



March 1, 2021

Dear Participants,

Thank you very much for taking part in the 2021 Braiding Diversity into Justice Program.

This is a very important program. The legal profession needs to become more diverse and representative of the communities it is responsible for serving. Some of this change is occurring, but it has not happened fast enough.

This has become increasingly evident during the past year. The pandemic has not affected everyone equally. It has exposed existing inequalities and has had a disproportionate effect on less affluent and historically marginalized communities in Canada, including many living in racialized and new immigrant communities. Those with fewer resources and privileges have tended to be more affected by both the disease and the economic slowdown.


This past year has also marked a turning point in the movement against anti-black racism. A global movement, sparked by events in the United States, but resonating with experiences in Canada, has prompted many Canadians to ask hard questions about systemic racism in our society, including our justice system.

The justice system alone cannot be expected to solve all issues of inequality. However, it is a place where people turn to address unfairness and inequality, and it must be a part of the solution.

To properly address these issues, the justice system itself needs to become more diverse at every level, have more people working in every area who bring a broader diversity of experiences to their work. It needs more women and men from diverse backgrounds working as judges, lawyers and senior court administrators. This change is beginning to occur. I see it among new judges who are being appointed and among the lawyers arguing cases in our courts. Even more so, I see it among the bright young women like yourselves who are increasingly entering legal professions.

I hope that you find today's program interesting and rewarding, and that it allows you to gain an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the justice system. I also hope that many of you might see potential roles for yourselves within the justice system. Finally, I hope some of you will embark on careers in law and justice that will allow you to become part of the movement to braid greater diversity into the justice system.

Sincerely,



The Honourable George R. Strathy
Chief Justice of Ontario