

Kingston, Ontario
October 11st, 2011

Undergraduate Admissions Office
Faculty of Law, McGill University
3644 Peel Street, Room 418
Montréal, QC H3A 1W9

Object: Application to the B.C.L./LL.B. program at McGill University

Dear Admissions Committee,

In the course of my studies in economics, I have examined several economic and fiscal aspects of social contracts and constitutions. While most public finance economists tend to avoid judicial issues as much as possible, I felt compelled by them. Over the last few years, I frequently found myself reading judgments, digging into the Canadian constitution, and attending law seminars at Queen's University. I gradually developed a passion for issues related to the constitutional division of legislative powers: I wanted to understand the normative rationales underlying the design of our constitution and of its successive amendments. As I became increasingly aware of the fundamental importance of law in every aspect of our public and private lives, I developed a strong interest for both Canadian and comparative Constitutional Law. This intellectual evolution has spurred my desire to engage in legal studies at McGill University and to become a practitioner in the field of Canadian Constitutional Law.

Our constitution shapes the way government and citizens interact, both by protecting them from abuses by the State and, in a federal country like ours, by determining the role of each tier of government through the distribution of legislative powers. Thus, a government's ability to institute social policies is intricately linked to its Constitutional Law. At Queen's University, I worked under the supervision of Professor Robin W. Boadway, a pioneer in the field of fiscal federalism. My first research project, now the main chapter of my dissertation, investigated whether fiscal centralization and decentralization are likely to weaken or strengthen national unity and political stability in a federation. I also studied the relationship between centralization and political extremism in local elections.

Although my academic work consists primarily of theoretical research projects, I worked on several applied policy issues which revealed to me the significance of the Constitution in every area of policy-making. For instance, my master's work on the public funding of elementary and secondary education brought up questions about the constitutionality of federal investments and transfers to provincially-funded education. While I participated in preparatory work for the "Groupe de Travail sur la Tarification des Services Publics" at the Quebec Ministry of Finances, I further familiarized myself with some legal aspects of tax policy, such as the constitutional distinction between taxes and tariffs, which are treated similarly by economists. I came face to face with the constitutional aspects underlying the Canadian Social Transfers and Canadian Equalization Programs when I co-authored a book about federal-provincial transfers in 2007. Recently, while working on a paper proposing several reforms to the Employment Insurance program, I ran into the problem of identifying the constitutional meaning of 'insurance' in order to make policy recommendations.

My interest in grappling with difficult legal questions further extended when I held the position of economic adviser to the opposition critic for Labour at the National Assembly of Quebec. I enjoyed reading legal doctrine when drafting, reviewing and criticizing bills submitted to the National Assembly. I also had the chance to draft a Resolution, unanimously adopted by the National Assembly, pressuring the federal government to use its foreign relations prerogative to fight more efficiently against tax evasion.

While my background may not be typical, my previous studies and experience have prepared me well for legal studies. I excel at tackling problems that incorporate both theoretical and practical facets. One of the most sought-after qualities for an economist is his being able to break out complex problems into clear and insightful intuitions. It allows them to tackle abstract questions, to analyze them logically and methodologically in order to inform public policy. Additionally, working on economic issues that were intertwined with other branches of the social sciences provided me with opportunities to share my interests with peers across several fields of practice and research. Just as it is the case with legal work and litigation, communicating a research idea demands the

scholastic work of constructing an informed and flawless argument, but also necessitates the capacity to convince one's peers of its relevance with sharpness and precision.

It is no coincidence that McGill law faculty is by far my first choice as to where I want to pursue my legal studies. Its expertise and reputation in Constitutional and Public Law is outstanding. The prevailing pedagogic approach seems well adapted for students who seek real intellectual stimulation and who want to be comfortable in both of the legal traditions that shaped our country's history and institutions. In a globalized world in which cross-border interactions are commonplace, being able to approach legal problems within the scope of both the common law and civil law traditions is crucial. Because it rests on the transsystemic approach pioneered by McGill, the B.C.L./LL.B. is unrivaled because it is more firmly rooted in this reality than any other existing bilingual program.

Unquestionably, the composition and the excellence of the student body is another major strength of McGill Law Faculty. The learning environment is enriched by the students' diverse cultural, professional and academic backgrounds and by the bilingual nature of the program. These aspects are of prime importance to me. In this spirit, if I am given the privilege to join McGill Law faculty I will seek to contribute to its intellectual and social life. Having been a researcher and a referee in a peer-reviewed journal I know I will enjoy being an active contributor to McGill Law Journal's team. Having been the organizer of a students' reading group at Queen's University I also feel that I could positively contribute to the student life by being involved in the organization of workshops. I would also welcome the opportunity to participate in competitive mootings, such as in the Laskin competition in Canadian Administrative and Constitutional Law.

By all accounts, completing the B.C.L./LL.B. Program at McGill University would be the best path to achieving my intellectual and professional goals. Knowing how much studying and practicing law involves working in synergy with others, I hope I will be given the chance to contribute to and benefit from the exceptional learning environment McGill has to offer. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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