



Laura McLaren
SENIOR COUNSEL AND
DIRECTOR
BMO FINANCIAL GROUP

AGE: 37

Glasgow-born, Vancouver-raised and Montreal-educated, Laura McLaren spent nine years as a litigator with Clifford Chance in New York City before moving in-house. Now senior counsel and director at BMO Financial Group, and based in Toronto, McLaren says that she prefers the diversity and business-focus of in-house practice.

McLaren manages BMO's litigation arising from its US Capital Markets business. She says that BMO has provided excellent opportunities for her to broaden her skill set. While McLaren still relies on the securities litigation and regulatory skills developed in private practice, she now also handles employment, compliance advisory, and investigation matters.

McLaren's legal expertise from having worked on four continents — Europe, North and South America and Asia — is a great fit for BMO, an institution with a global footprint. She routinely advises on cross-border issues that impact BMO's business, including international regulatory matters and the significant distinctions between the Canadian and US litigation systems.

One trend that McLaren has whole-heartedly adopted is the use of alternative fee arrangements. "From a business perspective, they offer us the cost predictability that we need and force us to think about engagements in terms of a value proposition," she says. "They also encourage our external counsel to staff and manage their cases in the most efficient manner possible." McLaren has led the Capital Markets team's efforts to put alternative fee arrangements in place for much of its high-volume, routine litigation work in Canada and the US, which frees up internal resources for more complex matters. And she regularly speaks on the topic at industry conferences.

McLaren credits her mentors with helping her to achieve success. One particularly special mentor, a New York City litigator, encouraged her to go to law school and provided guidance to her through the first few years of big-law practice. That mentor? Her sister.

Others helped her along the way too. "I've been fortunate to find mentors throughout my career who took a keen interest in my development as a lawyer and provided me with some really incredible professional opportunities," McLaren says. With this in mind, she feels it's important that she pay it forward so McLaren dedicates time to mentoring high school students interested in pursuing a legal career through the "Law in Action Within Schools" program.

McLaren actively serves her community, focusing her efforts on women's causes. One cause that is particularly close to McLaren's heart is Tina's Wish, an organization dedicated to funding research for and raising awareness of ovarian cancer. It was started in memory of the Honorable Tina Brozman, a former chief judge of the US Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York. McLaren sits on the organization's junior committee, and says that through its efforts the group hopes to educate a younger demographic about the risks of ovarian cancer and fund research for an effective screen.

When asked about her future plans, McLaren says she's looking forward to exploring new and challenging opportunities within BMO. Given McLaren's journey to date, the sky is the limit. **30**