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The Pitch: Expert judges survey the field

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The Pitch, the first-ever legal innovation competition hosted by CBA and LegalX is off to a rousing start, with 31 submissions received by midnight on Wednesday.

It's now up to the committee of experts to survey the field and deliver, by June 23, the names of the five entrants who will go on to compete at the CBA Legal Conference in Ottawa in August.

The virtual judging panel is replete with names familiar to those in the legal futures/tech world. They are:

Karim Benyekhlef, Director, Cyberjustice Laboratory, Université de Montréal: A professor at the U de M's Faculty of Law since 1989, Karim launched the first French-language electronic law journal in 1995 and has initiated a number of online dispute resolution projects. The Cyberjustice Laboratory won an innovation award from the Bar of Quebec in 2015. "Start-Ups are essential actors to justice innovations. #TowardsCyberjustice" Follow him on Twitter @CyberjusticeLab

Monica Goyal, My Legal Briefcase: Named one of 10 Women to Watch in Tech by the Journal of the American Bar Association, Monica brings the problem-solving focus of an engineer to the business of law. "Lawyer, Engineer, Entrepreneur, Teacher, and Speaker interested in advancing the field of law and technology." Follow her on Twitter @MonicaNGoyal

Randall Howard, General Partner, VERDEXUS: A prolific serial technology CEO, investor and philanthropist, Randall is committed to building world-leading high-growth technology organizations through "Venture 2.0" boutique VERDEXUS. "An activist investor before the term even existed. Asks startups hard Qs key to success." Follow him on Twitter @randallh

Mitch Kowalski, principal consultant at Cross Pollen Advocacy: Recognized as a Fastcase 50 Global Legal Innovator in 2012, Mitch also writes for a number of publications, including a monthly legal innovation column in the National Post. His latest book The Great Legal Reformation: Notes from the Field, will be published later this year. "As a legal futurist, I'm absolutely certain that legal service delivery will be transformed by start-ups. I enjoy following the revolution." Follow him on Twitter @mekowalski

Carla Swansburg, Director, Professional Development, Pricing & Knowledge Services, Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP: Carla has a keen interest in developments and changes in the practice of law and in legal technology and innovation, and is on the front lines of innovation in service delivery, legal technology and the evolving practice of law. "I manage the Blakes/LegalX partnership and spend a lot of time talking to legal tech startups and considering the implications of technology for Big Law." Follow her on Twitter @cswansburg

The five finalists will state their cases before a second group of judges and a live audience – who will vote on their own favourite presentation – on August 12. The prize for the winner chosen by the judges will include a two-week residency at LegalX, with mentorship and introductions to the kinds of people startups need to know. All five finalists will be guaranteed an interview with the Chinese Angels Mentor Program. If selected (and pending due diligence), they will receive an equity investment of no less than \$200,000. There will also be investors in the audience, and more opportunities during the conference for the finalists to drum up interest in – and funding for – their projects.

Tickets to The Pitch: Where startups state their case, are free with full CBA Legal Conference registration, and are also available on the conference [website](#). Keep an eye on this space, and on The Pitch [website](#), for details about the finalists and judges.