



May 12, 2017

**Sent via email and post**

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

**Herman Van Ommen, QC**  
*President*

Office telephone  
604.643.7973  
Cellular telephone  
604.345.6822  
Office Email  
hvanommen@mccarthy.ca

Dear Minister:

**Re: Judicial Appointments to the Supreme Court of British Columbia**

The Law Society has a statutory duty to uphold and protect the public interest in the administration of justice in British Columbia. We are becoming increasingly concerned by the shortage of judges on the Supreme Court in this province. We are informed that there are currently 10 vacancies on the court, and that no appointments have been made for quite some time. Moreover, we understand that with impending retirements and elections by judges to become supernumerary, it is anticipated that by the end of the year there will be at least 24 vacancies on the court. Such a high number of vacancies would reduce the capacity and efficiency of the Court in a very profound manner.

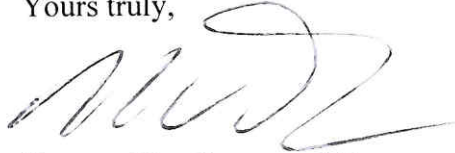
We know you understand the importance of ensuring a full complement of judges in the superior courts. The adjournment of trials due to a lack of judges causes significant hardships on litigants who need to resolve their legal disputes, as adjournments cause delays in the resolution of important matters and can prevent litigants from being able to get on with their lives. Moreover, delays can also cause an increase in the cost of the legal services required, which works to reduce access to legal services. It is in neither the parties' nor the legal profession's interest for trials to be adjourned, but with such a significant shortage of judges, that inevitably happens. This makes

our justice system much less effective, and reduces overall public confidence in the system.

Further, with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Jordan*, the lack of judges can have significant effects on the criminal justice system. Adjournments caused by a lack of an available judge could lead to the staying of serious charges without the ability to have the matter judicially determined. This also decreases the public confidence in the system, and makes our criminal justice system less effective.

We strenuously urge you at your earliest opportunity to ensure that your government appoints a full complement of judges to the Supreme Court of British Columbia in a timely manner. If there is anything that we can do to assist you in this process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Van Ommen', written in a cursive style.

Herman Van Ommen, QC  
President

/al

cc. The Honourable Christopher E. Hinkson  
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia