

# Legal Aid BC Update

From the desk of Mark Benton, QC  
Chief Executive Officer, Legal Services Society



## The stories behind the services

I'd like to share a couple of stories we've got on our website about the work we do. As you may already know, we're piloting several new services with money from the Ministry of Justice — which ends in March 2017 unless we can secure more funding.

One of the pilot projects that's showing real value is the Parents Legal Centre (lead lawyer Katrina Harry is pictured). It represents a culture shift in how child protection matters are handled. **Read about how our team helps keep families together.** For more about the pilot, the Vancouver Sun's Ian Mulgrew did an excellent piece on it: **Pilot legal aid project supporting families.**



We're also piloting a program that expands the services of criminal duty counsel. When a client is accepted into the program, one lawyer, instead of whoever's scheduled on court day, helps the client to resolve his or her case with fewer court appearances. **Read how the service is good for clients and the courts here.**

LSS is currently preparing business cases on these and other pilot projects.

## BC's Attorney General gets an update from LSS Board Chair



Attorney General and Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton visited LSS recently for a quarterly meeting with LSS Board Chair Suzette Narbonne (pictured) and me. The Attorney General also received a briefing about our new interactive website MyLawBC (read more about that below).

We talked about ministry priorities, such as the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the criminal justice system, a review of the disclosure process, Provincial

Court Family Rules, the province's Civil Resolution Tribunal, and Tribunal Transformation project. She noted the interest that the federal Justice minister has in child protection issues, and suggested LSS talk with the federal ministry about LSS priorities in this area. Suzette and the AG had a candid conversation for an hour and agreed to meet again in late July.

After the meeting, Suzette and the AG met with the staff who worked on MyLawBC to acknowledge their achievement (pictured below).



## MyLawBC helps British Columbians with everyday legal problems

Our **MyLawBC** site is live after a year in development and receiving positive feedback. It's designed to help British Columbians with everyday legal problems in cases where they may not be able to access direct legal services. The site contains things like a dialogue tool that people can use to negotiate a separation agreement online. There are also templates for creating your own will, and guided pathways that produce action plans tailored to the user's own situation.



Vancouver Sun reporter Ian Mulgrew talks about the benefits of MyLawBC in his article **Legal Self-help finally arriving in BC.**



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