



## TLABC FAMILY LAW COMMITTEE

# Statement on Unified Family Courts

### WHEREAS:

- A: The members of the Family Law Committee have considered and reviewed the now-considerable body of evidence in respect of the unification of family courts, and strongly endorse a government initiative to establish the unification of family courts in British Columbia.
- B: The federal Department of Justice has determined that this model expands access to justice, and provides cost efficiencies due to the streamlining of services and the emphasis on alternate dispute resolution.
- C: Based on the models established in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario and other Canadian locales, the Committee recommends the following parameters and government commitment:
1. Unified Family Dispute Resolution Centres (UFDRC) be established in both major urban areas of British Columbia and smaller, more remote locations using existing government facilities, including courthouses, government office space, recreational centers, and community centres.
  2. The government commit sufficient funding, on a permanent basis, to provide the required services at each centre including Provincial Court Judges, Supreme Court judges, duty counsel, Law Society accredited mediators, arbitrators, and parenting coordinators, accredited parenting counselors, accredited debt counselors, and Family Justice counselors to assist with client intake and forms.

3. The judges in the Unified Family Court should be specialists in family law.
4. Family Legal Aid be expanded to ensure that all clients can avail themselves of the services offered and there be a sliding scale of costs for all clients based on family income and assets to access services apart from private counsel.
5. The current two sets of court rules (SC and PC) be replaced with one set of simplified court rules and court forms.
6. The UFDRC be established across the Province so that all British Columbians can access available services and resources, regardless of their location.

### TLABC FAMILY LAW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Georgiale A. Lang (Chair), Zahra Jimale, Erin Bowman, Agnes Huang, Melanie Magnusson, Magal Huberman

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**We are pleased to announce that Maureen Baird QC and David Lunny have joined our firm as Senior Counsel.**

Maureen Baird is highly experienced as trial and appellate counsel having conducted court proceedings at every level of court including the Supreme Court of Canada. She is nationally recognized for her expertise in the field of administrative law. Maureen's well-earned reputation for excellence and integrity was recognized by her appointment as Queen's Counsel in 2011. Maureen will continue to provide strategic advice and top-level guidance to tribunals, regulators and other clients.

David Lunny has practiced for almost four decades as a barrister in trial and appellate proceedings, both civil and criminal, and in appearances before a wide range of administrative and regulatory tribunals and in arbitration and ADR hearings in Canada and abroad. David will provide highly valued and much sought after strategic direction, insight and advice to our clients.

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