



October 14, 2021

Honourable David Eby
Attorney General
PO Box 9044 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

RE: Roads to Revival: An External Review of Legal Aid Service Delivery in British Columbia

Dear Honourable Minister Eby,

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee was honoured to have **Jamie Maclaren, QC**, as its keynote speaker at our Annual General Meeting in January 2021. He focused on the *Roads to Revival* review he delivered to your office in early 2019, highlighting the achievements to date along with recommendations he hopes will be addressed by the Province in the future.

In preparing the report, Mr. Maclaren received submissions from 130 individuals and 12 organizations, and heard from 240 people across 37 municipalities representing a wide range of stakeholders -- Legal Services Society staff, judges, lawyers, legal advocates, articulated students, law students, legal-aid plan administrators, non-profit service providers and the public included.

At the close of our AGM, committee members (comprised of elected representatives from CRD municipalities, trustees from Greater Victoria school boards, citizen appointees and frontline service providers) moved that the VFCYJC formally write you in support of Mr. Maclaren's report and urge your renewed attention to this critical document.

We send our sincere thanks to you and Ministry staff for addressing a number of the report's 25 "highest" recommendations. In particular, those related to Indigenous aid were emphasized in your Nov. 2020 mandate letter from the Premier: *"Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Indigenous communities, and the BC First Nations Justice Council to advance the First Nations Justice Strategy and to improve access to culturally appropriate justice, including continuing to establish Indigenous Justice Centres across the province."*

We thank you in particular for the following:

* The development of **Indigenous Justice Centres** in association with the BC First Nations Justice Council as culturally safe sites for holistic aid: Three IJCs (Merritt, Prince George, Prince Rupert) are now operating, and we understand as many as 15 more are planned across BC in future.

* **Creation of a child-protection clinic** to help children in contested protection matters: IJCs offer this service, and we understand a dedicated clinic is planned.

* Funding and support for an integrated network of **independent legal aid clinics with teams of lawyers and advocates providing law services**: Five such clinics are operating (Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Surrey, Victoria) and more are planned.

* Development of a strategic network of **specialty legal aid clinics: Disability, immigration/refuge and housing clinics** are operating in Vancouver.

This said, there are a number of other priorities -- rated as "high" and "higher" -- in the *Roads to Renewal* report that require renewed consideration and potential funding. These include:

* Creation of an **experimental Criminal Law Office** in Metro Vancouver with a team of criminal staff lawyers, paralegals, administrators and support workers.

* Development of a **Major Case Team of Legal Services Society staff lawyers and paralegals** for long and complex criminal case work.

* Creation of a **Criminal Resource Centre providing free co-working space**, training and shared resources to tariff lawyers, pro bono lawyers and other legal aid service providers.

Sincere thanks for your ongoing attention to improved legal service delivery in BC. The *Roads to Revival* report is rooted in the principles of user-centered design, evidence-based analysis, collaboration and experimentation.

As Mr. Maclaren notes:

*"It is time to move beyond speculation and anecdotal information in redesigning legal aid services. System reform should not be a linear process led by experts, but rather an **iterative process involving continuous learning and adaptation that leads to improvement from the perspective of users**. I have adopted this approach throughout my report, along with Access to Justice BC's Triple Aim Framework, with its three core pursuits of **better user outcomes, better user experiences and lower system costs**."*

Sincerely,

Cynthia Day,
Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee
Councillor, City of Colwood

cc The Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
cc Premier John Horgan