

LexisNexis Canada and Canadian Lawyers Abroad: Rule of Law Partners

by LexisNexis Canada Rule of Law Committee

On Thursday, July 8, representatives from Canadian Lawyers Abroad – Avocats canadiens à l'étranger (CLA-ACE) gave a presentation to LexisNexis Canada employees at the company's head office in Markham, Ontario. The company is a 2010 sponsor of CLA-ACE, having contributed \$10,000 to support its Student Program. LexisNexis Canada is committed to being a sponsor and developing a relationship with CLA-ACE as part of the company's continued rule of law efforts. The LexisNexis Canada Rule of Law Committee was instrumental in securing the sponsorship and arranging the presentation.

CLA-ACE was co-founded in 2004 by lawyers Catherine McKenna and Yasmin Shaker, who were on hand for the July 8 presentation. Having grown into a nationwide entity with a global reach, CLA-ACE states in its literature it has developed "innovative legal projects that focus on systemic change, particularly focused on issues that impact children and women, as they comprise the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society."

McKenna described several CLA-ACE projects, to include the African Canadian Women's Human Rights Project (ACWHRP), the Ghana Legal Clinic Project and the Student Program. The ACWHRP unites human rights experts from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Canada to address women's issues. In February 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya, the ACWHRP held a workshop on customary law and marital rape; one of the organization's goals is to lead a public campaign to educate people on the need to criminalize marital rape in the three African countries. With the Ghana Legal Clinic Project, CLA-ACE, in partnership with the University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic, is helping to establish a legal aid clinic and access to justice programs in Ghana. The legal aid clinic will focus on the protection of women and children.

CLA-ACE's Student Chapter Program involves approximately 600 members in 10 student chapters located at law schools throughout Canada. Each year the Program has a particular theme for which each chapter can formulate its own activities; the 2010 theme is children's rights.

The Student Program chapters also are eligible to have members participate in CLA-ACE's Summer Student Internship Program, which puts students in various human rights and rule of law related organizations around the world, to include Ghana, Kenya, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, East Timor and the Yukon.

One of the internship opportunities is with the Bangkok headquarters of ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes). Brittany Twiss, a second-year law student, was also present at the July 8 presentation to talk about her experience interning at ECPAT in 2009. Twiss talked about the dynamic and fast-paced nature of ECPAT's mission, telling the LexisNexis audience that one of her first tasks was to write a report on online child pornography for the United Nations Office of the High Commission of Human Rights. Said Twiss about being faced with this task, "I learned how to use Quicklaw very, very quickly."

LexisNexis Canada is proud of its sponsorship and support of CLA-ACE, and the presentation attendees appreciated the opportunity to hear first-hand how the sponsorship is helping CLA-ACE continue its work.

Said McKenna, who is the Executive Director of CLA-ACE, "We are extremely pleased to partner with LexisNexis, to have their financial help in supporting our Student Program. We look forward to continuing working together in the future."

A highlight of the event was when Twiss summed up her portion of the presentation by telling the audience:

"I am very excited that LexisNexis has chosen to work with CLA, and I hope you are as well. You are joining a very dedicated and compassionate group of individuals; they are inspiring a new generation of law students to think of a law degree not as a right of passage, but as an opportunity to promote positive change across the globe."

LexisNexis Canada was pleased to hear CLA-ACE talk about its programs and goals and how the company is helping to continue CLA-ACE's mission. Alan Dingle, Vice President, Business Development, and executive sponsor of the LexisNexis Canada Rule of Law Committee, said "LexisNexis Canada is committed to furthering rule of law initiatives in Canada and around the world. CLA-ACE is a good fit as they provide opportunities for young Canadians to gain a global perspective as they begin their legal careers."

Catherine McKenna, CLA-ACE Executive Director, addresses LexisNexis Canada employees



Yasmin Shaker, CLA-ACE co-founder, talks about the organization's mission



CLA-ACE Student Intern Brittany Twiss talks about her experience working at the ECPAT International Secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand



LexisNexis Canada employees in Markham listen to the CLA-ACE presentation on July 8, 2010

