



“ PBSC’s Tax Advocacy Project has shown me that pro bono can be part of a mainstream legal practice. Even though my skills may seem rather niche, I can help vulnerable taxpayers who don’t have the means to pay for counsel. Thanks to PBSC, I know I have something to give back.



#### *How did you get involved with PBSC?*

I had the good fortune of being selected for the PBSC Tax Advocacy Project when I was in law school. What inspired me was the uniqueness of the opportunity to unify my interest in tax law with pro bono priorities and access to justice issues.

#### *How are you involved now?*

When I joined Dentons in Edmonton, I asked the tax partners how they would feel about bringing the project to Edmonton. The reception was very positive. I became the project coordinator here for our pilot year. It was always a goal of the office to get on board but they didn’t necessarily have the manpower. When I came here, with the willingness and interest to pilot the project, they were happy to give me free rein to implement the project here.

#### *How has it unfolded?*

In our very first year, we had more applicants than positions. We ended up taking two teams of students who each took a couple of files that were destined for the tax court. All the students received accolades from the bench and from the clients. The level of appreciation was phenomenal.

#### *What does your involvement give you personally?*

I think the Tax Advocacy Project has shown me the power of innovative and transformative work. A lot of commercial lawyers leave law school with a desire to do pro bono work, but without any clear idea of how to apply our skill set to pro bono issues. Thanks to this project, I have an understanding that access to justice isn’t just about wrongful conviction or criminal defense. It can be about helping someone review a lease or draft a contract. Everybody has something to give back, and even though my skills may seem rather niche, they might have applicability to taxpayers who don’t have the means to pay for them.

#### *How would you describe the role of law students in filling the access to justice gap?*

I think it’s one of the greatest untapped resources the legal community has to offer. If you contrast the amount of enthusiasm for pro bono initiatives, the thirst for experience that law students have, with the number of opportunities out there, I think there’s a disparity and I think organizations like PBSC really help connect litigants who need assistance with students who are keen to help them. To the extent that this is a multifaceted problem with multipronged solutions, law students are going to play a fundamental part in correcting the problem.

#### *What advice would you offer new graduates about making time for pro bono work?*

Be innovative. Sometimes people are too apt to assume that their skill set doesn’t apply. In reality, everybody has something to offer. When you start to view it through that lens, it enables you to devote time to access to justice initiatives without learning an entirely new skill set.

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