

## BUSINESS &amp; CAREERS

## Announcements

General Counsel,  
Nuclear Laboratories  
Division (NLD)

Chalk River, Ottawa Valley, Ontario

**Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)** is a leading-edge nuclear technology and services company. Over 3,500 highly skilled employees within the Nuclear Laboratories Division enthusiastically deliver a range of nuclear services from R&D and isotope production to specialized technology and testing, waste management and decommissioning activities in support of CANDU reactor and other nuclear technology.

Reporting directly to the Senior Vice President, Nuclear Laboratories, and as a member of the NLD Senior Leadership Team, the General Counsel, Nuclear Laboratories is responsible and accountable for all legal affairs pertaining to the Nuclear Laboratories' business. The position will be responsible for the Corporate Secretary function and be the key advisor to the Senior Vice President, Nuclear Laboratories, and to the Board, on corporate governance and strategic, commercial and regulatory directions from a legal perspective. The General Counsel manages the legal aspects of corporate, commercial, employee and regulatory contracts and Freedom of Information related matters, and retains and manages relationships with external legal counsel. The General Counsel works collaboratively with other members of the NLD Senior Leadership Team to provide guidance and support to meet operational requirements and achieve annual and long-term goals.

As the ideal candidate for this position, you possess deep and broad legal knowledge combined with previous experience leading legal professionals. Ideally, you also possess specialized legal knowledge in the areas applicable to the Nuclear Laboratories' business. You are an exceptionally quick study, have the mental capacity to absorb and retain substantial information, and are at ease with the complexity of a large organization. You have experience working with and supporting a Board of Directors and Board Committees. The ability to communicate in both official languages would be considered an asset.

To pursue this important opportunity and contribute to the long-term success of an iconic Canadian institution, please contact Jane Griffith 613-742-3219 or jane.griffith@odgersberndtson.ca. To be considered for this position, please submit your resume and related information online at [www.odgersberndtson.ca/en/careers/9392](http://www.odgersberndtson.ca/en/careers/9392).



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PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

An artists rendering of the exterior of the House of Learning at Thomson Rivers University at night.

## Law is a business and a calling

School

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involved in attending law school is already cutting into time available for outside interests, including writing — and eventually selling that novel — to cover some of the costs of his schooling.

Osgoode Hall's tuition—at nearly \$18,000 a year — is also a “serious” concern for 34-year-old first-year student Paul Jorgensen.

“It takes so much time to pay off debt, while at the same time trying to save for retirement. It's something somebody in their 30s worries about more than when they're in their early 20s.”

Fortunately, his wife, Andrea Janzen, is an architect in Toronto, and he also received a Harley D. Hallett Renewable Entrance Scholarship, which will give him \$10,000 a year for three years as long as he remains in the top 20 per cent of his class.

“I'm worried about whether I still have the academic chops,” worries Jorgensen, whose modesty belies his considerable academic achievement to date.

A 2004 University of Toronto Ph.D. graduate in genetics, the Alberta native worked as a post-doctoral research fellow at Harvard Medical School and as a senior research associate at the U of T prior to enrolling at Osgoode this year.

But in science, “the opportunities for a good-paying job in Toronto are quite limited,” says Jorgensen, who was inspired to try law by five lawyer friends and a sister, Dalhousie law grad Debbie Jorgensen, who practises in the area of civil litigation with the Toronto firm, Birenbaum



Jorgensen

Steinberg Landau Savin &amp; Colrairie LLP.

“Everything my sister told me about the work she's doing is fascinating.”

Whether he ends up working for government, or chooses social justice (his sister, who also holds an LL.M. from the U of T, previously worked in the areas of human rights and HIV/AIDS) or focuses on intellectual property — all possibilities, so far — Jorgensen hopes that a career in law will provide him with stable employment.

Given the pressures people face to get into and succeed at law school, and then find articling positions — along with the time and expense involved — “you have to expect they're going to focus on making a living,” says British-born Axworthy, a former NDP Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan, who obtained his LL.M. from McGill.

“Many graduates gravitate toward large firms in big urban centres. But I think law schools could perhaps do a bit more to provide them with a range of options that they can pursue.

“It's not all about Bay Street and the big corporate commercial law firms. There are opportunities in smaller and remote communities where often there are no lawyers or the ones that are there are aging.”

In addition to law schools instilling a strong academic knowledge base in students, he believes these institutions also need to collaborate with the profession to better understand the needs of the Bar.

“Law is a business as well as a calling — and to expect law firms to hire graduates we need to ensure they can add value to a firm.” Adds Osgoode Hall's Sossin: “The worlds of academic life and professional or practice life have become too much of two solitudes. We need far more opportunities for each to view the concerns and

## Get long-term loyalty from your associates



THE HEADHUNTER

WARREN  
SMITH

One of my clients recently commented that I probably do more exit interviews in a month than most law firms do in a year. Recruiters are often uniquely positioned to obtain perspective on the challenges faced by firms in the market; not only from a macro perspective (issues common to all firms), but also in terms of recurring

themes faced by individual firms (or practice groups). Our ongoing interviewing in the market frequently uncovers issues or unintended consequences created by partner decisions (or lack thereof), ultimately resulting in increased associate dissatisfaction, or worse, departures. While turnover is a reality for all employers, when the root cause can be both identified and remedied, it confounds me when firms continue to turn a blind eye to resolvable issues. Here are the four most common issues that result in talent attrition, and what steps you can take to fix them:

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## BUSINESS &amp; CAREERS

# Law firms can improve retention rates of associates

## Associates

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### Lack of communication

The single most common issue cited by associates when leaving their firm is lack of communication. It takes many forms, from lack of feedback, to unclear work expectations, to a lack of understanding of the firm's goals, and how associates can be a part of helping to achieve them. Together, these issues can create a sense of frustration for associates, particularly where partners insist associates must better anticipate partner (and client) needs. While the pressures of practice can make it feel impossible to consistently and clearly identify expectations and do the necessary follow up, failure to do so will greatly contribute to associate attrition. One solution I've seen work is, once a month, book a breakfast with your key associate(s) to discuss these issues, solicit their feedback on past work projects, and use real time examples to provide both vision and input on how to maximize their development.

### Not having a known plan

Associates are frequently trying to better understand the firm's plan, its vision, and more specifically, what it means for them. What their role is in the firm, how they fit in, and what their future looks like are recurring questions associates ask almost daily. Consider this: for most associates, the past 12 years of their lives has been broken into three- to four-year increments (junior high, senior high, undergrad, law school)—so as an associate, for the first time, their next event horizon is potentially an unprecedented seven to 10 years away (partnership). Helping break down this timeline into manageable milestones, and how it fits into the bigger firm vision, will help give them a better sense of accomplishment, development and career ownership as they transition into the first substantive stage of their professional career.

### Lack of compensation clarity

I could write an entire book on the complexities of compensation issues within the legal profession, but suffice to say compensation remains a key issue when discussing associate (or partner, for that matter) job satisfaction. Interestingly, however, total (or maximum) compensation is rarely the issue. Rather, it is the understanding of the firm's compensation formula (or lack thereof) that causes the greatest frustration. If your firm employs a discretionary model, it is critical to explain the variables considered when determining compensation under the formula. Better yet, using specific, past examples to illustrate its application will help calibrate newer law-

yers to the model. The main goal with all compensation models should be to clearly communicate those attributes most valued by the firm, and reward them in a manner that reduces the "surprise" element to individual compensation.

### Changing station in life

The one aspect firms have the least control over is an associate's station in life. Getting married, buying a home, having a baby, getting a divorce, or the changing health of an aging parent are all

common issues lawyers face that can dramatically impact their priorities and commitment to practice generally. In essence, the introduction of a "change agent" into an associate's personal affairs can lead to actively considering a change in their professional affairs. However, by creating clear lines of communication, having a known plan, and creating a transparent compensation structure, partners can greatly reduce the impact personal change might otherwise have on their top associates. Tak-

ing an active interest in their personal lives may also give you the opportunity to flag change agents, mitigating the impact on their professional lives.

Overall, implementing best practices in managing associates is no easy task. It requires time, a precious commodity for all partners in practice, hence the reason they are so rarely implemented by firms. My advice? If feasible, delegate or outsource the implementation of these concepts, but leave a few hours every month to provide

the leadership necessary to effectively carry out these goals. Though difficult, these are critical issues your associates are looking for the partnership to address. However, if you don't, be prepared that another firm might do it for you. ■

*Warren Smith is a managing director with The Counsel Network, a lawyer recruitment and career consulting firm. He is also the only Canadian elected to the Board of Directors for the National Association of Legal Search Consultants.*

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