



West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund

800–409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 1T2

t: 604.684.8772 westcoastleaf.org

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Sunny Dhaliwal
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Salman Azam
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Attorney General
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Anne Kang
Minister of Citizens' Services
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Dear Mr. Dhaliwal, Mr. Azam and Ms. Kang,

I am writing to share my shock and disappointment in plans to close the Law Courts Inn and convert the public space into office space.

West Coast LEAF is a feminist legal advocacy organization established in 1985 when the equality provisions of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came into force. We envision a just and equal world for all women and people who experience gender-based discrimination. Informed by community, we use litigation, law reform and public legal education to make transformational change to advance gender equality in BC.

West Coast LEAF has held our annual general meetings at the Law Courts Inn for several years, at least since 2011. We choose the Law Courts Inn for a number of reasons.

First, the service is personal, warm, attentive and professional. I look forward to planning our event with the venue staff, where I am treated with respect and genuine care. I look forward to being welcomed by the staff, most especially Steve Chamli and Davor Pandza, who are total gems.

Second, the folks at the Law Courts Inn are committed to community. The Law Courts Inn supports the non-profit social justice sector and those who serve marginalized communities in Vancouver. They provide an affordable option for small nonprofits in the city.



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Hosting an event at the Law Courts Inn holds a number of benefits for a small but well-known legal organization like ours. One, it's in a central downtown location, where most of our members and supporters from the legal community are located, as well. Those folks are often familiar with the venue and find it easily accessible. The location allows folks to make it to our after-work AGM on time and with ease, increasing the likelihood that we make quorum and fulfill our legal requirements and the requirements of our bylaws. Second, our members who are not in the legal profession enjoy the opportunity to visit the Law Courts in a low-stress context, demystifying the Courthouse and giving them a sense of what it feels like to be inside the Courthouse complex. The Courts don't have many public spaces and keeping the Law Courts Inn as one of those public spaces seems like a community benefit ill served by closing it down and converting it to private spaces. It also removes the beautiful view and reflecting pool from public view, another loss to the community at large.

It was only a couple of years ago that the Law Courts Inn underwent much needed renovations to better serve the community. We were impressed with the renovations and the improvements are experienced by those who rent the space for their functions. It seems a serious waste of resources--natural resources and money--to rip it up and rebuild for an entirely new purpose. What a shame that would be.

Not only do Law Courts Inn staff and management provide warm and professional service, they routinely sponsor our event in big and small ways. In a recent year when we had a very limited event budget, the Law Courts Inn stepped in to generously sponsor the rental portion so that we could still host our members and invited guests in style. We were happy to be able to pay for the delicious and beautifully presented appetizers and desserts to our guests. Staff go out of their way to ensure we and our guests are well cared for and I trust them to continue that level of service in future.

At West Coast LEAF, we are grateful to the Law Courts Inn staff and management and feel committed to holding our annual general meeting in their space in future. Losing the space would mean we would have to look for another affordable space, which may or may not have food service, may or may not provide audiovisual services, may or may not be accessible, and may or may not have staff on site to assist us problem-solving. It's not easy to find a space in the city of Vancouver that has an accessible space for 75-150 people to enjoy a presentation and a reception with a beautiful view, high ceilings, lots of natural light and that has a commercial kitchen and fantastic staff.

I don't want to end this letter without making a note of the current context, which I believe is important to the matter at hand, in addition to the reasons stated above. During a global pandemic



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and economic recession, I can think of no good reason why more talented, good people should lose their jobs, even more so considering that the service and tourism and hospitality industries are contracting and we have no sense of when our economy will get back on track and businesses can hire again with confidence. People in the province are suffering and I cannot imagine that further reducing jobs is a just response. Sometimes decisions that seem wise in one moment are foolhardy and short-sighted in another. The decision to reconsider and keep the Law Courts Inn open is a simple matter of economic justice in this context.

This is all to say nothing of preserving Arthur Erickson's architectural legacy for future generations of the public in Vancouver and across the province.

The Law Courts Inn is a public good and should remain as such. As a citizen and as an employee of a feminist legal nonprofit organization in BC, I respectfully request that you reconsider and keep the Law Courts Inn open and accessible to the public.

Sincerely and with respect,

Basya

Basya Laye

Director of Development and Engagement

Pronouns: she/her/hers