

**LAW SOCIETY CONVOCATION
TORONTO JULY 23, 2004**

- Honorary
Degree¹
of Doctor of
Laws Speech
- Justice Charron -

Mr. Treasurer, Benchers of the Law Society of Upper Canada, Justice Feldman, distinguished guests, "almost new" members of the Ontario Bar, their families and friends.

First, I wish to congratulate most warmly the graduates who are admitted to the Bar of Ontario today. You are entering a truly great profession and you and your family have every reason to feel proud of your achievement. Sur un plan personnel, je me sens particulièrement honorée que la Société du Barreau corps ait choisi de me conférer un doctorat honorifique aujourd'hui et j'en remercie ces membres très chaleureusement.

I also thank the governing members of the Law Society for the timing of their decision to honour me today because it allows me to get a doctorate degree before my son gets his. As those of you who are parents know, it gets more and more difficult with time to keep one step ahead in the parental game and, for this added benefit, I am grateful.

There is a lot of important business to attend to this morning. Therefore - you will be relieved to hear, I was asked to make my comments brief.

Single most important ingredient for success:

As you embark upon your career as lawyers, you undoubtedly hope and want to be successful. I therefore tried to identify the single most important ingredient in the quest for success as I have observed it in others over the years, and to the extent that I have experienced some measure of success in my own career.

That most important ingredient is **passion**. I therefore urge you to find your passion and pursue it.

I have come to believe that the only way you can truly excel and therefore succeed, in your life and with your life, is by doing the things that you love to do and by continuing to love the things that you do. You have to have passion.

Discovering what will put fire in your belly can sometimes be tricky. Ensuring that the fire is always burning can prove trickier.

A fortunate choice of profession:

Fortunately for you, of all professions, the one that you have chosen - the legal profession - presents innumerable causes that can put fire in your belly:

- The private clients that you will represent will keep bringing causes to you and ask that you do them justice;
- The public bodies that you may choose to serve will present you with their particular interest to advance or to defend.

- You may even have the opportunity to participate in the greater issues of the day through some form of public service – lawyers are well-represented in many aspects of public service.

Causes are constantly served to lawyers on platters. You are bound to find something that puts fire in your belly.

You are also fortunate in that your chosen profession is the most generous in the choice of careers that it offers you and each one can present with quite a different lifestyle. You can be:

- a lawyer in private practice – be it a sole practice, a small boutique firm, a big partnership;
- you can be an advisor to a business corporation or to government;
- an advocate for some community interest – be it in respect of criminal prosecutions, human rights, environmental concerns, etc...;
- a professor of law;
- a judge.

You are sure to find the way in which to exercise your profession that suits your particular strengths and your personality. You can have several careers in one lifetime to suit your changing circumstances as you progress through life.

Making career choices:

Some of you may think – that’s the problem. There are so many choices – how do I find the right path? How do I know if I have made the right choice?

If it brings some reassurance, I would say to you that you can relax about that. All you can do at any given moment in time when you are faced with making a career choice is to make it as reasonably informed as possible and as much in tune with your inner self as possible. Then, bring it your best.

I would strongly recommend however that you not limit yourself to that first choice. You may be fortunate and come upon something that will provide you with an unending source of passion that will last you a lifetime. But your first choice may not be that place that will allow you to reach your full potential, or you may outgrow it. There are two things you can do to help you find the way.

Finding a passion and keeping the flame:

First, make sure to stop and reflect from time to time on what you are doing. Take your internal temperature regularly and discover what you’ve got the hots for, and just as importantly, what leaves you indifferent or turns you off. The discovery of what turns you on will be like a star that will give you the necessary sense of direction for growth, either within your present environment or in another. It is important to do it regularly because you also change.

Second, it is important that to be open, and indeed alert, to new opportunities that will present themselves to you during the course of your career. I think you have to make a point of looking out for opportunities, particularly in this age of specialization. There is a huge pressure to specialize, and often to specialize in a rather narrow field of activity within the law. Specialization undoubtedly has its merits but it can have its downsides. One that I can see in respect of making career choices is that it may limit considerably your exposure to the different facets of the profession. Therefore you have to keep an active look out, talk to people who do different things within your profession.

Advice based on my experience:

I say this out of personal experience. Thinking back to the time when I was called to the bar, if someone had asked me what I thought I would be doing for the rest of my life, I would have said that I wanted to be a private practitioner, most likely in some field such as corporate or commercial law. But one thing for sure, I would have said, I will not be doing litigation – the courtroom is not for me. I won't bore you with the details of how I got there but surprisingly enough, I found out that what I loved the most was litigation, and that the best environment that would allow me to develop my potential was the courtroom. That discovery was unexpected and still astounds me at times.

Don't be afraid to make changes as you progress in your career. They may be necessary. Don't worry, the skills that you will acquire

along the way will be transportable. Your moves will always be in a forward direction if you have given it your best each step of the way.

The difference between success and excellence:

In this respect, it is important to keep in mind the difference between success and excellence.

Success is generally measured externally by comparison with others. It is often beyond our personal control. Moreover, it is often perishable.

Excellence, on the other hand, is found in values such as truth, honesty and integrity. It manifests itself in dedication, hard work and discipline. It is an internal quality, a measure of the capacity and of the commitment of an individual. Excellence, therefore, endures.

Stay focused on the task, not the limelight and aim for excellence in doing the small tasks as well as the big ones. Life is but a conglomeration of moments. Always do the best you can with any job no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time. There never are regrets about having done your best. This habit will also breed success.

Let excellence be your personal measure of success. It will therefore endure. It will become part of the journey, not just a final destination.

I wish you all a lot of passion, and success in your careers.