

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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In 2015-2016, the Supreme Court Advocacy Institute completed its ninth year of operation, 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 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 services remains very high: over the past year, the Institute provided free, non-partisan advocacy sessions in 50% of cases before the Court. Participation rates were particularly elevated in Ontario (66%), Québec (53%), and Alberta (50%). The Institute's advocacy program was used for a wide range of appeals, both civil and criminal; by counsel working in private practice as well as in government; and by seasoned advocates as well as first-time counsel before the Court.

Sixty-eight (68) 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, resulting in an improved oral argument before the Court.

The Institute experienced a number of personnel changes this year. Executive Director and founder Grégoire Webber has taken a temporary leave of absence from the Institute to accept a position in the office of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, effective August 2016. Michael Feder (formerly Session Co-ordinator for British Columbia) and Pierre-Jérôme Bouchard (formerly Session Co-ordinator for Québec) have stepped in to replace Grégoire, joining Shantona Chaudhury as Executive Directors of the Institute.

Mila Shah has taken over the role of Session Co-ordinator for British Columbia and Audrey Boctor has taken over this role in Québec. We thank them, as well as April Grosse (Alberta), Sacha Paul (Manitoba), Colleen Bauman (Ontario: Ottawa), Erin Dann (Ontario: Toronto), and Jula Hughes (Atlantic provinces) for their invaluable assistance in delivering the Institute's services.

The Institute is delighted to announce that in December 2015, Owen Rees and Grégoire Webber were honoured with Meritorious Service Medals by the Governor General of Canada for their role in founding the Institute.

The Institute congratulates the Honourable Peter K. Doody, formerly an advocacy advisor in the Ottawa region, on his appointment to the Ontario Court of Justice in February 2016.

As part of the Institute's continuing professional development activities, Grégoire Webber, Owen Rees and Shantona Chaudhury attended the Advocates' Society's conference on 'Supreme Court of Canada Advocacy' in October 2015. Owen Rees delivered a presentation on 'The Media And Your Case'.

The Institute continued to increase its profile within the profession in 2015-2016. In particular, the Institute was featured as the cover story of Canadian Lawyer Magazine's April 2016 edition, with an in-depth piece written by Kirk Makin.

We estimate that in the 2014-2015 period the Institute's advocacy advisors, committee members, and executive directors contributed approximately \$778,825 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 \$4.06 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. Thanks to the willingness of all participants to donate their time on a *pro bono* basis, 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.