



The Law Society of British Columbia’s vision for how lawyers can advance access to justice and legal services

Through its policy development, rule reform and strategic planning, the Law Society of British Columbia demonstrates a commitment to finding ways to enhance access to justice and legal services. This work requires lawyers to be committed to the goal of a more just society.

The Law Society’s Vision for Public Legal Aid in British Columbia recognizes that “Access to justice is a fundamental human right, and:

- (a) Our democratic society cannot exist without the rule of law, and the rule of law depends on all people having meaningful and effective access to justice,
- (b) not all people in society have the ability or means to access justice,
- (c) Indigenous people are uniquely and historically disadvantaged in their access to the legal system and legal aid.”

These considerations not only underpin the vision of public legal aid but also the vision for how lawyers can advance access to justice and legal services. Therefore, the Law Society adopts the following vision for how lawyers can advance access to justice and legal services:

A democratic society, subject to the rule of law, requires all people to have access to justice. The *Legal Profession Act* restricts the practice of law, almost exclusively, to lawyers. This privilege carries with it a duty to society for lawyers to find ways to make their services accessible and to promote access to justice. Lawyers, through provision of legal services, have always played an essential role in helping people achieve access to justice and must continue to do so.

Some barriers to access to justice arise from systemic inequalities in our society. Formal systems of justice can reinforce systemic inequalities, and in the process place equal treatment under the law beyond the reach of many in society. As stewards of the justice system, lawyers have played - and must continue to play - a leading role in promoting access to justice. This work starts with lawyers providing their services in a manner that is sensitive to cultural and socio-economic factors that impede access to justice.

As professionals, lawyers must remember that the practice of law is more than a money-making business, it is a branch of the administration of justice (Canons of Legal Ethics, 2.1-3(j)). Access to justice is best achieved with the help of a lawyer. When lawyers champion policies and law reform, access to justice is enhanced. The Law Society encourages lawyers to find ways to make their services accessible to advance access to justice.