

## **Diversity and Inclusion as a Strategic Priority**

How can diversity be a realistic priority in what is sometimes described as the “extreme work environment” of a private law firm? We admit there are lots of challenges, however, we see progress, and from that, we are building the future. For us, diversity is not about counting heads for survey purposes. Our goal is to foster a spectrum of perspectives, resulting in an inclusive environment that is strategically based on talent and excellent, with a focus on our clients. Simply put, we believe that inclusion impacts environment and:

- attracts, retains and advances the best talent;
- maximizes business performance, and is a risk management tool; and
- is a client imperative.

We also recognize that our professional environment is demanding (to say the least). In an experienced based profession, excellence is fostered by experience. We aspire to excellent as a fundamental value. We also aspire to do legal work at the most challenging level. As alumni, you know that about us. Even so, our goal is to grow our partnership with women equity partners and other lawyers with diverse experiences, and nurture sustainable long term growth, to a leadership level. We will do this by ensuring that all of our lawyers, regardless of individual differences, have access to equal opportunities, and flexibility at times in their career when work/life issues require accommodation.

Equity partnership is one measure. Our percentage of women equity partners is currently 19.4%, which is pretty much industry average. This is not where we intend to be. We do not aspire to be industry average in anything. However, in a partnership of our size, growth at senior levels takes time if it is to be sustainable. What we have done is build a talent pipeline supported by an industry leading foundation of best practices which embeds diversity and inclusion in our recruitment and talent management programs. We measure progress at every year end and take the results very seriously because our people are our future. Here are some of our recent successes:

- 23% of our partners (combined income and equity) are women...a significant rise from 15% in 2004;
- 50% of our senior leadership team are women; and
- 36% of our Board of Partners are women.

We have a great deal more to do. But we are proud of our achievements, our goals and our long term commitment. We are equally proud to include our alumni as part of our community and our future.