

## Legendary Queen's Law collegiality on display at Ottawa alumni event



Everything was picture perfect on September 6 at the latest cocktail reception for Ottawa-area alumni. Gathering in the new home of the Ottawa Art Gallery that had opened to rave reviews five months earlier, grads of all ages enjoyed good company, saw impressive art collections and applauded two alumni award winners.

The beautiful venue was especially fitting for Tom Houston, Law'78 (Com'75), recipient of the H.R.S. Ryan Law Alumni Award of Distinction. Recognized as one of Canada's leading corporate lawyers, in 1985 he co-founded the Ottawa office of Dentons Canada LLP, which sponsored the event. In addition to his overall distinction in the legal profession, for six years Houston provided Dean Bill Flanagan with "very generous counsel on directions for the school" as a Dean's Council member, and in the nation's capital

he has served on a number of community boards, including the OAG's. The gallery's Executive Director, Alexandra Badzak, told the crowd, "An important institution like this isn't built without great champions like Tom Houston, who was instrumental in making this space possible."

In accepting his award, Houston paid tribute to his alma mater, which he credits for being instrumental to his career. "Queen's Law continues to offer a very welcoming environment and a strong faculty, creating an excellent learning environment," he said.

Though he only knew Professor Stuart Ryan by reputation, Houston said he "very much appreciated" receiving the award commemorating the co-founding faculty member.

The next speaker was not only a former student and later a law partner of the "enormously gifted and excessively generous" Ryan, but also made

one of his first appearances at the Supreme Court of Canada with his mentor. The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, Law'76, LLD'10 (Mus'73), retired SCC Justice, was on hand to make an award presentation to an alumnus he in turn guided.

Owen Rees, Law'02, received the Justice Thomas Cromwell Distinguished Public Service Award for sustained outstanding public service. Rees, now counsel with Conway Baxter Wilson LLP, served from 2012 to 2015 as Executive Legal Officer to then-Chief Justice of Canada Beverley McLachlin. In 2016, then-Governor General David Johnston, Law'66, LLD'91, awarded Rees and Professor Grégoire Webber with Meritorious Service Medals for their work in launching the Supreme Court Advocacy Institute.

"Owen is an immensely gifted lawyer, an immensely warm and generous person and makes his accomplishments look so easy," said

Cromwell. "His entire law practice in large measure has been devoted to public law and the public good."

For Rees, it was "particularly meaningful" to receive an award honoring Cromwell. "I was fortunate to have Tom – a jurist of unsurpassed gifts, a man of wisdom, and a generous soul – as my mentor."

Rees also thanked Queen's Law faculty for their support. "I was blessed with an array of talented professors, many of whom have since become friends," he said. "Not only are they leaders in their legal fields, the faculty are also supreme mentors. They have a gift for promoting a passion for law and a sense that law serves a higher purpose and public ideals."

*Watch for feature stories on award winners Tom Houston and Owen Rees.*



Tom Houston, Law'78, accepts the H.R.S. Ryan Law Alumni Award of Distinction from Dean Bill Flanagan.



The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, Law'76, LLD'10, presents the Justice Thomas Cromwell Distinguished Public Service Award to Owen Rees, Law'02.









