period the Institute's advocacy advisors, committee members, and executive directors contributed approximately \$548,000 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 to approximately \$3.29 million since 2006.

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 Law Foundation of Ontario, and the Ontario Bar Association Foundation, as well as the continuing support of the Canadian Bar Association. 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.