

Thinking about running for bencher? Read on! Even if you're not, read on!

I have been a bencher for 23 years, the first 16 as an elected bencher, the last seven as a life (non-voting) bencher. It has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Almost all benchers feel the same way about their own experiences.

The work is very interesting, the people are great (even the ones you often disagree with) and you learn far more than you thought you would, from arcane negligence traps to the psychologies of the political animal.

You get to hobnob with some of the shining stars of the profession (and they get to hobnob with you!) as well as various judges and occasional world dignitaries.

You get early information on trends affecting the profession and you can get to influence them.

And, best of all, because the law touches everything, you get to Make a Difference in positive ways to the lives of all your colleagues and every citizen of and immigrant to Ontario. The work is multi-faceted and ranges from broad policy considerations to the minutiae of practice. Convocation regulates three professions – solicitors, barristers, and paralegals – each of which features numerous sub-categories. Convocation also runs a \$120M operational bureaucracy, a \$660M insurance company, a tribunal featuring hearing and appellate levels, a library network, a human rights monitor, and a post-graduate school program. There is something for everyone to sink their teeth into.

As for creature perks, your travel and accommodation are fully paid for and, after a period of volunteer contribution, you receive a per diem for your time and trouble. Travel, if by train, is in first class where they feed you well, ply you with wine (go easy) and give you plenty of time to do the readings. Accommodation is upstairs at the Hilton, a block from the Law Society. In the evenings, you can sometimes take in shows or go on interesting walks.

The time commitment has not adversely affected my practice, but it does hobble some hobbies. The trade-off is worth it because the bencher work is more interesting than many hobbies. The work takes about one full day a fortnight or about 26 days a year. Many benchers put in less than that and are still productive benchers; others put it more than that out of interest and availability. You can set your own level of commitment (provided you do actually contribute meaningfully; in other words, do not run just for the prestige, the lure of Toronto or the butter tarts).

Solicitors are half the bar, but constantly underrepresented in Convocation. This is not good. Convocation, the bar, and the public desperately need people like you. Please consider running. If elected, it will be an experience that will enrich your life.

If you like, you can call me, Brad Wright, at 613 825 8800, for more information.