



**Legal
Services
Society**

Providing legal aid
in British Columbia
since 1979

Suite 400
510 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 3A8

Tel: (604) 601-6000
Fax: (604) 682-0914
www.lss.bc.ca

Vancouver

March 8, 2011

Legal Services Society response to the report of the Public Commission on Legal Aid

Mark Benton, QC, Executive Director of the Legal Services Society, made the following statement in response to the report of the Public Commission on Legal Aid.

The Legal Services Society (LSS) is responsible for providing legal aid in BC. It was not a member of the commission. The commission was a joint initiative of the Canadian Bar Association (BC Branch), the Law Society of BC, the Law Foundation of BC, the BC Crown Counsel Association, the Vancouver Bar Association, and the Victoria Bar Association. None of these organizations is responsible for the delivery of legal aid.

LSS welcomes the opportunity that the commission's report provides to begin a discussion about much-needed improvements to BC's legal aid program. LSS endorses the commission's conclusion that the current scope and availability of legal aid in BC does not adequately meet the needs of the public. LSS also endorses the recommendation that legal aid must be recognized as an essential public service and that significantly more funding is needed.

The report and its recommendations are based on submissions the commission received from the public. As the commission notes in the disclaimer on page 20, it accepted those submissions "at face value" and did not "review the submissions in light of the policies of LSS." As a result, the information contained in the report does not necessarily reflect the current state of legal aid in BC. Up-to-date information about legal aid is available on the LSS website (www.legalaid.bc.ca) and the Family Law in BC website (www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca).

Many of the concerns mentioned in the report have been addressed including the restoration of many services. LSS also established in 2010 a new community engagement department to ensure legal aid services meet local needs particularly in rural and remote communities. Additional comments from LSS regarding the report are available by [clicking here](#) or by visiting the media section of the LSS website (www.legalaid.bc.ca).

The Legal Services Society looks forward to future discussions with the commission about what it sees as the priorities for publicly funded legal services in BC.

Media contact
Brad Daisley
604 604 6004