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## **B.C. Provincial Court makes court less intimidating for people without lawyers**

VANCOUVER, BC: - The Provincial Court of B.C. has adopted Guidelines for self-represented litigants to use a support person during a trial.

Thomas J. Crabtree, Chief Judge of the Provincial Court, said, “We know that going to court can be an intimidating experience, especially if you’re presenting your case on your own, without a lawyer. Self-represented litigants say having someone attend court with them to provide emotional support, take notes, organize documents, and make quiet suggestions is an important aspect of access to justice. As part of our efforts to improve meaningful access to justice for self-represented litigants, our Court has developed and adopted [Guidelines for Using a Support Person in Provincial Court.](#)”

The Guidelines make it clear that the Court welcomes support persons to provide quiet help to self-represented litigants in civil and family court trials, although individual judges in a particular case may decide that a support person’s presence would be disruptive or unfair. The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide people with a measure of certainty about when they will be permitted to have a support person help them in Provincial Court, and the scope of that help.

BC’s Provincial Court is the first court in Canada to adopt guidelines like this. Dr. Julie MacFarlane, Director of the National Self Represented Litigants Project, welcomed the Court’s initiative, saying, “The publication of these new guidelines will make the experience of going to court less intimidating, more humane, and more consistent for self-represented litigants in B.C. Provincial Court. I hope that other provincial courts will follow B.C.’s excellent example!”

Jennifer Muller, an Access to Justice BC committee member with experience as a self-represented litigant, agreed, “These guidelines will have a positive and significant impact on the experience of many self represented litigants in B.C. Provincial Court.”

For more information, see [BC Provincial Court adopts Support Person Guidelines](#) .

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