

## **Backgrounder: Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters**

The Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters releases its final report on October 8, 2013. The Action Committee is a group broadly representative of all sectors of the civil and family justice system as well as of the public.

The final report presents a broad consensus among all of those stakeholders that significant change is urgently needed and sets out a broad roadmap for reform.

### **Principles for change**

The report proposes six principles to guide change:

1. Put the public first
2. Collaborate and coordinate
3. Prevent and educate
4. Simplify, make coherent, proportional and sustainable
5. Take action
6. Focus on outcomes

### **Setting access to justice goals**

The report also sets out nine access to justice goals for the three main areas for reform: specific civil and family justice innovations, institutions and structures, and research and funding. Together these make up an access to justice roadmap to stimulate and guide reform:

#### **A. Innovation goals**

1. Refocus the justice system to reflect and address everyday legal problems
2. Make essential legal services available to everyone
3. Make courts and tribunals fully accessible multi-service centres for public dispute resolution
4. Make coordinated and appropriate multidisciplinary family services easily accessible

#### **B. Institutional and structural goals**

5. Create local and national access to justice implementation mechanisms
6. Promote a sustainable, accessible and integrated justice agenda through legal education
7. Enhance the innovation capacity of the civil and family justice system

#### **C. Research and funding goals**

8. Support access to justice research to promote evidence-based policy making
9. Promote coherent, integrated and sustained funding strategies

### **The Action Committee**

The Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters was convened at the invitation of the Chief Justice of Canada, The Rt. Hon. Beverley McLachlin and is chaired by Justice Thomas Cromwell. It is a stakeholder-driven initiative which reports to all of the participating organizations and sectors involved in civil and family justice.

### **Working group reports**

In addition to the final report, the Action Committee published earlier this year four working group reports relating to court process simplification; access to legal services; prevention, triage and referral; and family justice. For these reports and a backgrounder on them, go to: [www.cfcj-fcjc.org/collaborations](http://www.cfcj-fcjc.org/collaborations)

### **Contacts**

Professor Trevor Farrow – [tfarrow@osgoode.yorku.ca](mailto:tfarrow@osgoode.yorku.ca)

Jerry McHale Q.C. – [mjmchale@uvic.ca](mailto:mjmchale@uvic.ca)

Mark Benton Q.C. – [Mark.Benton@lss.bc.ca](mailto:Mark.Benton@lss.bc.ca)

Rick Craig – [rick.craig@justiceeducation.ca](mailto:rick.craig@justiceeducation.ca)

Owen Rees -- (613) 996 9296