

## **Finding a lawyer who's the right fit for you**

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You know you need a lawyer when you're buying or selling a home. You may also know the sooner you retain the services of a good lawyer, the better protected you'll be.

But how do you go about finding the right kind of lawyer for you?

Often the best place to start is with referrals from family, friends and other knowledgeable contacts. They can give you a first-hand account of the lawyer's thoroughness and style. Another good source is the free Real Simple Real Estate Guide, created by the TitlePLUS program to educate homebuyers on the role of a real estate lawyer. One of the Guide's features is a locate-a-lawyer searchable database. The guide is available at [www.titleplus.ca](http://www.titleplus.ca).

Once your research is complete, make a list of the lawyers who you are considering, and set up a meeting with each of them. Keep in mind that there are many factors to consider when selecting a lawyer to represent you. Real estate is an area of law where the quality of service that you receive makes a significant difference. It is not always wise for a buyer or seller of property to simply choose the lawyer with the lowest quoted fee. After all, a real estate lawyer's advice can prevent future problems and save a purchaser or vendor of property a lot of money, time and needless headaches.

So instead of basing your decision only on fees, consider a range of criteria. Ask questions that will help you to determine if you can have confidence in the lawyer and will enjoy interacting with him or her. Your goal is to find a lawyer you can really connect with, a lawyer who is right for you.

As well, find out about the lawyer's area of expertise. Although most lawyers have a general knowledge of real estate law, you may prefer a lawyer who specializes in real estate law. Ask how long the lawyer has been practising law and how many real estate transactions he or she has handled. If you are buying or selling a special category of property such as a cottage or condominium, you may want to look for a specialist in that particular area of real estate law. Remember also that specific geographic regions often come with specific real estate issues: It's wise therefore to look for a lawyer who works in or has experience with, the area in which you are considering buying. As an added safeguard, and to ensure that your investment in the home will be fully protected, find out if the lawyer helps clients obtain title insurance for the transaction, and, if so, what type(s).

Inquire into the lawyer's work style: How your lawyer executes the purchase or sale will affect your comfort level with the transaction. You will feel more confident in buying or selling a home if your lawyer maintains an open line of communication with you, and keeps you informed at key stages. For example, does the lawyer hold an initial meeting with you to clarify the process and answer your questions? Is he or she available to answer future questions and in what format (e.g. phone, e-mail, etc.)? Is the legal work done in-house, by the law firm staff? If some or all of the

legal work is outsourced, you may not be able to assess the quality of service that you will receive.

Another option is to return to a lawyer who you have worked with you in the past. Having an ongoing relationship with a personal lawyer is no different from having an ongoing relationship with a family doctor. The better the professional gets to know you, the better he or she can advise you and help ensure that your interests are protected. Also, like anyone else, lawyers value repeat business.

In the final analysis, your good judgment is your best ally. If you sense that the lawyer is someone you can rely on and have confidence in, you have made the right choice.

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