

I have spoken with Peter Leask, Q.C., the Treasurer of the Law Society of British Columbia, and Wendy Baker, Q.C., the President of the British Columbia Branch of the Canadian Bar Association. The three of us would appreciate the chance to meet with you to discuss this issue, as soon as possible at your convenience.

Yours very truly,

Lynn Smith
Dean

The Honourable Gerry Wilson
Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship
11th Floor, Jules Léger Building
15 Eddy Street
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0A9

Dear Mr. Wilson:

This is to express my shock and disappointment at the announcement of the termination of the Court Challenges Program. As an academic who has worked in the area of equality rights and as a past President of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, I am disappointed that the Court Challenges Program has provided an essential service, and in a highly cost-effective way. I am disappointed that the program was terminated without any consultation with the academic community about government courts and the Charter is already here. The existence of the Court Challenges Program was never in doubt to those who stated that the Charter was a hollow promise, no more than words on paper which the courts had no intention of enforcing, and the courts had no intention of enforcing. The Court Challenges Program ensured that there was a chance that cases could be brought and arguments presented by disadvantaged groups in our society. It also ensured a public commitment by government to the courts and stated in the Charter. I am disappointed that the program will give I feel great support to the court's position.

Having said that, I think the Court Challenges Program was a very important program. I think it is cost effective. With reference to the Charter, I think it is very important to the court world also apply to other, the funding tended to be devoted very substantially to the cost and expense of bringing cases forward, and not to legal fees. In fact, there were large donations of free legal work of equal value across the country which the program made possible. The value of the legal work may be measured by the impact it has had on judicial decisions, as in the law cases and more recently. Even in fact, I would suggest obtaining an evaluation as to whether organizations funded under the Court Challenges Program made useful or important contributions to Supreme Court of Canada decisions. I think that the Justices of the Court, such as the Right Honourable Brian Dickson or the Honourable Bertha Wilson.

Understanding as I do the government's desire to reduce expenditures, I urge you to reconsider the decision. I think that termination of the program will do serious damage not only to the progress of social justice, but also to the public perception of government and of the rule of law.