

Good Afternoon,

I am writing concerning decision by the Ministry of Citizens Services to not renew the lease of the Law Courts Inn at the Vancouver Courthouse. I have read the open letter dated June 25, 2020 to yourselves from Adam Howden-Duke on behalf of the Lawyers' Inn Society. I wish to express my concurrence with that letter and also to offer the personal perspective of an affected stakeholder.

For the last 15 years, I have been the Program Director for the Inns of Court Program. This program was founded in 1984 by Allan McEachern (then Chief Justice of the BC Supreme Court), with judges Henry Hutcheon, John Bouck, and Josiah Wood. The program was designed to promote professionalism and competence at the Bar and was fashioned after an English tradition where approximately 25 junior lawyers would meet casually with senior practitioners to discuss the legal field. There are two program terms each year. Each term consists of six sessions, each of which include a 90 minute "roundtable" discussion addressing professional and ethical issues, followed by dinner. Our program is fully accredited by the Law Society of British Columbia as a continuing professional development provider, and is very popular among junior barristers. It provides a unique and unparalleled opportunity for young barristers to receive knowledge, advice and mentorship from judges and senior lawyers.

Since I was a participant in the program in 1995 (and likely earlier) the Inns of Court has run its sessions out of the Law Courts Inn. The location is not only one that is convenient to the many members of the judiciary and counsel who volunteer their time, but also lends a certain atmosphere to the program which I have no doubt contributes to its success. Since the lease announcement, I have given some thought to operating the program in different venues. In each case, I come to the conclusion that the Inns of Court will suffer for want of the Law Courts Inn as a venue. It is also my view that any impact on the program will have a similar impact on the junior members of the bar who benefit from it. I simply cannot conceive of any other venue that will allow the program to provide young lawyer the benefits that it does.

I can recall when Minister Eby (then a young lawyer) was a participant in the program. I suspect, if asked, he would agree that the Inns of Court would be poorer for loss of this venue.

While the Inns of Court Program is one user of many, I wish to add my voice to those requesting that this decision be reconsidered.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Yours Truly,

Mike

Please note that our physical offices are closed until further notice, but all of our lawyers and staff are continuing to work remotely and are available by phone and email.

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