

McCarthy and Blakes rise to the top in Chambers Canada 2017



Laura Pedersen/National Post

Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP and McCarthy Tétrault LLP continue their rein as Canada's two leading business law firms, at least as ranked by legal publisher Chambers.

Chambers Canada 2017 was published on Sept. 29. I tallied up how often firms were ranked on a nationwide basis in 43 practice areas that would interest a business-focused law firm with a national profile. I found that Blakes received 30 national rankings, with 16 of those in the highest or coveted "Band 1" grade. McCarthy Tétrault LLP received 29 national rankings, with 10 at Band 1.

"We're pleased," said Brock Gibson, chair of Blakes. "Our strategy is to be one of Canada's leading national firms, and not just with strong client relationships, but also with über-specialization where our clients need it. The rankings show that we're achieving that level of expertise."

"You have to have the raw talent to start with," said Dave Leonard, who earlier this year became chief executive of McCarthy Tétrault. "We're proud of the results coming out of this ranking. It's recognition

of the strength of our firm across the country."

There are many ways to slice and dice the numbers. I didn't count up the number of practitioners at each firm receiving individual rankings. Nor did I go through the regional results. Many of the big national firms have regional offices that feature well when measured against local firms with devoted regional practices.

William Braithwaite, chair of Stikeman Elliott LLP, is proud of his firm's performance in the guide, particularly because the firm does strongly when you take those regional rankings into account. "I'm a big fan because it gives a firm like ours a chance to showcase our talent across the country."

You can find all of Chambers' Canadian firm and lawyer rankings online at <http://www.chambersandpartners.com/guide/global/2/50/1>

The Chambers guide has some cachet in the legal business because U.K.-based publisher Chambers and Partners bases its rankings on research conducted with clients and legal peers. The Canadian legal world

is fairly opaque, and the Chambers research offers some objective perspective.

A few takeaways emerge. One is that there is clearly strength in numbers. The country's three biggest firms by lawyer count each appear in my top 10 list of national rankings: Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP (4th), Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (5th) and Gowling WLG (10th).

On the other hand, smaller firms demonstrate they can punch above their weight. Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP is only the 10th largest firm in Canada by lawyer count, but ranks third on our list with 28 national rankings in Chambers, including 10 in Band 1.

You can also discover some interesting things if you compare a firm's ratio of national rankings to lawyer count. Torys LLP, for example, ranks 7th in my list of national rankings, but it has the highest ratio of rankings to lawyer count. Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP, which

is 11th in my overall table, comes in second-place by this measure. Osler is third, and as we've seen, also does well in the overall national rankings.

Goodmans LLP is only the 22nd largest firm in the country, it comes in 13th place in my overall rankings, but it posts the fourth highest ratio of rankings to lawyer count. Bennett Jones LLP, which is 9th in our overall rankings, ranks 5th place by this ratio.

A couple of notes.

Unfortunately, publishing deadlines prevented Chambers from accounting for some recently announced law firm mergers. Norton Rose Fulbright, for example, has announced a merger with Vancouver-based Bull, Housser & Tupper. Norton Rose Fulbright Canada ranks 8th on our overall list, but if you were to combine both firms based on this year's results, Norton Rose would rise to 6th place.

Also, when Chambers released the guide, it announced a series of law firm awards. Full coverage can be found on our blog.

NATIONAL FIRM RANKINGS IN CHAMBERS CANADA 2017

Rank	Firm	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Unranked	Total Rankings
1	Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP	16	8	5	1	0	0	30
2	McCarthy Tétrault LLP	10	13	6	0	0	0	29
3	Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP	10	6	9	2	1		28
4	Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP	5	10	5	7			27
5	Borden Ladner Gervais LLP	8	3	9	3	2		25
6	Stikeman Elliott LLP	7	9	3	3	1		23
7	Torys LLP	7	6	6	1	1		21
8	Norton Rose Fulbright Canada	1	4	9	6	1		21
9	Bennett Jones LLP	4	5	6	4			19
10	Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP	2	4	8	1	4		19
11	Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP	5	8	1	2			16
12	Dentons Canada LLP	2	2	2	8	1	1	16
13	Goodmans LLP	1	7	3				11
14	McMillan LLP	0	4	2	2	1		9
15	Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP	2	2	0	3			7
16	Lawson Lundell LLP	0	2	3	1	0	1	7
17	Bull, Housser & Tupper LLP	1	1	1	2	0		5
18	DLA Piper (Canada) LLP	1	1	0	2	0	1	5
19	Miller Thomson LLP	2			2			4
20	Aird & Berlis LLP					4		4

Note: National rankings only. After the 2017 guide was prepared, Bull, Housser & Tupper announced its intention to merge with Norton Rose Fulbright Canada.

SOURCE: CHAMBERS AND PARTNERS

NATIONAL POST

Our count of the Top 20 firms with national rankings in Chambers Canada 2017

National Post, Chambers and Partners

