

]THE ARTICLING STUDENT WITH THE CORNER OFFICE

By Dirk Van Ommen

Graduating from law school is a milestone that students will never forget. You're finished school once and for all and are about to embark on the next stage of your highly anticipated long and illustrious career. As my graduation date approached, I found myself formulating a mental image of what articling would look like. I assume this is common among students. Some may be fearful, others excited, and most likely have no idea what to expect. I naively imagined a romanticized version of this past year that involved living downtown, going for dinner and drinks after work, and sporting the Vancouver lifestyle that young professionals crave. Needless to say, this did not materialize. Fast-forward 15 months and you'll find me living in my parents' house at age 27 with my bedroom doubling as my office—a stark contrast to what I envisioned.

Some lawyers may feel sorry for articling students because we're missing out on the traditional articling experience. I admit, our situation doesn't seem ideal. Frequently I am reminded of the importance of building connections with people in the office and how it's "just not the same" over Zoom. I appreciate the empathy, but I don't ask for your sympathy. While we may have missed out on some aspects, we've become well versed in others. Personally, I think our situation is rather exciting. An optimist would say that we are pioneers of a new era of articling: the first class of students to complete articles almost entirely from home. Alternatively, and perhaps more realistically, we are guinea pigs of a mandated reality. In any event, while there is no replacing in-person mentorship, lawyers and articling students can also be productive from home.

I don't claim that this past year was great. It was an extremely challenging year for many. I choose not to complain because, relatively speaking, I've been fortunate. For me, the most difficult moment was cancelling a graduation trip to Italy that my girlfriend and I planned. Perspective. I'm also not suggesting that working from home is better than working in the office. There are many benefits to working in the office. However, this requires a critical threshold of people to materialize. In the current state, it's

not worth it for me. My commute downtown is 45 minutes and I pay \$15 for parking and another \$15 for lunch. Therefore, each day I need an hour and a half of time and \$30 worth of benefit to justify working in the office. This is a difficult bar to meet when very few people are in the office. I can sit by myself and work just the same from home.

In the spirit of full and frank disclosure, I admit that I've slightly misled you. I don't actually work from my bedroom. My "office" is a bedroom; it's just not mine. My sister moved out, so I expropriated her room as my office. I've never liked working in my actual bedroom. I'm a strong believer in the separation of timesheet and bedsheets. I realize I'm dangerously close to fulfilling the stereotype of the late-20s child living in his parents' basement. To be fair, this is my choice. What's the point of living by myself downtown when I go into the office once a week? If I'm going to work from home, I might as well work from my parents' house where I don't pay rent and have a dad that cooks dinner every night. Life is great out here!

I realize that my situation is different from those of many students. Many students had an especially challenging year, and I don't intend to trivialize their experiences. I only mean to document my thoughts and experiences before we all return to the office in the fall. For me, while this past year had its challenges, it also presented many beneficial opportunities.

I conclude with a final thought. As of now, my commute to work is at an all-time minimum. I work from a great house in the suburbs with my own "office", a comfy chair and a pool. Above all, I have a beautiful view overlooking a corn field! Not many articling students have the luxury of a view. A few days ago, we were encouraged to begin working from the office on a consistent basis. The e-mail was bittersweet. It was then that I realized how good I have it. I'm living like a partner and working like a student. I am the articling student with the corner office!