

Banack's Bencher News #50

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SPECIAL EDITION BAR ADMISSION REFORM IS HERE

In a Special Convocation to be convened on December 5, 2003, Benchers will be asked to consider the recommendations of the Task Force on the Continuum of Legal Education. The final form of report was provided to Benchers for information in October. It calls for a dramatic change in the bar admission training and testing process to be effective the Spring of 2006. To view the report electronically, you can visit the following site: http://www.lsuc.on.ca/news/pdf/convoct03_continuum1.pdf. Since 2001, the Task Force reviewed previous reports, considered the process in other jurisdictions and conducted extensive consultation including research in skills and professional responsibility training, licensing examinations and the articling process.

The new, proposed bar admission course model has the following characteristics:

- Establishment of a licensing process to ensure candidates demonstrate pre-determined standards of competence in substantive law and an understanding of professionalism, including ethics;
- Termination of traditional classroom teaching of substantive law at the bar admission course;
- Provision of reference materials by the Law Society on which candidates will be examined with respect to substantive law, including professional responsibility;
- Creation/Maintenance of learning tools and services to support candidates' self-study and preparation for licensing exams;
- Creation of licensing examinations, established in consultation with appropriate professionals to create a standard, reliable, valid, fair and defensible licensure program;
- A bar admission process consisting of :
 - a four week skills and professional responsibility program and assessment;
 - two licensing examinations: a barrister examination and a solicitor examination, each including a professional responsibility component;
 - a 10-month articling program;
- Examinations will be scheduled three times each year;
- In addition to the 10-month articling term, students will have one study week for each examination and two days to write each examination (one free day and one writing day);
- Reduction of the overall bar admission cost to the profession;
- Reduction of the current annual tuition of \$4,400.00 per student.

Please consult the Report for more particulars and discuss it with colleagues.

No other Law Society reform will affect the future of our profession as dramatically (positively or negatively) as this proposal. Your comments, whether critical or not, and suggestions are very important. If you wish, please respond to me (by return fax or email) or to any other Bencher or the Treasurer **by no later than November 28, 2003** in order that your thoughts may be circulated and considered by Convocation.

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