
For Immediate Release**November 27, 2006****TASK FORCE PROPOSES FUNDAMENTAL
CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM**

VANCOUVER – Following a two year review of British Columbia’s civil justice system, a multi-stakeholder working group today released its report proposing significant reforms to improve the justice system.

The 12-member Civil Justice Reform Working Group, appointed by the Justice Review Task Force, was co-chaired by B.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Donald Brenner and Deputy Attorney General Allan Seckel, Q.C. The working group included representatives of the Law Society of B.C., the Canadian Bar Association, the B.C. Supreme Court, the B.C. Provincial Court, the Legal Services Society, Court Services, the Rules Revision Committee, and members of the bar.

"We are proposing practical ways to make the justice system more affordable," said Chief Justice Donald Brenner. "The judiciary is very committed to ensuring that everyone can afford our justice system."

The Working Group’s report entitled, “Effective and Affordable Civil Justice” sets out a vision that provides everyone with access to effective and affordable civil justice through two broad strategies:

- Providing integrated information and services to support those who want to resolve their legal problems on their own before entering the court system; and
- Providing a streamlined, accessible Supreme Court system where matters that can be settled are settled quickly and affordably, and matters that need a trial get to trial quickly and affordably.

The report provides a number of recommendations (for Supreme Court civil, non-family, matters) broken down into three main parts:

1. Create a “hub,” where people can go to get the information and services they need to solve legal problems on their own.
2. Require parties to personally attend a case planning conference (CPC) before they engage the justice system beyond initiating and responding to a claim. This conference will require judges to take an active role in the management of the case and to match the case to the most appropriate dispute resolution process.

3. Rewrite the Supreme Court Rules to include (in addition to the CPC) these main features:
- Require judges to take proportionality principles into account when issuing any order in a case. Judges will be expected to ensure that the amount of process is proportional to the value, complexity and importance of the case.
 - Abolish the current pleading process and replace it with a case initiation and response procedure that includes a plan for conducting the case and achieving a resolution.
 - Substantially reduce the volume of documentary discovery, oral examinations for discovery and expert evidence.
 - Limit allowable time and materials for motions.
 - Set limits to streamline trials.

During 2006/07, the Deputy Attorney General and Chief Justice Brenner will begin a tour of communities province-wide, soliciting input on the report's recommendations. "We are now taking our ideas to business, legal and other groups," said Allan Seckel. "We plan to widely circulate this report in order to gather as much feedback as possible to guide the implementation process."

The full report is available on the Justice Review Task Force Website at www.bcjusticereview.org.

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