



Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL)
20 Toronto Street, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M5C 2B8
info@cabl.ca

Statement from the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers celebrating and applauding Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s appointment of The Honorable Justice Michael Tulloch as the new Chief Justice of Ontario and President of the Court of Appeal for Ontario

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As a new year begins, many Canadians take the opportunity to take stock, celebrate our achievements and plan for the future. In that spirit, the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (“CABL”) celebrates and applauds Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s December 18, 2022 appointment of The Honorable Justice Michael Tulloch as the new Chief Justice of Ontario and President of the Court of Appeal for Ontario. It is a truly historic appointment. Chief Justice Tulloch was the first Black Canadian appointed to an appellate court in Canada. He now becomes the first Black Chief Justice of Ontario and President of the Court of Appeal for Ontario. His appointment is well deserved, and of seismic importance to not only members of CABL, Black and immigrant communities in Canada, but also to Canada and the legal profession generally.

Chief Justice Tulloch’s career is a long and storied one and, following his historic appointment, Chief Justice Tulloch’s biography and career has been detailed and shared via various media outlets and platforms such as the [National Post](#), the [Toronto Star](#), the [Law Times](#), the [Loop News](#), [CBC News](#) and [CTV News](#). But, a recitation of Chief Justice Tulloch’s biography and career achievements alone cannot capture the significance of his appointment and his contribution to CABL, Black and immigrant communities and the legal profession in Canada. The appointment of Chief Justice Tulloch is significant to Canada and the legal profession because representation matters. Chief Justice Tulloch’s appointment is an inspiration to judges, lawyers, law students, and the Black community as a whole. Members of the Black community continue to be disproportionately over-represented in a criminal justice system staffed with judges who do not reflect their communities and lived experiences. Members of the Black community are also disproportionately under-represented in the practice of law.

Appointments like Chief Justice Tulloch’s are important positive steps to address the systemic challenges faced by Black Canadians and indigenous peoples in the legal system. As The Honorable Justice Kofi N. Barnes of the Ontario Superior Court notes:

A diverse bench and bar enables the voices of all segments of society to be heard. Such a circumstance is crucial for every Canadian to have confidence in Canada's democratic institutions of which Canada's legal systems are an indispensable component. The Founders of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers recognised that it was not enough to only provide Black people with an opportunity to become lawyers but it was crucial to ensure that they acquire and maintain the skills and opportunity to be successful at the highest level of their craft and to ensure that principles of equality and equity are infused and safeguarded in all aspect of Canadian life. Chief Justice Tulloch understood these values. He has always fought for these values an example of which is his status as a past President of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers. The fact that Chief Justice Tulloch is supremely qualified to be Chief Justice of Ontario or that he has made and will continue to make significant positive contributions to the development of the law in Ontario towards a just, fair, peaceful and equitable society for all Canadians is plain and obvious from his qualifications and contributions to date, however, Chief Justice Tulloch's appointment serves as another important beacon of inspiration and hope to every person in or out of the legal sphere (a source of inspiration and hope to every BIPOC) that regardless of any barriers any mountain can be climbed or any goal achieved with hard work, self-confidence, resilience, perseverance and tenacity. Our justice system continues to make strides towards achieving a just, fair and equitable justice system. Without excluding the voices whose values have always been heard at the table of justice, we continue to look for ways to include the voices of segments of society that have traditionally been either deliberately or inadvertently silenced or ignored. As we give effect to these voices we move closer to our quest to create a fairer, more just, more peaceful and more equitable legal system for all Canadians. Chief Justice Tulloch's appointment takes us closer to achieving this goal.

Regarding CABL specifically, Chief Justice Tulloch's well deserved appointment is of particular significance to CABL and its members because he is a long-time CABL supporter. He served as CABL president from 2001 to 2003. At the end of his tenure, he became the first CABL president to be appointed to the bench in-seat. When success came to Chief Justice Tulloch, he did not leave CABL or his fellow members behind. He lifted us as he climbed. As Sue-Lynn Noel, Senior Vice President Purolator and a former fellow CABL Board member notes:

I served on the CABL board with Justice Tulloch, who was then President (and also just "Michael"). When he was appointed to the bench in 2003, he encouraged me to fill his vacancy as President of CABL notwithstanding my few years at the bar. He taught me that intelligence, passion and dedication can overcome a lack of experience. As one of the youngest lawyers to be appointed to the Superior Court in Ontario, Justice Tulloch proved that advice over and over again by his quick accession to the Court of Appeal and now to Chief Justice. How wonderful for Justice Tulloch personally, who has dedicated his career to equitable justice for all. More importantly, how wonderful for the Black community in general and for Black lawyers specifically. Justice Tulloch has always kept his finger on the pulse of the community, and his perspective and voice is exactly what the higher courts need to help dismantle systemic anti-Black racism in Canada.

After his appointment to the bench, Chief Justice Tulloch continued to support CABL, its members and Black and diverse legal practitioners no matter where in Canada they were located. He has given generously of his time to mentor students, lawyers and judges, including travelling to nascent CABL chapters in British Columbia (in 2013) and Nova Scotia (in 2017) to serve as a keynote speaker at chapter building events. Sandy Thomas,

Senior Counsel, Public Prosecution Services and CABL's inaugural President articulates below:

Justice Tulloch is the ideal choice for the position of Chief Justice of Ontario and President of the Court of Appeal for Ontario. His intelligence and his work ethic are unmatched. He has always had a stellar reputation in the legal community, from his time as a provincial Crown, defence lawyer, member of the Superior Court of Justice and then Court of Appeal. For a number of years Justice Tulloch was a member of the Board of Directors of CABL. Over the years, he contributed his time and energy towards the development of CABL's goal of fostering the professional excellence of its members. In 2003, Justice Tulloch was President of CABL when the organization established the Hon. Julius Isaac Scholarship at the University Of Windsor Faculty Of Law. He also participated on CABL's planning committee for the event which launched that scholarship.

Perhaps informed by his own lived experience as a Black Canadian, Chief Justice Tulloch has demonstrated a commitment to creating a more equitable society throughout his career. He is a founding member and patron of the Second Chance Scholarship Foundation, an organization which provides scholarships for young people who have been in conflict with the law or who are from at-risk backgrounds and are pursuing a post-secondary education. Chief Justice Tulloch is also a past member of the Board of Directors of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Tropicana Community Services, and the Jane-Finch Community Legal Aid Clinic. Notably, he was appointed by the Ontario government to conduct reviews which resulted in two important reports: the Report of the Independent Police Oversight Review (2017) and the Report of the Independent Street Checks Review (2018). Respectively, these reports provided insight and recommendations related to police oversight bodies and street checks (carding). As a fellow former CABL president, Arleen Huggins, describes:

The importance of Justice Tulloch's elevation cannot be understated. He serves the public not only as a Judge preserving the rule of law, but as someone who has lived experience as a Black Immigrant to Canada with an understanding of historical and current experiences which the Black community has endured. He also has served as a role model to Black children and youth as to what is achievable/possible. Justice Tulloch has spoken on many occasions as to the importance of the public seeing judges from their own communities when coming to the Court. It is a crucial component of access to justice.

We in the Black legal community, and in the Black community generally, welcome this important elevation and are watching for many more judicial appointments and elevations of Black Judges in Ontario and across Canada.

Congratulations Chief Justice Tulloch on this wonderful and well-deserved achievement. We look forward to your continued leadership in the legal profession and broader community. Thank you for your example to all of us.



Raphael Tachie
President
Canadian Association of Black Lawyers

About the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers

The Canadian Association of Black Lawyers is a national network of law professionals (students, lawyers and the judiciary) with an overall mandate to promote the advancement of black lawyers within the profession by providing support systems, promoting academic and professional excellence and advancing issues of equity and diversity among the bar and judiciary.