

Human Resources Legislative Update

Do You Employ Lawyers in your Workplace? Law Society Implements New 2017 Requirements for Licensees

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The Law Society of Ontario (LSO) is in the process of implementing the first of the recommendations adopted in its 2016 Report, [Working Together for Change: Strategies for Addressing Issues of Systemic Racism in the Legal Profession](#), which will require lawyers licensed by the LSO to take action before the end of 2017.

Specifically, before January 1, 2018, all lawyers licensed by the Law Society must:

- Create and adopt a mandatory individual Statement of Principles which acknowledges their obligation to promote equality, diversity and inclusion generally, and in their behaviour towards colleagues, employees, clients and the public.
- In the case of legal workplaces with 10 or more lawyers, lawyers must confirm that their workplace has a human rights and diversity policy that addresses issues such as fair recruitment, retention and advancement. If the workplace does not already have such policies in place, a suitable policy must be developed and implemented.

In legal workplaces with 10 or more lawyers, existing human rights and diversity and inclusion policies should be reviewed to determine if they comply with the new LSUC requirements, and amended if necessary before the end of 2017. If policy changes are required, many employers will prefer to address this requirement on an organization-wide basis, rather than developing human rights or diversity policies which apply only to them, or (as contemplated by the LSUC) expecting lawyers to develop their own policies.

All lawyers will be asked to confirm that they have adopted and are abiding by a Statement of Principles in their 2017 Annual Report, which is due by March 31, 2018.

In workplaces with 10 or more lawyers, lawyers are expected to appoint a representative to report on behalf of the group on the development, implementation and maintenance of a human rights and diversity policy in the 2017 Annual Report.

In the case of legal workplaces with 9 or fewer lawyers, the requirement to develop, implement and maintain a human rights and diversity policy is not applicable and lawyers will not be required to report on the development, implementation and maintenance of such a policy in their 2017 Annual Report. However, the LSUC is still encouraging individual lawyers to develop a human rights and diversity policy that addresses fair recruitment, retention and advancement. Again, employers may prefer to see this addressed on an organization-wide basis, rather than by lawyers acting individually.

To learn more about whether this requirement applies to you or your workplace, [consult the LSUC website](#). Please contact your Hicks Morley lawyer if we can assist you in ensuring the necessary steps are taken prior to December 31, 2017.