

# What I love about being a lawyer

## Practitioners in their own words

Turn on a movie and you may see a legal career portrayed as one of stoic solemnity, like in *To Kill a Mockingbird*; or perhaps it's one of overwhelmed but passionate idealists, like in *A Few Good Men*; or maybe it's one of corruption and cynicism, like in *The Firm*.

Our culture, through movies and journalism and bad jokes, paints different pictures of legal careers—but rarely is it a picture of joy.

But joy is there. In fact, the profession is full of it. Like any job, a legal career has its ups and downs; its thrilling moments and its seemingly dreary tasks.

We asked some Ontario lawyers—from various practice areas and years of call—what they love most about being a lawyer and what part of their day brings them that all-important joy. Here's what they said.



“Every now and then I get a thank you card; or another lawyer sends me a holiday card; or a colleague sends a handwritten note of encouragement. I love these gestures of kindness from clients and colleagues. Being a lawyer can be an isolating experience. We focus on our solicitor-client relationships from a transactional approach, documenting our instructions, committing our legal advice to memos. Our work is surgical and tactical. We are taught to set and maintain professional boundaries, and to be stoic, intelligent, and tough.

But a hand-written card is magical. The whimsical bends and curves of the penmanship, the careful selection of words, the genuine expressions from the writer. Sometimes cards have a picture of a happy client, a sticker, or a small doodle or drawing enclosed. The choice of pen is always special – a sharpie or a fine point pen. The cards are always sent to my office address, which is available on my website and the Law Society of Ontario portal, so they always come as a surprise. The address is handwritten, the sender taking time to fill out the envelope and place a stamp. In today's digital age, this gesture is significant. I save every card that is sent to me, and a shelf in my office is now happily cluttered with them.”

*Neha Chugh practises criminal law with Chugh Law in Cornwall, Ontario*



“I’ve been practicing law for almost 19 years. Nothing really beats being in court on a complex matter. But on a more regular basis, I love that I still find myself having to wrap my head around new and interesting facts, even in my focus areas, and having to write opinions on the probability of success in these matters. This is basically writing a more complex and much longer law school exam (we also assess damages).

For example, in one week in August 2021, I was assigned three files, each with a fact pattern I hadn’t seen in the previous 18 years. The next month, I was asked to assist with handling a matter relating to alleged engineering design errors in the construction of a hydro-electric substation. Since October, I have worked on three class action certification responses relating to three completely different types of losses, in two different provinces.

Of course, I have to deal with more conventional matters, as well. But having to often consider new and complex issues allows me to address the more conventional matters with greater energy and vigor.”

*Oneal Banerjee practises insurance litigation, focussing on personal injury, property, and class actions defence with Dolden Wallace Folick LLP*



“What brings me satisfaction on a daily basis is the knowledge that my transactional work in the renewable energy sector – from the mundane to the complex – is contributing (at least in a small way) to Canada’s energy transition.

This includes everything from contractual drafting to staying on top of the latest regulatory and legislative developments. For me, it’s about seeing how the individual building blocks, which on their own may not be breathtakingly exciting, fit into a broader economic and social context, and provide us with virtually endless growth opportunities.”

*Will Horne practises Business Law with McCarthy Tétrault LLP*



“My favourite aspect of my day-to-day work is speaking directly to clients, hearing their stories, and then transforming the information received into a plan of action. By the time people come to lawyers, they often feel discouraged and victimized. So being able to help clients reclaim what they’ve lost feels rewarding. The best part about being a lawyer is knowing that you’ve helped achieve justice for the underdog.”

*Heather Douglas, B.A. J.D. LL.M., is a sole practitioner with a civil litigation practice in Toronto*



“One of the best parts of being a lawyer is being part of the legal community. The vast majority of lawyers that I know in Ontario are incredibly brilliant, kind, and generous people, who are always happy to see their colleagues, catch up on what they’ve been working on, and even lend a hand if you’re encountering a particular challenge. Those connections have become far more strained during the pandemic, and I’m looking forward to catching up with many people in the months and years to come.

Having a passion for the law also means that on a monthly or even weekly basis

there is always some new development or change in the law, either through a new court decision or statute or regulation that is being introduced or amended. What that means is that the law is an ever-evolving story, and one that we are all part of. There’s something special about knowing where our laws come from, why our laws are what they are right now, and imagining what they could be in the future.”

*Omar Ha-Redeye practises business law, health law, and civil litigation with Fleet Street Law in the Greater Toronto Area*



had a preference for how they ran their court on uncontested divorce day, and they had no bones about chastising you if you didn’t present the divorce exactly to their liking. So, on my own time, I made a point of going to court many times to observe and make notes on each judge’s preferences.

One day I was heading to uncontested divorce court when one of the partners told me to bring the articling student along to watch. The articling student was my older brother’s best friend. Will had taken a detour before going to law school, which resulted in me beating him to the call to the bar and now, coincidentally, landing us both at the same firm. The tide had turned – I was no longer the pesky little sister who wasn’t allowed to tag along, rather the lawyer allowing the student to watch and learn. Karma, baby!

The courtroom was packed that day with lawyers and their clients. The cases were called in order of seniority of counsel. The

judge seemed to be in a particularly foul mood, and, when the first case was called, the judge sniped at the senior lawyer and told him to sit down until he could figure out how to properly present a divorce. Next lawyer, same thing. The judge scanned the courtroom and saw me. “Miss Glatter”, he said, “you’re next.” I put my client in the box, followed the script I’d prepared reflecting this judge’s preferences, and got my client divorced without a stumble. The judge then turned to the packed courtroom and said, “That gentlemen, is how it’s done”. (Yes, back in the day they were all men.)

As the articling student and I left the courtroom, I turned to him and said, “That happens to me all the time.”

I’m pretty sure I heard his eyes rolling.”

*Deborah Glatter is a professional legal educator and management consultant. She previously practised as a litigator in Windsor, Ontario*

“I started my career as a litigator at a small law firm in Windsor. Back then, even though a divorce was uncontested, you had to attend court, robe, and call evidence to prove the grounds. As the only associate at my firm, it fell upon me to present these divorces. Each of the judges in Windsor



“I have done a lot of different things with my law degrees. I have overseen programs and strategies to improve access to justice, changed laws, and now I run a firm. In every position I have held, I have looked for and found ways to support the people I work with to do their best and to work collaboratively to achieve ambitious goals.

Nothing makes me happier than helping a colleague identify a goal – big or small – and brainstorming and working with them to get there.”

*Kirsti Mathers McHenry is a lawyer and consultant at Mathers McHenry & Co. in Toronto*