

## **CALEYWRAY LAWYERS SUPPORTS MANDATORY MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR ARTICLING STUDENTS**

CaleyWray Lawyers is proud to support calls for the Law Society of Ontario to implement a mandatory minimum compensation for articling students in the province of Ontario.

As a union-side labour firm, we feel it is our duty to compensate our articling students at a competitive rate. The work that these students perform is valuable to both our firm and our clients. The idea of expecting this work without compensation runs counter to both our firm's values and our clients' values. Historically, our students have worked hard to support counsel in litigation and, in our view, that hard work is deserving of reward.

We understand the struggle that many students face after completing law school. Tuition for JD programs is rising each year and most graduates have six figures of debt as they enter the work force. Servicing this debt is a barrier to entering the profession for many students. The Ontario bar should be as diverse as the clients we represent. Expecting students who may already be struggling with debt to work for 10 months without compensation prevents talented advocates from becoming called. Moreover, it disproportionately impacts the students who already face significant barriers.

We note that the articling requirement and the exclusion of law students from minimum employment standards can create an environment that is ripe for exploitation. All firms have high expectations for their students and many students work long hours. A mandatory hourly wage will ensure that students are at least compensated for the hours of work that they put in.

We recognize that not all firms and not all sole practitioners are in a position to compensate an articling student. We recognize that number of students seeking positions has, in recent years, outpaced the number of available positions. In our view, it is not appropriate to remedy this problem by expecting students to engage in unpaid or underpaid labour. We call on the Law Society of Ontario to explore options to expand the number of available paid articling positions, including the establishment of a fund to assist small firms and sole practitioners in creating well paid articling placements.

As lawyers, we have a professional obligation to uphold the principles of justice, fairness and equality. Supporting mandatory minimum compensation for articling students furthers these principles. We call upon our colleagues, and especially our colleagues in the labour bar, to support the implementation of mandatory minimum compensation for articling students.