



March 23, 2017

Via email: justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca; mcu@justice.gc.ca; Bill.Morneau@canada.ca;
minister@ec.gc.ca

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8

The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Finance
17th floor
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5

The Honourable Navdeep Singh Bains, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic
Development
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
28th floor, 10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers:

Re: Budget 2017

The Canadian Bar Association is pleased to share its initial reaction to Budget 2017. We welcome how it addresses many areas critical to Canada's justice agenda, particularly the commitment it demonstrates to access to justice, promoting equality, fairer criminal justice and innovation.

We are concerned, however, about the impacts of removing billed-basis accounting on professionals and their clients. We would like to discuss this with you at your earliest opportunity.

Access to Justice

We are pleased to see new judicial positions and the pool to facilitate timely future appointments, as one avenue to address court delays. We have identified a number of other initiatives that might be undertaken.¹ But the right number of judges in the right places at the right time is fundamental to any true access to justice. We welcome the money attached to gender and diversity training for judges, implementing recommendations from the 2015 Quadrennial Commission on Judicial Compensation and Benefits, and additional support for the Canadian Judicial Council and the Courts

¹ Canadian Bar Association, Top 10 Ways to Reduce Court Delays, online at <http://ow.ly/dXWI30ach2G>.

Administration Service. Ensuring access to court decisions in both languages is welcome, and long overdue.

We applaud the ongoing funding promised for the Supporting Families initiative, and other measures including enhanced support for enforcement of family support orders and a commitment to innovation that will go far to improve family justice services for Canadians.

We will follow up with the Finance Minister on the possible impacts of removing billed-basis accounting on access to justice for the middle class.

Promoting Equality

We welcome the government's incorporation of a gender-based analysis in this budget and commitment to strengthening this approach across all policy and program development. The CBA is especially encouraged by the proposal to establish a National Strategy to Address Gender-Based Violence to address violence experienced by women and girls across a wide range of backgrounds.

Fairer Criminal Justice

Steps to make the criminal justice system fairer and more efficient are a CBA priority. Many items in Budget 2017 are squarely directed at Indigenous people, which is appropriate to address the serious problem of their over-involvement in the criminal justice system. The budget's support for restorative justice, improved rehabilitation and reintegration and mental health services for offenders represent significant steps in the right direction.

Innovation

Finally, the CBA is pleased to see recognition that a well-functioning intellectual property regime is a key factor in an innovative economy. We would be pleased to engage with the government as it develops a renewed national intellectual property strategy.

The CBA appreciates the attention that you and your government are giving to key issues for improving justice in Canada. We will be examining the budget documents in greater detail, and look forward to discussing with you and your colleagues the implications for the law and the legal profession. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration on these important measures.

Yours truly

(original letter signed by René J. Basque)

René J. Basque, c.r./Q.C.