



TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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MISSION

To support and promote diligence and excellence in advocacy and jurisprudence on behalf of consumers in British Columbia. Together, we strive to: protect the rights of individuals, preserve the jury system, enhance trial practice, ensure access to the courts, advance the interests of innocent parties, and maintain judicial integrity and independence.

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NEWS RELEASE

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Serious Criminal Case Halted Today in Vancouver for a Lack of Security, Lack of Sheriffs

(Vancouver) – Security concerns brought on by a lack of courtroom sheriffs caused a case in BC Supreme Court to be halted today mid-trial. This is the latest setback to the justice system, a structure that continues to be weakened across the province due to a lack of resources and court time.

Cases have been postponed and even thrown out entirely in several places around the province, largely due to a shortage of judges in British Columbia and – more recently – a shortage of sheriffs. Budget cuts to courthouse staff have a negative ripple effect on the entire court system.

Richard Fowler is one of the lawyers involved in the case that was halted today. As defence counsel, he saw first-hand how bad things have become for courthouse staff, counsel, victims and witnesses. "This is a desperate and devastating situation," explained Fowler, an executive member of the Trial Lawyers Association of BC (TLABC). "Things have to change immediately. Justice and the people of the province are suffering severe harm by this sad state of affairs."

As TLABC president Azool Jaffer-Jeraj stated just last week: "Courtrooms should not be empty when there is a backlog of cases to be processed. Just like judges, lawyers and court clerks, sheriffs are a very important part of the system. Justice cannot be achieved without them."

Justice should not be shortchanged, yet the current reality puts justice in jeopardy each and every day.

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BACKGROUND NOTE: The Trial Lawyers Association of BC's voluntary membership base is 1300 people strong, with legal professionals located throughout the province actively practicing in a diverse range of areas. Many members have a mixed practice, though a common characteristic of their work is that they represent individuals rather than corporations, governments or other large entities. Practice areas include family, employment and immigration law, wills and estates, criminal defence and personal injury litigation. The association of today is a not-for-profit society with 30 years of history to its credit. Members are united with the goals of protecting the rights of individuals, ensuring access to the courts, preserving the jury system and maintaining the highest standards in legal education for the profession.