

## TDS Alumni - Christine Van Cauwenberghe

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TDS has begun a new series where we profile alumni lawyers. The first TDS alumni spotlight is Christine Van Cauwenberghe, Vice-President, Tax & Estate Planning at **Investors Group**.

### 1. Why did you decide to go into law?

My first degree was in business, majoring in finance, but I was always interested in the tax law courses that I took as electives when I was in business. I worked for TD Bank for many years during university, and my co-workers there mentioned that business and law were a good combination, so I tried it. And they were right - I really love what I do.

### 2. What did you enjoy the most about your time at TDS?

The people there are really top notch. Some of my best friends to this day are people I worked with at TDS. I learned so much from everyone there - and not all of it law related. Everyone there is just so professional, hard-working and pleasant. Law school was interesting, but my time at TDS was where the rubber really hit the road. It is a fast-paced environment where you get to meet a lot of interesting clients and work on interesting files.

### 3. What was your biggest surprise when you left private practice and went in-house?

I remember one day pretty early into my new job when someone gave me a project that they said was a "priority". I received the project at about 4:00 pm that afternoon and handed it in around 10:00 am the next morning. When I handed it in, the person I was working with said that it was "impossible", as the project would have taken 6-7 hours to complete. I agreed - I said that I had stayed until around 8:00 pm the previous night and came in at 7:00 am that morning to finish everything (certainly not an unusual pattern at TDS!). My co-worker advised that "priority" meant a timeline of about 2 weeks! I was flabbergasted. As it turns out, I have worked many evenings and weekends in my current job, but I usually have a lot of advance notice as to when that might happen. In private practice you never know when a real emergency is going to hit.

### 4. Describe a 'day in the life' of a lawyer who is no longer actively practising law, but is now in a business role within a large corporation?



Working in a large organization is very collaborative. Everyone is constantly conferring with one another as to how best to do things, and how the actions of one person might affect others. When I was practising law, I was constantly making judgment calls, often by myself. I think that my experience at TDS really prepared me well for the business world in terms of being able to make hard decisions, but I spend much more of my day now working with others and attending meetings. Sometimes that can be frustrating when you want to move things along more quickly, but in other cases a joint effort can produce some phenomenal results.

A lot of my work also has a very long-term time horizon. In private practice, I was often working on very short deadlines. At Investors Group, I am involved with a lot of long-term corporate initiatives dealing with things like financial literacy, working with seniors and vulnerable persons, and how to improve the financial planning process, focusing on estate planning in particular. Fortunately, my work day has a lot of variety – I do a lot of writing for our in-house tax guide, spend time on the phone providing tax and legal support to our financial advisors, travel across Canada to do public speaking engagements for clients and other professionals, and also act as a media spokesperson for Investors Group. There is no such thing as a typical day, which is the way I like it.

**5. If you could go back in time and talk to Christine on the day you received your Call to the Bar, what professional advice would you give to yourself?**

I would give myself the advice that I received from Don Douglas (the current Managing Partner of TDS) early on in my career: “Try and do one thing really, really well - don’t try and be everything to everybody. If you’re really good at one area of the law, and you enjoy it, you will be a better lawyer.” I really appreciated the fact that TDS gave me the opportunity to do the types of work that I was interested in. If you’re passionate about what you do, you will want to spend more time doing it, which by definition will make you a better advisor.

## Christine Van Cauwenberghe

### **B.Comm. (Hons), LL.B., CFP, TEP, RRC**

Christine is Vice-President, Tax and Estate Planning with Investors Group. Christine spent several years practicing tax law with Thompson Dorfman Sweatman LLP prior to joining Investors Group in 2001. She is also the author of *Wealth Planning Strategies for Canadians*, which is published annually by Thomson Carswell and is currently in its 10th edition. Christine is a member of the Canadian Tax Foundation, has her Certified Financial Planner designation, is a Registered Retirement Consultant and is a Trust & Estate Practitioner, as

certified by the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (“STEP”).

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