



Ministry of the Attorney General
Court Services Division
Annual Report 2003/04

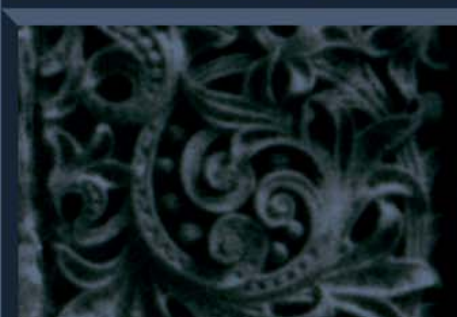


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Message from the Deputy Attorney General

Ontario's Court Services Division provides court administration services to the largest and busiest court system in Canada.

It is an enormous challenge to ensure the effective day-to-day functioning of the courts across such a wide and diverse province. It would be impossible to do so without strong and effective working relationships with the judiciary and the other participants in the justice system. The Ministry is committed to respecting and building on these relationships.

Last year, the Division developed a Five-Year Plan that set out its business goals, defined service standards and outlined initiatives to achieve those standards. The Division made a commitment to update the Plan every year. This Report contains the updated Plan, including a report on the Division's progress to date.

The Five-Year Plan focuses on continuously improving court services. Management practices are becoming more sophisticated, both in the private sector and in government. Technology offers greater opportunities for operational efficiencies. The demand for increased

accountability requires more transparent, rigorous and meaningful public reporting.

The Division's Report and the Five-Year Plan enhance the transparency of the Division's activities, in the interest of public accountability. I encourage members of the public to comment on the issues and initiatives that are discussed here. Please feel free to contact the Ministry by email at attorneygeneral@jus.gov.on.ca.

I look forward to continued success and support from the Court Services Division as the Ministry works to provide excellent court services and improve the justice system in Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Murray Segal', written in a cursive style.

Murray Segal
Deputy Attorney General
Deputy Ministry Responsible for Native Affairs
April 2004



**Forward by the
Assistant Deputy Attorney General**

I am pleased to present the second Annual Report on the operations of the Ministry of the Attorney General's Court Services Division for the fiscal year April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.

The Court Services Division works to provide a modern and professional court service that supports accessible, fair, timely and effective justice services. Our five-year planning process helps us achieve this mission in a focused, fiscally responsible and transparent way. This Annual Report is an important part of our commitment under the Five-Year Plan to measure and report on the steps we have taken over the past year to provide excellent court services.

As you will read in the following pages, the Division has achieved a number of significant accomplishments in 2003/04.

A new, electronic court case tracking system for civil, family, Small Claims Court, Divisional Court and Superior Court criminal cases was implemented in 35 sites across the province. The system, which is being rolled out across the province, allows staff to track timelines and electronically schedule cases into courtrooms. The system also creates an information database that will improve the accuracy and enrich the scope of data for statistical reporting.

In collaboration with other divisions and the judiciary, the Justice Delay Reduction Initiative was implemented in 10 target sites to address criminal court delays in

high-volume courts. The Division also undertook an intensive review of administrative best practices at these sites, to ensure that court administrative processes are consistent, efficient and effective.

Several upgrades and renovations to existing court facilities were completed across the province. To accommodate continued caseload growth, new courthouses opened in Midland, Owen Sound and Chatham.

In addition to these projects, the Division implemented improvements in a number of other areas, including: new measures to support financial decision-making and accountability; a province-wide Divisional Business Continuity Framework to ensure that court services are provided during unforeseen or emergency circumstances; and pilot video assessment hearings to improve access to justice in remote areas of the province.

I trust you will find that this report is an informative overview of these and other initiatives that the Division is undertaking to ensure the high quality of Ontario's court services.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Paulseth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra Paulseth
Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Court Services Division