



THE CANADIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION DU BARREAU CANADIEN

August 8, 2007

The Honourable Monte Solberg, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada
140 Promenade du Portage, Phase IV
Gatineau, QC K1A 0J9

Dear Minister:

In recent years, the Canadian Bar Association has noticed an alarming trend towards dramatically increased costs of tuition for professional programs, specifically in law. We are writing on behalf of the Young Lawyers-CBA to seek your assistance in addressing the financial plight of students when they graduate from law school.

The CBA is very concerned about the financial challenges faced by law students. Unfortunately, government student loan programs have not kept pace with increases in tuition to ensure that all those who are accepted into law school have the resources they need. Student loan programs are essential to allow individuals from all economic backgrounds to have access to professional programs, and to ensure that our profession is reflective of today's society.

The situation for law students is further exacerbated when they graduate from law school. At this point, law students are not fully-qualified lawyers, and are not yet earning professional income. Across Canada, upon graduation, law students receive a six-month grace period on repayment of federal student loans. Interest begins to accrue immediately, and they are required to repay loans while still completing their professional education.

The CBA, a national association representing 37,000 members including some 16,000 young lawyers, is calling on governments to consider the articling periods and bar admission programs as part of the period of study. That way, interest would not accumulate, and payments would not be owing on student loans.

Given the national situation, we are writing today to ask your government to take immediate action, as follows:

1. We request that law students be exempt from loan repayment during articling and bar admission periods, and that loan repayment not begin until articling and bar admission are completed. Both articling and the bar course are mandatory elements in the professional education of lawyers.

2. We request that your government increase the maximum amounts of student loans available to an amount sufficient to cover the actual cost of professional training to ensure equal access for all who wish to enter law school.
3. We are calling on your government to initiate funding programs to lessen student debt and facilitate access to professional program.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this matter further. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

(original signed by Annette Horst)

Annette Horst
Chair, Young Lawyers-CBA

(original signed by J. Parker MacCarthy)

J. Parker MacCarthy, Q.C.
President, Canadian Bar Association