



News Release

Federation of Law Societies of Canada Grants Preliminary Approval of Trinity Western University's Proposed Law Program

**For Immediate Release
December 16, 2013**

After a thorough review of the proposal submitted by Trinity Western University (TWU), the Common Law Program Approval Committee of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada has granted TWU preliminary approval of its proposed law school program. The Approval Committee identified three concerns that it will monitor in subsequent reviews.

The Approval Committee had a limited mandate: to determine whether the proposed law school program would produce graduates competent for admission to law society bar admission programs. All law schools in Canada must adhere to a National Requirement set by the Federation and the law societies that outlines the knowledge and skills competencies that applicants for entry to the bar admission programs in the Canadian common law jurisdictions must possess.

Until it produces its first graduates, a program that complies with the National Requirement can be granted preliminary approval only and will be subject to regular reviews. The concerns that will be monitored by the Approval Committee in these reviews relate to TWU's teaching of legal ethics and public law, as well as the budget for the proposed law program.

TWU is a Christian university located in Langley, British Columbia. Established in 1962, it currently offers more than 40 undergraduate and 16 graduate programs, including recognized professional programs in nursing, education and business.

Approval of the academic program is only one phase in the development of a new law school in Canada. Provincial government authorities decide whether universities can offer specific degree programs. In this case, the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education would have to consent to TWU offering a new law degree program.

"The Federation followed a fair, rigorous and thoughtful process", said Federation President Marie-Claude Bélanger-Richard, Q.C. She added, "We took into account and listened very carefully to all points of view that were expressed about this proposal."

Following TWU's application for approval of its proposed law school program, issues relating to TWU's Community Covenant Agreement were raised that were outside the scope of the Approval Committee mandate. The Federation decided that these issues should be addressed and appointed a Special Advisory Committee of respected leaders of the legal profession to examine them. The advisory committee concluded that as long as the National Requirement is met, there is no public interest reason to exclude future graduates of the TWU program from law society bar admission programs.

"Members of the legal profession are bound to uphold the Rule of Law and fundamental constitutional values set out in the Constitution of Canada, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and human rights legislation", noted Ms. Bélanger-Richard. She added that "adherence by lawyers to principles of non-discrimination in the exercise of their professional duties is an essential part of what defines a member of the profession."

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The Special Advisory Committee recommended that consideration be given to adding a non-discrimination provision to the National Requirement similar to that required of American law schools. Ms. Bélanger-Richard said that the Federation Council agrees that this suggestion will be explored.

The reports of the Approval Committee and of the Special Advisory Committee have been provided by the Federation to Canada's law societies. The law societies have the statutory authority to set policies for admission to the legal profession in their jurisdictions.

All documents referred to in this news release are available on the Federation web site (<http://www.flsc.ca/en/twu-common-law-program/>). Additional information about the Federation's common law program approval process is available here: (<http://www.flsc.ca/en/national-requirement-for-approving-canadian-common-law-degree-programs/>)

The Federation of Law Societies of Canada is the national coordinating body of the 14 law societies mandated by provincial and territorial law to regulate Canada's 100,000 lawyers and Quebec's 4,000 notaries in the public interest. It plays an important role in the development of high, consistent national standards of regulation of the legal profession, including standards for admission to the profession. It is also a leading voice on issues of national and international importance relating to the administration of justice and the Rule of Law.

For more information on the Federation, please visit our web site at www.flsc.ca

For more information about this release, or to acquire a high resolution photograph of the Federation President, please contact:

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