



(Via email)

Shannon Salter, KC

Deputy Minister to the Premier, Cabinet Secretary, and the Head of the Public Service

Barbara Carmichael, KC

Deputy Attorney General

February 8, 2024

I write on behalf of the BC Government Lawyers Association, which represents legal and legislative counsel working for the provincial government other than Crown counsel. Last Friday one of our Crown counsel colleagues was attacked on the approach to the provincial courthouse in Vancouver at 222 Main Street. The week before that, a worker was attacked in the lobby of the Ministry of Attorney General's office in Victoria, where many of our members work. While there is no indication these recent incidents were related, they were also not the first occasions where our members have been threatened or assaulted in relation to our work. The underlying risks have long been known by our employer.

The BC Government Lawyers Association stands with the BC Crown Counsel Association in calling for improved safety for all of us who work in the provincial justice system and for members of the public who participate in that system. The government needs to listen to its workers, including giving serious consideration to the BC Crown Counsel Association's proposal to move the courts to another location away from the Downtown Eastside.

Our members represent the government in different arenas of law than our Crown colleagues. Nonetheless, we agree all courthouses must be seen as safe places for people who work there, people who are compelled to be there, and people who have the right to be there.

There is already a contingent of security personnel posted daily at the entrance to 222 Main, some of whom are responsible for escorting Crown lawyers into the building unharmed to perform the simple act of going to work. The job of a Crown lawyer, working to uphold the law and pursue the public interest, is challenging enough without the added stress of being in danger.

We share the profound disturbance expressed by the Premier in response to the attack last Friday. Frankly, we have been disturbed for a long time; disturbed that unsafe working conditions have been normalized and downplayed by our employer for years. Being forced to change work routines and depending on security escorts every day should not be considered normal. Nor should the expectation that workers "be vigilant" as was expressed to us in the aftermath of the security incident at our office the preceding week.



It is our employer's legal responsibility to ensure our health and safety while at work. That responsibility is not being met. It is time to do something about the longstanding problems that surround our workplaces, including but not limited to the provincial courts at 222 Main. That requires meaningful employer engagement with worker representatives of the BC Crown Counsel Association and the BC Government Lawyers Association.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Micah Weintraub', is positioned below the 'Signed,' text. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Micah Weintraub

President
BC Government Lawyers Association
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CC: Adam Dalrymple, President of the BC Crown Counsel Association