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David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

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ABOUT THE DAVID ASPER CENTRE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights is a centre within the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law devoted to advocacy, research and education in the area of constitutional rights in Canada. The Centre was established in 2008 by the generous donation of David Asper and was officially launched in early September 2008. It houses a unique legal clinic that brings together students, faculty, members of the bar and other advocates to work on significant constitutional cases and advocacy projects. It is the only Canadian centre in existence that attempts to bring constitutional law research, policy, advocacy and teaching together under one roof.

David Asper's stated motivation in making his donation to the Faculty of Law was to enhance access to justice for people whose constitutional rights have been violated.

Access to justice and social justice are clear themes that have motivated the advocacy work of the Centre over the last 6 years. The Centre defines these themes more specifically as access to constitutional rights. These values are reflected in the Mission and Strategic Goals of the Centre.

A guiding principle for the Centre's advocacy work is access to constitutional justice, in particular in relation to vulnerable individuals and groups. The Centre will continue to target advocacy work that is consistent with that principle. We are also keenly aware that as a Centre that does not represent a particular group or constituency, we must be sensitive to the implications of the positions that we take on those marginalized in our justice system. Playing to our strengths means that we continue to ground our advocacy in the scholarship of our Faculty. Through partnerships with other organizations and collaborations with coalitions of advocacy groups, we can ensure that we are involved in the most appropriate cases in the most appropriate way.

WHAT GUIDES US

VISION

Sophisticated and progressive awareness, understanding and acceptance of constitutional rights in Canada.

Realizing Constitutional Rights through
Advocacy, Education and Academic Research.

MISSION

VALUES

- **Excellence:** the Centre is committed to high quality academic research, intellectual engagement, and intellectual rigour as the foundations for all of its work.
- **Independence:** the Centre's location within an academic institution provides the basis for trust, integrity, and intellectual freedom and diversity.
- **Diversity:** the Centre is committed to diversity in its interaction with community organizations and groups and to intellectual diversity in its work and approach to legal analysis.
- **Innovation:** the Centre seeks to shape the direction of constitutional advocacy, to be flexible in order to respond to emerging constitutional issues, and to take a broad remedial approach to the Charter in order to transform Canada's legal and policy landscape.
- **Collaboration:** the Centre is committed to working in an interdisciplinary and collaborative manner with community organizations and groups and within the academic institution.
- **Access to constitutional rights:** the Centre seeks to promote access to constitutional justice and human rights for marginalized individuals & groups.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Process

The David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights has been in existence for over 12 years as part of the Faculty of Law University of Toronto. As part of this third strategic planning process we met with key stakeholders, including faculty members and partner organizations to talk about our strengths and our future in one-on-one interviews.

In an in-person session in November 2019, the Centre's Advisory Board met together with individuals from partner organizations, past constitutional litigators in residence and alumni of the Centre to review the work that the Centre has done to date and to set the strategic priorities for the next five years. The draft strategic plan was crafted over the summer of 2020 and approved in the Fall.

We identified three key priorities and thirteen strategies or objectives. The next stages of this process will be to develop an implementation plan to guide us in conceptualizing and realizing these strategic priorities.

Our Strategic Direction

1

MAINTAIN the reputation of the Centre for providing significant and scholarly contributions to constitutional rights advocacy in Canada.

2

STRENGTHEN the Centre's core competencies of education, constitutional expertise and collaboration.

3

EXPAND the Centre's capacity.

MAINTAIN

The reputation of the Centre for providing significant and scholarly contributions to constitutional rights advocacy in Canada.

1

Continue to develop appropriate advocacy projects, in accordance with selection criteria, for students in the clinical legal education course and working groups through consultations with the private bar and non-governmental organizations.

2

Continued involvement in appropriate interventions at appellate level courts (independently or in partnership to support other organizations).

3

Continue to develop a diversity of advocacy projects to include policy, legal reform and support to trial level constitutional challenges.

4

Maintain a regular annual or biennial conference to bring together public interest groups to engage with specific topics in constitutional litigation including the role of interveners.

STRENGTHEN

The Centre's core competencies in education, constitutional expertise and collaboration.

1

Continue to support student participation and learning as a central principle of the Centre's mandate.

2

Explore additional opportunities for student learning & engagement through projects that enhance their experience.

3

Draw upon the expertise of the Centre's alumni in its advocacy and educational projects.

4

Target difficult constitutional issues for scholarly exploration and potential advocacy strategies (e.g. positive rights under the Charter).

5

Build on the expertise of the Executive Director to develop projects in emerging constitutional areas (e.g. children's rights under the Charter).

EXPAND

The Centre's capacity.

1

Increase capacity for research through litigation or research fellowships.

2

Reach out to other Centres within the University and other disciplines more generally to enhance the scholarship and advocacy work of the Centre.

3

Continue to target legislative and policy advocacy projects to expand the reach of the Centre on constitutional issues.

4

Play a central role in a significant ground level constitutional challenge (e.g. voting age challenge).