
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Attorney General
The Provincial Court of British Columbia

NEW JOINT INITIATIVE TO SPEED UP COURT PROCESS

VICTORIA – B.C. and the Provincial Court are working together on a new initiative to get court cases to trial faster, Attorney General Geoff Plant and The Hon. Carol Baird Ellan, Chief Judge of the Provincial Court said today.

A key issue being addressed is delays for criminal cases at Vancouver's Provincial court, 222 Main Street, which can take up to 11 months to go to trial.

"These delays are unacceptable and the Chief Judge and I are committed to doing everything we can to reduce them," said Plant. "By doing so, we can find ways to make our entire court system function more effectively and increase access to justice for all British Columbians."

The Vancouver Backlog Reduction Initiative will cut waits at 222 Main Street significantly by Dec 31, 2004. And as part of that initiative, two new judges are being added to B.C.'s Provincial court system.

Baird Ellan is chairing the initiative's Main Street Criminal Procedure Committee, which is looking at ways to increase courtroom efficiencies through optimum utilization, adherence to criminal caseflow management rules, the role of counsel and the judiciary in pre-trial case management for long trials, and other improvements. The Committee includes senior members of the judiciary, Crown counsel and government.

"It is important that there is an equal commitment by both the Ministry and the Judiciary to make a genuine effort to address issues of delay at 222 Main Street," said Baird Ellan. "Some of the issues are clearly for the Judiciary, and others are for either Crown counsel or the Court Services Branch to resolve. But we must work together to identify potential answers."

The two new judges are Joseph Frank Galati and Donna Senniw. Galati practiced both civil and criminal litigation most recently with the firm Anderson and Galati in Vancouver. Senniw practiced family law, civil litigation, corporate and commercial law, and criminal and youth law in Vancouver.

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