

Dear Minister Eby and Minister Kang

I am writing about the proposed closure of the Law Courts Inn. I was called to the Bar in 1975 and spent the first 19 years of my career (including articling) as a court room lawyer, largely in County Court (as it then was) and Supreme Court. I spent the first few years in the Old Courthouse (now the Art Gallery) and moved to the current premises when they opened. As a trial lawyer that building was home. When the Law Courts Inn opened it immediately became a place of importance to the profession. It was a convenient place to meet for lunch, it had space for meetings of lawyers, such as CBA section meetings, lunch and learns, Inns of Court and other regular and important cornerstones of our profession. As well it has had many events, for a period of time the Law Society AGM was held there, meetings of the UBC Law School (as it was then called) had our breakfast meetings there, there have been many receptions and some funerals there. In other words it is a place that contains memories and history and it would be a significant loss for the legal profession. It is an area of the building that gives some life to the building and it would be a great loss to turn it into more office space and make the building even more sterile and uninteresting.

The Lawyers Assistance Program of B.C. has had our annual gratitude lunch there on the third Friday of June for the past 20 years. We were sorry to have to cancel this year and we have reserved for June 18, 2021. This event has over 200 lawyers, and supportive members of the public, attend to honour a member of our profession who has been of service in helping other lawyers. Past recipients include Chief Justice Hinkson, Justice Crossin (David Crossin QC as he then was), The Honourable Wally Oppal, Chief Justice Finch, and many other notable lawyers from around the province. It has been an occasion for lawyers to get together to remember the highest ethics of the legal profession and to develop and honour collegiality and respect at the Bar. We could move the event to another location but the profound flavour of this being a lawyers' event for lawyers and honouring the legal profession would be dampened. I consider the Law Courts Inn as the venue that brings us all together. Tradition is very important to the smooth and effective operation of the law and the legal profession and collegiality helps the administration of justice and the Law Courts Inn is important in both regards. The loss of this venue would seriously affect many lawyers and the operation the legal system as a whole.

I have read the letter from Adam Howden-Duke and I agree. I will also add that in my role as Executive Director of the Lawyers Assistance program I have contact with a great many lawyers each year, hundreds directly and thousands at meetings and presentations, and while I don't have a crystal ball, it seems pretty clear to me that there will be a significant reduction in the amount of office space used over the next few years. I don't think this will be a particularly good investment.

I sincerely hope you will reconsider your decision to remove the Law Courts Inn from the Law Courts building.

Your respectfully,

Derek LaCroix QC

Executive Director

Lawyers Assistance Program of B.C.

(604) 685-2131 direct

1-888-685-2171 ext 223 toll free