



MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name :Carolynn V. Conron

Year of Call : 2010 (BC) & 2011 (ON)

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QUESTIONS :

1. How did you get into criminal law?

I developed a passion for criminal law in high school. I found the criminal prohibition of cannabis to be fundamentally unjust and in my view, grossly disproportionate and not rationally connected to valid public policy objectives. The criminal consequences and stigma associated with cannabis consumption offended me so I began to explore the constitutionality of the prohibition in my grade 12 law class, and in OAC, turned my focus to other areas of civil liberties, including the regulation of sex work.

2- What type of cases do you enjoy defending the most and why?

I love cases with a good story to tell. Where the evidence lines up in such a way as to support the defence theory. I like finding details in different witnesses' evidence that all come together to support the defence case. Crimes against the person, including sex assaults and human trafficking are particularly interesting to me.

3- How did the practice of criminal law change you?

I definitely have learned a lot about people, including how humans can have vastly different subjective experiences of an event. As well, it has increased my gratitude for my own privilege and appreciation for other people's struggles. When I first started practicing, I did not have as much exposure to vulnerable and marginalized populations. Coming into close contact with people who do not have the ability to advocate for themselves and learning about their lives has changed my perspective and really makes me appreciate where I am, even on the bad days.

4- If there is one thing only you would like to see change in criminal law, what would it be?

I would change the laws around drug possession and decriminalize possession of all substances and increase supports for those struggling with mental health issues. I think people should have the freedom to consume the substances they want if they are not committing other offences. Substance use and mental health are often overlapping issues and the criminal justice system is not equipped to address the root causes. I think it's a complex issue of insufficient resources on the front-end to assist people struggling with mental health issues and substance use before they come into contact with the criminal justice system and at the back end, the limited jurisdiction at the sentencing phase which often leaves people worse off than when they started.

5- What advice would you give to your younger self when you first started practising criminal law?

It took me awhile to have confidence in myself and to find my voice. If I could give myself advice, it would be to let my light shine. Focus on the client and the judge and don't worry about what the people behind you think.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I am really lucky to have an amazing group of colleagues and friends in the legal community who are all very supportive. On the bad days, it helps to share the difficult parts with them and commiserate. At the end of the day, I go home and see my kids and they still love me, regardless of what kind of day I had.

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

I find it's very efficient for adjournments. It compresses space and time to allow effective appearances in court without leaving the office. I can still do substantive work while waiting in court and do not have to take time to go to court, struggle with courthouse connectivity issues or the ergonomics of trying to review disclosure on a laptop in the body of the court and wait around all morning for a simple adjournment. For trials and contested preliminary hearings I prefer being in-person, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

8- Any embarrassing court story you're willing to share?

No way!

9- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?

I shared office space with Craig McLean for a number of years. He was an extremely effective advocate and always impressed me with his seemingly endless patience and attentiveness to clients.

10- What's your favourite song?

All-time favourite is Summertime by Sublime on the self-titled album.

11- How do you maintain work life balance and how do you deal with the stress of the job?

I find this job very rewarding and don't usually get too stressed. I try to keep in mind that there is so much uncertainty, but just do as much preparation work as I can and be ready for anything to happen and go with the flow. I like getting outdoors and hiking, biking or doing yoga to unwind.

12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

My associate, Sam Puchala. She is so focused and dedicated to the practice of law and legal profession. She always goes above and beyond to ensure that her professional duties are discharged.

13- What do you do outside of the law?

I love plants and gardening. I'm always propogating more pothos.

14- What would your defence bar colleagues be surprised to learn about you?

I am a vocalist in a band where I write and rap songs. The Soldiers of Disappointment recently performed at the 2022 Courthouse Rocks event, which raised around \$22,000 to support London Lawyers Feed the Hungry and my band won the Pensa Cup for best performance!