

## Chapter 5

### 2003/04 Corporate Initiatives

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#### Modernizing Service Delivery

##### Civil/Family Court Case Tracking System

CSD has developed a new electronic court case tracking system to more effectively manage civil, family, Small Claims Court, Divisional Court and Superior Court criminal cases. The system tracks timelines, allows staff to electronically schedule cases into courtrooms and creates an electronic database that increases the accuracy and availability of court data for statistical reports.

As of March 31, 2004, CSD has implemented the new court case tracking system in 35 court sites. Province-wide training and phased implementation is targeted for completion by December 31, 2004.

##### Criminal Court Case Management Legacy System Modernization

Building on existing technology, CSD is planning to improve the criminal court case management system: the Integrated Court Offences Network (ICON). The Ministry is reviewing pre-court, in-court and post-court processes, resource requirements and technology needs. These reviews are to be completed in 2004, and will result in recommended priority improvements for ICON.

##### Display Boards Project

Visitors to busy court facilities often require assistance to locate the proceeding they wish to attend. The Display Boards Project fosters user self-service by displaying court information and directions on large display boards in courthouse lobbies.

As of March 31, 2004, display boards have been installed in 17 courthouses across the province, in the cities of Barrie, Brampton, Chatham, Cornwall, Hamilton, Kitchener, London, Milton, Newmarket, North Bay, Oshawa, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto and Windsor. Future phases of the project to display additional court information are in the planning stages.

##### Model Electronic Courtroom

In 2002/03, CSD established a model electronic courtroom at the 393 University Avenue Superior Court of Justice in Toronto. The courtroom is a test environment for the use of advanced in-court technology in commercial and other non-jury civil matters. The technology supports:

- Digital evidence and argument presentation
- Remote video and teleconferencing appearances by counsel, witnesses and interpreters
- Simultaneous cross-border hearings

Pilot testing and evaluation of the facility continued through 2003/04.

##### Telecom Modernization

The Ministry of the Attorney General Telecom Modernization Project was initiated to upgrade antiquated telephone infrastructure throughout the province, in order to improve Ministry adherence to Ontario's Quality Service Strategy.

During 2003/04, telecom enhancements continued at the Sault Ste. Marie, Red Lake, and Gore Bay courthouses. The Ministry undertook extended warranty plan options where applicable.

### **Video Remand**

A high proportion of preliminary criminal court appearances are remands; the accused is “remanded” (sent back) to custody to await trial. The Video Remand Project allows an accused person to appear in court by video conferencing from a police station or correctional institution. Video remand reduces the number of prisoners who must be transported to and from court.

As of March 31, 2004, the Video Remand Project has implemented 125 installations in courthouses, correctional facilities, First Nations buildings and Ontario Provincial Police detachments. Video facilities will be installed in one additional courthouse location in 2004/05. The project is continuing to work with Municipal Police Services, the Ontario Provincial Police and First Nations Police Services to coordinate POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) videophone installations, with the goal of providing video services in Ontario’s remote locations. CSD also continues to explore the use of video technology in non-criminal proceedings.

## **Improving Staff Support and Internal Communications**

### **The Court Services Division Intranet**

The Court Services Division Intranet site is the primary means of communication between CSD corporate head office and the regions. The site consists of over 1,800 web pages, including divisional directives, up-to-date manuals, electronic forms and other CSD communications. The site receives over 400 visits per day, resulting in over 175,000 hits per month.

The Intranet content management system was upgraded this year to facilitate posting and to make the site fully accessible under the *Ontarians With Disabilities Act* guidelines.

### **Procedural Manuals**

The objective of the Manuals Project is to improve resources for field staff and ensure common service standards in court procedures across the province. The project is undertaking to rewrite or create over 30 court procedural manuals.

Distributed to staff on the CSD Intranet site, the new manuals:

- Present information in a clear and readable format
- Provide electronic links to forms and legislation required for legal authority
- Incorporate all CSD directives
- Remain current, by allowing for updates on a real-time basis as policies and procedures change
- Illustrate step-by-step instructions in diagrams

The manuals are being developed through collaboration between professional writers, designers, business line experts, focus groups and review committees.

### **Electronic Forms**

The Corporate Planning Branch is in the process of making available all court forms in electronic format. The forms allow court staff to:

- Use the most current version of forms
- Fill out the forms electronically
- Save the contents of the forms for future reference
- Produce the forms in-house, on an as-needed basis, with considerable cost savings

The forms are linked to the procedural manuals on the CSD Intranet site, to allow for easy access by court staff. To date, over 500 forms have been recreated and posted online. Electronic forms are consistently among the most frequently accessed pages on the CSD Intranet.

## Working with Our Justice Partners

### **Provincial Offences Act Support to Municipalities**

The *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) governs non-*Criminal Code* offences, such as parking, traffic and liquor licence violations and offences under the *Ontario Health and Safety Act* and the *Environmental Protection Act*. Municipalities are responsible for administering POA offences and prosecuting selected POA offences. The province is responsible for prosecuting serious POA offences and for the quality of the justice system as a whole.

As part of its oversight and monitoring role, CSD conducts regularly scheduled audits of POA courts. CSD also reviews semi-annual financial and performance reports from all municipalities that administer POA courts. Additional monitoring mechanisms are being developed, including monthly reports of POA workload and financial data. The Division is also updating the POA operations manuals and is improving communications with municipalities.

### **Improving Public Legal Education**

Established in 2002 by Chief Justice McMurtry, Chief Justice LeSage and Chief Justice Lennox, the Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN) is a collaborative venture which fosters public understanding of the justice system.

Through the Courtrooms and Classrooms Program, tens of thousands of students across Ontario have had an opportunity to engage in interactive sessions with various justice system participants.

In 2003, OJEN completed its first year, expanding its Summer Law Institute for high school teachers to five locations, including Windsor, Ottawa, London, Sudbury and Toronto. The two-day program provided teachers with an opportunity to gain legal knowledge and to

meet members of the justice community. OJEN also developed resource materials titled *Values of the Justice System*, which were distributed to all schools in the English and French language school boards in Ontario. In winter 2004, the network published its first edition of *Update*, a newsletter that details many of the public legal education initiatives occurring throughout Ontario.

### **Ontario Justice International**

Ontario Justice International (OJI) is the Ministry of the Attorney General's international consulting service. By drawing upon the Ontario government's experience operating one of the largest justice systems in North America, OJI helps client governments design and operate fair, impartial, accessible and efficient justice systems.

As part of OJI, CSD prepared customized training materials in modules that covered Ontario's experience with recent civil and family justice reform initiatives, including case management and mandatory mediation. Materials were drafted to respond to the particular areas of interest of OJI's international clients.

### **Management Information**

CSD statistics, collected by court staff across the province, comprise the largest source of statistical data used by the Ministry of the Attorney General. CSD continues to develop its management information systems to:

- Improve the accuracy and scope of court statistics
- Present court statistics online
- Generate standard statistical reports
- Provide the basis for informed and strategic decision-making across the Ministry
- Provide data to assist courts in managing their caseloads

## Managing Court Facilities

### Investing in Court Facilities

Since 1996, Ontario has committed \$269M to the Courts Construction Program, which focuses on the consolidation of Superior and Ontario Courts of Justice. New courthouses have been constructed in Brampton, Cornwall, Hamilton, Owen Sound, Toronto (Civil/Family), Welland, Windsor and Chatham. Brockville is due to open in summer 2004. The planned Pembroke court consolidation project remains a Ministry priority in the 2004/05 Infrastructure Plan. The government is moving ahead with a new Durham courthouse that will consolidate court services that are currently spread throughout the region, which is expected to be completed in the winter of 2008/09.

The Ministry's other capital investments have focused on the repair of existing facilities to manage health, safety and security issues and to implement special initiatives, including improvements to holding cells and related areas to comply with the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

### Facilities Renewal

*Justice Delay Reduction Initiative:* As part of the Ministry's Justice Delay Reduction Initiative to reduce the criminal backlog in the courts, capital funding of \$2.4M was allocated to commence planning for additional space in multiple court locations. The additional space will include new courtrooms and holding cells and facilities to accommodate the judiciary, Crowns, support staff, victim services, duty counsel and court administration staff.

*Orangeville:* Constructed in 1881, the Orangeville courthouse needs to be expanded and modernized, to accommodate caseload growth and changes in program delivery. Design work is underway and the Ministry has identified this facility as a priority project for infrastructure funding.

*Holding Cells:* In order to comply with the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the Ministry invested \$900,000 in 2003/04 to improve holding cells and related areas for in-custody young persons in courthouses across the province.

### 2003/04 Courts Construction Projects

*Brockville:* Consolidation of the Ontario and Superior Courts of Justice into a renovated five-courtroom heritage courthouse with an estimated cost of \$15.1M. This project was substantially completed in 2003/04 and occupancy is planned for summer 2004.

*Chatham:* Consolidation of the Ontario and Superior Courts of Justice into a renovated six-courtroom facility with an estimated cost of \$13.4M. Construction is complete and the Ministry began operations in August 2003. The official courthouse opening ceremony is planned for May 2004.

*Owen Sound:* Consolidation of the Ontario and Superior Courts of Justice into a newly constructed five-courtroom facility with a total construction cost of \$15.8M. The new consolidated courthouse began operations on February 3, 2003, and the official opening ceremony occurred on March 12, 2004.

*Pembroke:* Planning for the consolidation of the Ontario and Superior Courts of Justice into the existing historic courthouse at 297 Pembroke Street East is currently underway.



Top: New courthouse in Owen Sound.  
Bottom: New courthouse in Chatham.