

**Remarks of Chief Justice Deborah E. Fry  
On the passing of Thomas J. O'Reilly Q.C.  
A Senior Member of the Law Society  
Court of Appeal, Duckworth St., St. John's, NL  
January 28, 2020**

**The Chief Justice:**

Before commencing the regular business of Court this afternoon, I want to take the opportunity to record and comment on the passing of **Thomas Joseph O'Reilly Q.C.**, a prominent senior member of the Bar who passed away after a short battle with cancer on November 16, 2019 after more than 50 years in the practice of law.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Joan (Connolly). He was also a proud father to Sean (Sara) and Daria (Mike). His grandchildren, Matthew, Nolan, and Luke, were the light of his life.

Mr. O'Reilly was born in Corner Brook, NL on May 22, 1941. He was a graduate of Dalhousie Law School. He was called to the Bar of Newfoundland on February 26, 1968 where he was entered on the Barrister's Roll as #277. He received his Queen's Counsel designation in 1980 and was appointed Master of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1988. He was still in active practice at the time of his death with the law firm Cox and Palmer where he was engaged in a highly respected and varied legal practice.

O'Reilly Q.C. made significant contributions to his profession. He was a former President of the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Branch of the Canadian Bar Association and a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. He was consistently recognized in the Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory and the publication Best Lawyers in Canada as a leading practitioner. He was an able advocate, always prepared and well regarded by the members of the judiciary before whom he appeared.

In addition to being a committed family man and a highly regarded member of the legal profession, Mr. O'Reilly gave generously of his time and expertise to the greater community. He served on many boards and committees over the years including: Chair of Marystown Shipyard, Director of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital, as well as the Chairman of its Ethics Committee. In recent years, he had been an invaluable contributor to the Gathering Place which he championed as providing care, support, and compassion to some of St. John's most vulnerable.

His firm commented that in addition to being a founding partner and inaugural chair of the regional board, he was a mentor to countless partners and associates at Cox & Palmer. "Tom had a brilliant mind with the kindest of hearts. We were privileged to have had him as a friend and as part of our firm family. He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered."

A legal colleague described him as a man for all seasons – “His love of the law and his family was formidable. He was a faithful friend and a committed supporter of his community. In the end, that is the true measure of a fine man.”

Others spoke of his love of fishing especially in Labrador. He was described by a fishing guide in Labrador as a “nice fellow to have in a boat.”

Many colleagues and friends commented on O’Reilly Q.C.’s great sense of humour. “He had an amazing sense of humour and always had a good joke to tell.” “He could tell many a good story with the best of them.” “Tom will be missed in our Wednesday night bridge game. He had a great wit and could tell stories all night.”

A colleague said: “Tom made the world a better place just by being. The impression made by his footsteps can be followed by those he left behind.”

On behalf of my colleagues at the Court of Appeal, I wish to extend our sincere condolences to the family on their loss of Thomas O’Reilly Q.C. The Bench and the Bar will miss him

I direct that a transcript of these remarks be prepared and sent to his family.