



Legal  
Services  
Society

British Columbia  
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# Media Release

**For immediate release**

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## **More locations for legal aid**

VANCOUVER – Families in crisis, refugees, and people facing criminal charges will have more ways to get the legal help they need at new legal aid locations throughout BC opening on March 29, 2010.

“We are pleased to announce new local agents in seven communities around the province,” said Mark Benton, QC, Executive Director of the Legal Services Society, BC’s legal aid provider. “There are now legal aid local agents in 33 BC communities and more than 50 locations, plus an expanded, province-wide call centre, where people can apply for legal aid or get the legal information they need to resolve their problems.”

The seven communities with new local agents are Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, and Surrey, where local agents replace Legal Services Society offices, and New Westminster and Langley, which were not previously served by a Legal Services Society location.

Local agents are private lawyers who contract with the Legal Services Society to administer legal aid and provide community legal outreach in the area.

“The move to local agents will reduce the Legal Services Society’s operating costs so that more money can be used for services such as free legal information, advice in courthouses for people who don’t have lawyers, and legal representation in more serious matters,” Benton explained. “The society has already announced it will be reinstating several programs that were previously cut, including one to assist people in particularly difficult family law cases.”

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## **Backgrounder – New Local Agents**

### **Kamloops – Louise Richards**

Called to the bar in 1985, Ms. Richards is currently the executive director of the Kamloops and District Elizabeth Fry Society, a non-profit agency that offers programs and services involving housing and community justice to people in the Kamloops area, with a focus on women and youth. She is chair of the Kamloops Women's Resource Group Society and a regional advocate for the Pacific region Elizabeth Fry Societies. Ms. Richards will be providing services at the Kamloops courthouse and at a location to be determined.

### **Kelowna – Andrew Vandersluys**

A lawyer since 1999, Mr. Vandersluys is currently the managing lawyer of the Legal Services Society's Kelowna Regional Centre and is a member of the Kelowna Community Court Committee. He will be providing services at the Kelowna courthouse and from 210 – 347 Leon Avenue, Kelowna.

### **Prince George – Beatrix Josephy**

Ms. Josephy has been practising law in Prince George for more than 15 years. Before going to law school, she spent four years as a legal information counselor at the Legal Services Society's Quesnel Community Law Centre. She will be providing services at the Prince George courthouse and at 1057 Third Ave.

### **Surrey, New Westminister, Langley – Craig Sicotte**

Mr. Sicotte was called to the bar in 1990 and is a criminal lawyer in Surrey and a founding director of the Surrey Bar Association. While in law school at the University of Victoria, Mr. Sicotte participated in the Law Centre Program. He will be providing services at 102 – 10706 King George Highway in Surrey, 206 – 20641 Logan Avenue in Langley and the New Westminister Law Courts.

### **Victoria – Roland Kuczma**

Called to the bar in 1979, Roland Kuczma was an LSS staff lawyer and then director of the Victoria Law Centre. He has run legal clinics on the Tseycum reserve and was a member of the steering committee for the Native Women's Association. He currently supervises advocates at Together Against Poverty Society in Victoria. He will be providing services at the Victoria Law Courts, the Western Communities courthouse and at 218 – 852 Fort Street, Victoria.