

**Legal Information and Legal Aid Services in the Province of B.C.
Resolution for the Annual General Meeting, B.C. Library Association, 22 April 2005**

WHEREAS the B.C. Library Association passed a resolution at the 2002 annual general meeting expressing the opposition of B.C. libraries to the onerous cutbacks imposed on the Legal Services Society, resolving that BCLA work with other advocacy groups to reverse these government decisions, and asking the BCLA Executive to establish mechanisms for documenting the impact of these and other government cutbacks as they affect the information needs of the people of B.C.;

AND WHEREAS the budget cuts (38% of the Legal Services Society budget cut between 2001 and 2004; full-time legal staff reduced to 21 from 147; 9 regional offices replaced 60 offices around the province) have subsequently affected access to legal services and information particularly in rural communities;

AND WHEREAS funding for legal aid for poverty law cases ceased, and aid for family law cases has been significantly restricted and diminished;

AND WHEREAS equitable access to legal information is a vital and basic information right in a modern society; and web-based or taped information and leaflets may assist some citizens capable of self-directed research and action, but cannot take the place of a trained advocate advising a client and representing him or her in court or at other adjudicative processes;

AND WHEREAS the provincial government announced earlier this year a pre-election reinvestment of \$4.6 million in legal aid (which can be used for family law) but this is a figure less than 12% of what has been cut since 2002;

AND WHEREAS there is evidence that shows women are affected disproportionately by these cutbacks because the majority of their issues tend to be addressed in the areas of poverty and family law;

BE IT RESOLVED that this AGM reaffirm the opposition of BCLA to the cutbacks imposed on the Legal Services Society during the past 3 years, requesting that the Legal Services Society once again be given arms-length status from government, and that the funding of legal aid services, particularly in the areas of family, poverty and immigration law, be restored at a minimum to the level that existed before the 2002 cutbacks;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that BCLA write to the leaders of the major political parties during the current electoral campaign, and after the election, write to the Premier, Attorney-General and the Leader of the Opposition expressing concerns about the level of readily-accessible legal information and legal aid funding for poverty, family and immigration law cases; and that such correspondence should be copied to advocacy groups and agencies such as BC Rural Women's Network, PovNet, and West Coast LEAF.

Moved:
BJ May

Seconded:
Brian Campbell