

## **Michelle Johal Election Platform**

I am running for an executive position with the CLA. I spent my last term on the Board as the CLA Women's Director. My co-director this term is Stephanie DiGiuseppe.

The pandemic witnessed a huge exodus of talented counsel from the defence bar. A lack of mentorship and networking opportunities were a factor, coupled with the shrinking Legal Aid Ontario budget.

In response, Stephanie and I co-chaired the Women's Conference in 2022. The theme of the conference was "Making Money Moves." Starting my own practice over a decade ago has been a rewarding personal and professional decision. We wanted to inspire others to do the same, and to share tips and tricks from the leaders in our bar about how to run a successful practice. The objective of the conference was to promote the retention of women in criminal law *and* to provide attendees with business development support.

The Women's Committee hosted several networking events throughout our tenure: the Women's Gala at Aria, the Women in Criminal Law Dinner at Terroni, and the 2023 Women's Gala: Meet a Legal Legend. At the most recent event, the Committee extended the invitation to Crown Attorneys and members of the judiciary.

I have been involved in numerous CLA committees this term including the Fall Conference, Diversity and Women's committees. Both the Fall Conference and Women's committees have put on exceptional education programs for our members this term. The feedback following the programs have been overwhelmingly positive. Quality education programming is critical to keep our members informed and up to date with various legal developments. If re-elected, I am committed to ensuring that this commitment to education programs continues.

If re-elected, I want to increase networking opportunities for our members. It is no secret that we are disconnected from our colleagues. The human interaction we enjoyed at courthouse lounges before the pandemic has

been lost. The Women's Committee and New Call Committee has been working hard to create networking opportunities for our members and doing a commendable job. I want to continue these efforts.