



Ministry of the Attorney General

Court Services Division

Annual Report 2002-03

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Message *from the* Deputy Attorney General

This is a most appropriate time for the Court Services Division to have undertaken to publish an Annual Report on its activities. The Division has made an ambitious commitment to change and has put in place a multi-year planning process to map out how change will be implemented. The Division's first Five-Year Plan is included in this Report. The Plan will be reviewed and updated every year, in consultation with the judiciary, our partners and with court users, and the updated Plan will be published annually in this Report.

I am delighted that the Division has undertaken this change process. I think that the initiatives identified for implementation over the next five years are the right ones to fulfill the goals and standards that the Division has set for itself and that they are achievable given the resources at our disposal.

Bringing about successful change in the public service is much more complicated than in the private sector. This is due to a number of factors. Government is bigger than most businesses and it has to manage a much more diverse array of activities. Further, it

operates in the public eye. However, I think that the most important reason that change is so complicated for us lies in the difficulty of quantifying our bottom-line concerns.

The public service does, of course, have bottom-line concerns, but they are complex. Governments must consider a wider range of interests and constituencies and sometimes these interests and constituencies are in conflict with one another. I think this is particularly true for us in the justice sector. Our bottom line involves not only effective use of resources but also the integrity of the justice system itself. That is, we have a qualitative bottom line, not just a quantitative one. We have to resist the impulse to substitute the measurable for the desirable: a fixation on quantification obscures the qualitative. This is not a trivial challenge.

Further, while the bottom line is there, the means to get there are not fully within our control. Not only must we weigh different, and perhaps conflicting, priorities, we are also in no position to unilaterally impose the priority concerns that we identify. We do not own the justice

system. The concerns of the bench, the bar, victims of crime, the police, social agencies and others arise out of the different and discrete roles that they each play. We have our own particular concerns as well, but our priorities must be negotiated carefully with the other independent yet interdependent institutions that make up the system. We must be conscientious about addressing the concerns of those others while at the same time not appearing to interfere in matters that are beyond our authority. It's a fine line to walk, given that we are also accountable to central agencies, the Legislature and the public generally for sound fiscal management and for our program and policy choices. We need to be very careful and thoughtful about how we approach change in this complex environment.

In light of these challenges, my advice to the Court Services Division has been twofold. First, I think we need to focus on change initiatives that are modest, small in scale and incremental. I'm all for thinking big, but we have to start small. I believe that a series of small steps can get us to our goals more surely than radical, systemic upheaval.

Second, I advised the Division to identify initiatives that build on what we already do well. Initiatives that reflect our existing infrastructure and interfere minimally with our normal way of doing things are more likely to be successfully embraced by our staff and those with whom we work in the courts.

I congratulate the Division on developing a Five-Year Plan that incorporates this approach to change and on the work it has successfully completed in the first year of the Plan. I will be very interested to see how this change process unfolds. And since the primary goal of the Court Services Division is to support the provision of high quality justice services to the public, I would welcome the views of those who read this Report and who have an interest in our work as it progresses.

Mark Freiman
Deputy Attorney General
March 31st, 2003



**Forward by the
Assistant Deputy Attorney General**

I am pleased to provide the Annual Report on the operations of the Ministry of the Attorney General's Court Services Division for the fiscal year April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

The Court Services Division is one of the largest operational divisions in the Ontario Government. We are mandated to ensure fully staffed, fully functioning courts in over 250 locations across Ontario. We provide public information and filing services at court counters, maintain court records, provide courtroom support for the judiciary, manage juries, deliver civil and family mediation programs and enforce court orders, among other services.

Ontario's justice system has many strengths but its key feature is the calibre of men and women who labour every day in the administration of court services. Ontario's knowledgeable and fair-minded judiciary and its highly skilled and dedicated bar continue to offer the Ministry leadership and guidance. The excellent working relationships between the judiciary, the bar and the Ministry are key to maintaining one of the best court systems in the world. The Court Services Division is pleased to support the co-operative efforts of these independent, yet interdependent, participants in the justice system.

There are, of course, challenges in administering court services across Ontario's huge distances. Public concerns about access, delays and complexity in the justice system are our concerns too. We are taking

action to improve our planning processes and manage these challenges in order to build a more effective, efficient and accessible Ontario court service.

Our Division has developed a detailed business planning process to keep our activities focused on results. Our new Five-Year Plan outlines the problems and prospects for the Division, establishes service standards and lists the initiatives we will implement to meet those standards. Our Plan reflects the goals of Ontario's local court managers and was developed in consultation with the judiciary. Key needs identified in the Plan include professionalizing our workforce, expanding access to court services through technology, and physically maintaining and improving our current system of courthouses across the province.

The Annual Report is part of our ongoing commitment to improve the accuracy, scope and accessibility of information on Ontario's Court Services Division and the operations of Ontario's courts. I trust you will find this report an informative overview of the programs and initiatives we are pursuing to provide a modern and professional court service that supports accessible, fair, timely and effective justice services.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Debra Paulseth'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Debra Paulseth
Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Court Services Division
March 31st, 2003

Photo (opposite page): Ontario Court of Justice, Old City Hall, Toronto

