

Client Spotlight: SE Health Leads the Way with a Hybrid Legal and Innovation Model

As one of Canada's largest not-for-profit social enterprises, SE Health has a long history of pairing purpose with innovation. Today, the organization is redefining how legal, privacy, compliance and digital functions can work together to strengthen healthcare across the country.

We spoke with Farah Ismail, Senior Vice-President, Chief Legal, Privacy and Compliance Officer, about how SE Health built a hybrid department from the ground up and why that model is accelerating the organization's future-ready strategy.

A Purpose-Driven Approach to Building a Hybrid Department

For Farah, building a new department was a chance to rethink the traditional in-house model. Rather than focusing solely on legal output, her team operates like a business within a business, partnering closely with internal stakeholders. Guided by SE Health's mission to help good people do good things, the department aims to be courageous, vigilant and tactful as it supports teams delivering care.

SE Health's hybrid structure helps the national organization respond quickly to regional differences and post-pandemic realities. It allows the team to:

- > navigate provincial variations in laws and operations;
- > identify trends emerging in other jurisdictions; and
- > scale or adapt successful approaches across the country.

This model also reflects SE Health's commitment to fiscal responsibility, combining strong internal expertise with strategic external partners to manage costs while ensuring access to specialized knowledge when needed.



Farah Ismail
Senior Vice-President,
Chief Legal, Privacy and
Compliance Officer



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Embedding AI Through Cross-Functional Collaboration

At SE Health, AI is not a standalone initiative but a cultural shift. The organization created a cross-functional framework that unites Innovation, Legal, Privacy, Compliance and Digital/IT to guide responsible adoption. Innovation explores new solutions, while Legal, Privacy and Compliance ensure alignment with Canadian regulations. Digital/IT strengthens security and protects Personal Health Information.

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These teams jointly conduct Privacy Impact Assessments and Threat and Risk Assessments to evaluate data use and potential risks before any AI tool advances. The result is a coordinated approach that positions AI as a support for provider efficiency and patient experience rather than a replacement for human care.

Early Wins: Building a High-Performing Team from the Ground Up

In under two years, SE Health has achieved several milestones that demonstrate the strength and effectiveness of its hybrid model. It has:

- > built a fully operational Legal, Privacy and Compliance department;
- > created new standard operating procedures aligned with enterprise risk management;
- > established a collaborative team where specialists and associates manage diverse files;
- > optimized the use of external counsel for complex matters;
- > freed internal capacity to focus on long-term strategic initiatives; and
- > strengthened internal relationships by engaging early in new projects and setting clear review pathways.

These early wins highlight the value of building deep partnerships across the organization and ensuring legal, privacy and compliance teams are involved early in planning and decision-making.

Looking Ahead: A Future-Ready Vision for Canadian Healthcare

SE Health's hybrid model is already helping the organization respond to some of Canada's most pressing healthcare challenges – from workforce shortages to shifting scopes of practice and evolving regulatory models.

Farah says the most exciting part is the rigour the team has established. This foundation allows SE Health to integrate AI responsibly and create safe operational efficiencies that ultimately give patients the autonomy they deserve.



LPC Department - 2025

Aird & Berlis is proud to support SE Health as it continues shaping a smarter, more connected and more innovative future for home and community care in Canada.

Contact



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Fiona has extensive experience advising international businesses entering the Canadian market. To date, she has advised more than 100 companies expanding into Canada. Fiona advises clients in this space all day, every day. She has been practising for more than a decade and is a regular speaker and writer on market expansion matters. Fiona is proud to have been recognized by *The Best Lawyers in Canada*, *The Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory* and *Benchmark Canada*.

A proactive and comprehensive approach is required to succeed in a new market. Fiona manages teams of other lawyers and patent agents to provide her clients with a full range of legal services to help their businesses grow. She acts as project manager to ensure her clients receive seamless legal services in all relevant areas.

Fiona takes great care to understand her clients' businesses and deliver advice that is tailored to meeting their specific needs. Her responsiveness, dedication to clear communication and hands-on approach show that she is personally invested in the success of her clients.

Fiona is pleased to offer a multitude of resources answering often-asked questions about expanding into Canada, including [this video](#) and [this one-page guide](#), all of which can be found on the [Market Expansion Resources Dashboard](#).

Have more questions about expanding into Canada? Please [click here](#) or scan the following QR code to access Aird & Berlis LLP's Market Expansion Dashboard, your one-stop-shop for market expansion resources:

