

# Women's day

*The CBA's National Women Lawyers Forum is focusing on business and career issues for female practitioners.*



Veronica Jackson

“By and large, the legal profession’s framework is designed without women in mind,” says Veronica Jackson, a lawyer with the Ministry of the Attorney General in Victoria. “We are still trying to find a way to make sure that women are making the most of legal practice.”

That fact and that goal were part of the reason for the founding in 2005 of the CBA’s National Women Lawyers Forum, which aims to be a common connecting point for and by women lawyers. The Forum, which grew out of a similar group in the CBA’s B.C. Branch, now has more than 1,500 members, says Jackson, the Forum’s Chair and a member of the CBA’s Futures Committee.

The Forum’s creation “was fuelled by the realization that women lawyers have different expectations and needs than men,” Jackson says. “The Forum facilitates women’s influence within the practice of law, and provides a support network, encouraging women in leadership roles, professional development and advancement.”

Sandra Schulz, vice-chair of the Forum and a lawyer and mediator with the Resolution Centre in Edmonton, adds that “the Forum developed out of women lawyers needing to talk to other women lawyers about problems they were facing, in the same way men had been talking to each other for years.”

Jackson observes that “in the ‘90s, lots of energy went into equality in the legal profession. But now we also want to do things for the direct economic, social and professional benefit of women lawyers in Canada. Women leave private practice in droves, far more than men. For example, in Manitoba, women make up 17% of private practice, and experience suggests this is similar across the country.”

“We are still seeing some of the recommendations from the [1994 Bertha Wilson Touchstones] task force report not addressed,” Schulz says, “including higher dropout rates of women from the profession. We are hoping to find out why, how to meet those needs, and how to work towards changing the way the profession operates for greater retention.”

The Forum has been organizing networking events, and several provincial forums have established mentorship programs for women lawyers and students. They hope to include female judges in the program as well. Jackson and Schulz are particularly proud of the Forum’s Cecilia I. Johnstone Award, which will recognize a lawyer who has advanced the cause of women in law. The award will be handed out annually at the CBA’s Canadian Legal Conference, starting in 2008.

## Un forum au service des avocates

*Le Forum des avocates de l'ABC répond aux attentes et aux problèmes des praticiennes quant à leur carrière et à leur profession.*

Le Forum des avocates de l’ABC offre une valeur ajoutée à toutes ses membres. Quelles sont ces dernières? La reconnaissance « que les attentes et les besoins des avocates sont parfois distincts de ceux de leurs homologues masculins » et « aider les femmes à mettre en valeur leur plein potentiel dans le cadre de leur pratique du droit », notamment par l’intermédiaire d’un « réseau de support encourageant l’engagement des femmes dans des rôles de leader, ainsi que le développement et l’avancement professionnels ».

« Nous tentons de trouver le moyen d’assurer que les femmes profitent de la pratique du droit au maximum », affirme Veronica Jackson, avocate au ministère du Procureur général à Victoria, présidente du Forum et membre du Comité sur l’avenir de l’ABC. Tel est l’un des objectifs ayant conduit à la création en 2005 de ce Forum qui compte actuellement plus de 1 500 membres et est représenté localement en Alberta, en Colombie-Britannique, au Manitoba, au Québec, au Nouveau-Brunswick et en Nouvelle-Écosse. Veronica Jackson en conclut que « les avocates ont indubitablement un intérêt intense pour les services fournis par l’intermédiaire du forum ».

Les participants bénéficient d’événements de réseautage et plusieurs programmes de mentorat ont été mis sur pied dans plusieurs forums provinciaux à l’attention des avocates et étudiantes en droit.

Un des chevaux de bataille de Veronica



Johnstone, who passed away last year, was the first female president of the CBA's Alberta Branch and only the second woman to be national president of the CBA. She was a leading proponent of the Wilson task force and was eventually appointed to the Alberta Queen's Bench. "She was a role model and hero to many people," says Schulz.

Future Forum plans include a national CLE event on topics of particular interest to women lawyers, as well as continued growth in CBA branches. There are now local Forums in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and Quebec and Saskatchewan have expressed interest.

"It is really an exciting time," says Jackson. "The Forum has grown in the number of provincial and territorial branches phenomenally, and women lawyers are involved nationally across the country. There is obviously a real thirst among women lawyers for services the forum is providing."

— Michelle Mann

Jackson est de renverser la tendance quant au grand nombre d'avocates à abandonner leur carrière en droit. Sandra Schulz, vice-présidente du Forum, avocate et médiatrice auprès du Centre de résolution d'Edmonton espère « comprendre pourquoi c'est le cas; comment répondre aux besoins des avocates et changer la profession pour une meilleure rétention des praticiennes du droit ».

L'autre projet à surveiller est le prix annuel Cecilia I. Johnstone du Forum qui sera attribué à partir de 2008 à une avocate reconnue pour avoir fait avancer la cause des femmes en droit!

— Yasmina El Jamal

## Le Techshow de l'ABA à l'horizon

Inscrivez-vous tôt pour économiser sur les frais d'inscription

L'ABA TECHSHOW, la plus prestigieuse conférence et expo mondiale en technologie juridique, accepte maintenant les inscriptions. L'édition de 2008 se tiendra au Hilton de Chicago, du 13 au 15 mars, et proposera des séances sur la divulgation électronique, la reconnaissance vocale, la gestion du savoir, les logiciels collaboratifs, l'exercice mobile du droit, la sécurité des données et bien plus.

De nouveau cette année, l'ABC fait la promotion du programme de TECH-

SHOW. Les membres de l'ABC reçoivent donc un rabais de 150 \$ sur le prix d'inscription régulier de 895 \$. De plus, les personnes qui s'inscrivent avant le 1<sup>er</sup> février 2008 auront droit à un rabais

supplémentaire de 100 \$. Alors, inscrivez-vous avant le 1<sup>er</sup> février et ne déboursez que 645 \$. Pour de plus amples renseignements, visitez le site [www.techshow.com](http://www.techshow.com).

### Techshow alert

Register early to save on fees

ABA TECHSHOW, the world's premier legal technology conference and expo, is now open for registration. The 2008 edition will be held at the Hilton Chicago from March 13 to 15, and will feature sessions on e-discovery, voice recognition, knowledge management, collaborative software, mobile lawyering, data security and much more.

Once again this year, the CBA is a program promoter for ABA TECHSHOW, so CBA members receive a \$150 discount off the regular registration fee of \$895. What's more, early-bird registrants who sign up before February 1, 2008, receive an additional \$100 discount. So register by February 1 to pay just \$645. For more information, visit [www.techshow.com](http://www.techshow.com).

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