



October __, 2025

Attention: The Honourable Niki Sharma
Attorney General and Deputy Premier

Dear Attorney General Sharma,

As you're aware, the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee is a designated committee of the Capital Regional District. It is comprised of appointed elected representatives from the 13 CRD municipalities, trustees from Greater Victoria's three school boards and at-large CRD appointees. Please learn more about our mandate and work at our [website](#).

At our meeting of June 26, 2025, VFCYJC members unanimously passed the following resolution:

THAT Chair Little write BC Attorney General Niki Sharma in support of the following recommendation raised with the Committee by Access Pro Bono's Jamie Maclaren KC, namely Recommendation #4 from his 2019 Roads to Revival review of the BC legal aid system:

"Task and support an independent body, like Access to Justice BC, the Access to Justice Centre for Excellence or the Office of the Auditor General, to coordinate the collection and analysis of standardized performance data across BC's justice system."

The main motion was amended to also include Recommendation #15 from *Roads to Revival*:

"Create a Child Protection Clinic to help parents before child protection concerns have reached the level of Ministry of Children and Family Development intervention and to serve as a practice resource centre for lawyers representing parents in contested child protection matters."

Invited to our meeting of April 24 this year, Mr. Maclaren presented the VFCYJC with an update on [Roads to Revival: An External Aid Service Delivery in BC](#), the commissioned report he delivered in January 2019 to the office of then-Attorney General David Eby.

Mr. Maclaren received submissions from 130 individuals and 12 organizations, heard from 240 people across 37 municipalities, and a wide range of other 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.

In his conclusions, he wrote: "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."

During his recent update to the VFCYJC, Maclaren praised the Province for delivering on a number of key priorities identified in *Roads to Revival*, including the establishment of [Indigenous Justice Centres](#) across BC and the creation of the [Immigration & Refugee Legal Clinic](#) in Vancouver. (See the appendix below for his April 2025 summary of fully and partially implemented recommendations within the report.)

The Committee asked Mr. Maclaren which recommendation he would like to see the Province tackle next, and he pointed to **Recommendation #4** with the logic that "what gets measured gets managed."

As *Roads to Revival* states in regard to this recommendation: *"There is too little being done across Canada to coordinate the collection and analysis of justice system data. This stifles innovation and contributes to duplication of justice reform efforts. BC would benefit from an independent and overarching body that is mandated and resourced to coordinate the collection and analysis of standardized justice system data from across the province. The data could then be used to assess the individual and aggregate performance of justice sector organizations—like LSS, the BC Prosecution Service and the courts—against national benchmarks. This would cultivate greater transparency and accountability in measuring performance."*

Maclaren suggested that a new independent office (to perhaps be titled Office of the Access to Justice Commissioner) would be akin to the independent Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, but with more focus on analytics and observations than advocacy.

"This Access to Justice Commissioner could receive and analyze progress reports from all justice institutions, including courts and government, to broaden the scope of institutional accountability for increasing access to justice, and to bring exposure and objectivity to inconvenient truths like the chronic underfunding of legal aid," he said.

"A newly established regulator would be required to publish annual performance reports while also commissioning regular independent reviews of the progress it makes in facilitating access to legal services."

This data would frame strategic objectives accordingly. Publicly accessible reports and review will redirect the regulator's main accountability to the public and "spur real action."

"The Office of the Access to Justice Commissioner would fulfill my Recommendation 4 to 'task and support an independent body [...] to coordinate the collection and analysis of standardized performance data across BC's justice system.'"

At the VFCYJC's June meeting, committee members amended the main motion presented above to include Maclaren's call for the establishment of a **Child Protection Clinic** to help children in contested protection matters (as per Recommendation #15 in *Roads to Revival*, pg. 42/43). It is worth quoting Maclaren at length on the subject from his report:

“I heard from many frontline legal service providers about the individual and community impacts of Parents Legal Centres. Most of them praised the PLC staff model for the holistic range of services it is able to arrange in developing customized support for parents in crisis. At the same time, most of them disapproved of the PLC policy of only serving parents in uncontested child-protection matters. In cases where parents wish to challenge an MCFD order, they must make a standard application to LSS for a lawyer funded by legal aid. Some review contributors viewed this policy as giving tacit encouragement to parents and guardians to consent to MCFD orders even when they fundamentally oppose them. Giving consent may, in some cases, result in a child being placed in foster care. This creates an unfair choice for parents who may not appreciate that other options are available to them.

“Since 56 percent of all children in care in BC are Indigenous, many lawyers view this situation as ongoing evidence of systemic discrimination. Despite governments agreeing to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, little has been done to correct the power imbalance that Indigenous parents confront when the state intervenes to remove their children.

As a vital step toward correcting this imbalance, parents’ lawyers proposed the creation of a child-protection clinic. It would be similar in its holistic approach to a PLC, but not premised on parental consent to MCFD orders. Such a clinic would provide parents with sufficient supports—including representation by staff or tariff lawyers—to challenge MCFD decisions, if they so desire.

The clinic would also serve as a centre for shared knowledge, strategy and practice resources for tariff lawyers across the province. It should be located in the Metro Vancouver area and include Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff lawyers and advocates who are sufficiently resourced to travel to different BC communities, as needed. The creation of this clinic is the highest priority of all of my recommendations.”

Thank you, Ms. Sharma, for your work and dedication to making tangible differences in the lives of British Columbians.

We are encouraged to read in your mandate letter of July 17, 2025, that you are to “use effective engagement with key stakeholders and aggressive innovation in relation to technology, rules and citizen-oriented processes to improve access to justice and reduce costs, increase speed and deliver independent and impartial justice and dispute resolution.”

We at the VFCYJC sincerely believe that acting upon these two recommendations in Mr. Maclaren’s essential report will help deliver exactly these important and timely ambitions.

sincerely,

Marie-Terese Little,

Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee
Vice-Chair, Capital Regional District Board of Directors
Mayor, District of Metchosin

cc Premier David Eby
cc The Hon. Jodie Wickens, Minister of Children and Family Development
cc CRD Board of Directors

Appendix: Roads To Revival Progress Report – April 2025

As shared by Jamie Maclaren with the Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee

Priority Recommendations Fully Implemented

RECOMMENDATIONS 13/18 - Fund and support an integrated network of independent community legal clinics with modular teams of lawyers and advocates providing family law and poverty law services.

RECOMMENDATION 16 - Support the iterative and scalable development of Indigenous Justice Centres as culturally safe sites for holistic legal aid service to Indigenous people.

RECOMMENDATION 17 - Create and embed a Refugee Legal Clinic in the integrated services hub at the Immigrant Services Society of BC's Welcome Centre in Vancouver or Surrey

Priority Recommendations Partially Implemented

RECOMMENDATION 3 - Develop and launch an online client portal to accept legal aid applications, to diagnose and treat clients' legal problems, and to empower clients in the active management of their own cases.

RECOMMENDATION 14 - Broaden the scope of Indigenous legal aid services to include more preventative services that are not premised on agreeing to state intervention or correction, which impose stigma.

RECOMMENDATION 24 - Develop a Major Case Team of LSS staff lawyers and paralegals to provide in-house capacity and to support tariff lawyer capacity for long and complex criminal case work.

Priority Recommendations Not Yet Implemented

RECOMMENDATION 4 - Task and support an independent body, like Access to Justice BC, the Access to Justice Center for Excellence or the Office of the Auditor General, to coordinate the collection and analysis of standardized performance data across BC's justice system.

RECOMMENDATION 15 - Create a Child Protection Clinic to help parents before child protection concerns have reached the level of Ministry of Children & Family Development intervention, and to serve as a practice resource centre for lawyers representing parents in contested child protection matters.

RECOMMENDATION 22 - Create an experimental Criminal Law Office along a major transit route in Metro Vancouver, with a team of criminal staff lawyers, paralegals, administrators and support workers providing general and specialized legal aid services.

RECOMMENDATION 23 - Create a Criminal Resource Centre at the Criminal Law Office that offers free access to tariff lawyers, pro bono lawyers and other legal aid service providers, and provides space for co-working and training as well as resources for legal research and practice management.