

Cassels Brock quartet joins Miller Thomson

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From left: Ellis, Ward, Craddock and Massie (Credit: Miller Thomson)

A quartet of Cassels Brock lawyers from Toronto, including GRR editorial board members **David Ward** and **Larry Ellis**, have departed for fellow Canadian firm Miller Thomson, and are looking forward to taking on more work in the evolving cannabis industry.

The quartet, which also includes associate counsel **Erin Craddock** and associate **Sam Massie**, joined Miller Thomson in mid-February.

In doing so they have followed a path already taken by a former Cassels Brock colleague, the late **Bruce Leonard**, who became a senior counsel at Miller Thomson in 2015. Leonard's tenure at Miller Thomson was short, however, as he sadly **passed away** in 2017 following a long illness.

"Miller Thomson is a natural fit for us and we are moving at an exciting time," the quartet announced in a media release. Speaking to GRR, Ward and Ellis say the new firm is "hugely supportive" of their practice, particularly their international insolvency work.

“The firm has a strong commitment to continue to grow the restructuring and insolvency group into a market leader, both domestically and internationally,” the partners say. “We also recognised an opportunity to work more closely with a group of colleagues who are both excellent insolvency lawyers and close personal friends.”

Miller Thomson has 12 offices across Canada and its insolvency and restructuring group is led by Montréal-based partner **Michel La Roche**. Partners **Kyla Mahar** and **Greg Azeff** in Toronto regularly take on large and international mandates, such as acting as creditors’ counsel in the well-publicised bankruptcy of the Canadian cryptocurrency exchange QuadrigaCX, which **applied** for court protection in February 2019 after the sudden death of its founder – the only individual with password access to the exchange’s cold storage wallets.

Ward and Ellis note they are also excited to work with Miller Thomson’s specialist cannabis teams, as Canada’s cannabis industry evolves in the next six months. Canada’s restructuring regime is attracting attention from US cannabis companies who are unable to use US federal bankruptcy law to restructure on account of the drug being considered illegal at the national level.

“Our existing network of clients involved in the cannabis space includes the full spectrum of stakeholders, including significant international investors,” they note. “We are excited to synergize our personal networks with the strong Miller Thomson cannabis teams to ensure that we remain at the forefront in all cannabis-related matters.”

The pair also note that Miller Thomson has shown support in helping them grow a debtor-side practice that they have been working to develop over a decade, particularly in regard to internationally based companies.

For partner Ward, the move will be the first time he has changed private practice firms during a career spanning more than a quarter of a century. He joined Cassels Brock shortly after qualifying as a lawyer in 1994.

He, Ellis and Craddock have worked together closely at Cassels Brock from the time of the younger lawyers’ arrival at the firm as associates, in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

They were recently debtor’s counsel on the CCAA proceedings of Canadian carpet-maker Kraus Group, which was **granted provisional Chapter 15 recognition** in the US in 2018.

In 2016, they also **successfully persuaded** courts in Ontario and the Isle of Man to allow a Canadian-appointed receiver they were representing to administer the liquidation of Banners Broker, an alleged pyramid scheme, in Canada. Before that, the Manx court had proceeded on the basis that the company’s centre of main interests was to be found locally.

Ellis worked at Borden Ladner Gervais and Thornton Grout Finnegan, while Craddock was an associate at Weil before they joined Cassels Brock. He made partner at the firm in 2015. Craddock was promoted to counsel in 2018.

Massie, meanwhile, interned at Cassels Brock as a summer law student in May 2015 and returned as an associate in September 2017.

Shayne Kukulowicz, chair of Cassels Brock's restructuring and insolvency group, confirmed the four departures and said the firm wished them "the best in this next stage of their careers".

"Cassels continues to have one of Canada's strongest restructuring and insolvency practices, with senior professionals in Toronto and each of our offices across the country," he added.