

Corporate Lawyer

Deals, contracts and company law at big firms. The best-paid lawyer path, and the one with the longest hours.

TYPICAL PAY

\$150,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$85k to \$500k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Large law firms, in-house legal departments, banks, startups

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Strong marks across the board. Business and accounting courses help you later.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
 Commerce, economics and political science are common, but any subject works. Keep your GPA high and write the LSAT (law school admission test).
- 3 Law school (JD, juris doctor)** 3 years
 Take business associations, securities, tax and contracts. Big firms hire most of their students through a formal recruit in second year.
- 4 Articling at a firm** About 1 year
 8 to 10 months at a firm, rotating through corporate, litigation and other groups, plus the barrister and solicitor licensing exams. Ontario's Law Practice Program is the alternative to articling.
- 5 Called to the bar, hired back** Ceremony
 Most big-firm articling students are offered a first-year associate job in the group where they fit best.

Pros and cons

- + Highest starting pay of any lawyer path
- + Big, interesting transactions that make the news
- + Skills that transfer to business, banking and startups
- 1,800+ billable hours a year means 60 to 70 hour weeks
- Your evenings and weekends belong to the deal
- Years of document review before the interesting work

Good to know

Why everyone says Bay Street

Toronto's biggest business law firms cluster on or near Bay Street in the financial district. It is the Canadian version of Wall Street, and a Bay Street job is shorthand for the big-firm corporate path.

1,800 hours is not 1,800 hours

A billable hour is time you can charge to a client. Lunch, training, staff meetings and the walk to the printer do not count. Billing 1,800 hours a year usually means being at work for 2,400 or more.

Optional boosts

Mergers and acquisitions. Securities. Banking and finance. Combined JD (juris doctor) and MBA (master of business administration).

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Lawyers and Quebec notaries, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Law Society of Ontario: Becoming a lawyer
 Federation of Law Societies of Canada
 Canadian Bar Association

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/corporate-lawyer>



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