



Tab 14

April 16, 2015

## Update Report TAG – The Action Group on Access to Justice

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This report provides a brief overview of TAG's evolving structure and an update of recent TAG activities.

### **National Action Committee Meeting**

The Law Society hosted a meeting of the National Action Committee (NAC) on March 9, 2015. Justice Cromwell, the Treasurer and representatives from across the country engaged in productive dialogue about the ongoing role of NAC in raising the profile of access to justice. Discussions also focused on how best to coordinate communication across jurisdictions about access to justice best practices, initiatives and news.

### **Improving Access to Justice - Flip Your Wig CPD Event**

On April 8, 2015 TAG participated in Improving Access to Justice, a CPD event organized by Flip Your Wig. Panelists included Justice Cromwell (*Supreme Court of Canada*), Ron Franklin (*Franklinlaw*) and Patricia Hughes (*Law Commission of Ontario*) with Lorne Sossin (*Osgoode Hall Law School*) as moderator. The speakers provided insight into the various barriers and potential opportunities that exist within the sphere of access to justice concerns. Additional comments were featured from Michele M. Leering (*Community Advocacy & Legal Centre*), Barbara Grossman (*Dentons*) and Grant Wedge (*Law Society of Upper Canada*).

### **Reference Group**

The Reference Group, which acts as the TAG planning committee, met on March 2, 2015 and is working on developing and implementing a public engagement strategy. The aim is to produce a destination for organizations, individuals and institutions from across the province that are interested in developing or learning more about innovative solutions to Ontario's access to justice crisis. The group's next meeting is scheduled for late May 2015.

## **Clusters**

### **Online Family Law Shared Steps Resource**

This initiative focuses on common legal problems faced by people who have low or moderate incomes or face other disadvantages. The project is aimed at the first-contact community workers whom these people trust and turn to for help. The resource is currently being beta tested with assistance from Ryerson University. We look forward to supporting its official launch this summer.

### **Targeted Legal Services**

“Targeted Legal Services & Access to Justice: We Are All Pieces of the Puzzle” is a series of three symposia organized by TAG, Social Justice Tribunals Ontario and the Law Society of Upper Canada. On May 12, 2015, the second symposium in this series will build on the discussion at the first symposium by focussing on “success stories” in the delivery of targeted legal services. The final symposium in this series will take place in September 16, 2015.

### **Task Force on Custody and Access Assessors**

For the past five years, family justice system participants, including lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists have been calling for reforms to address the shortage of qualified custody and access assessors in the family court system. One of the major concerns that has repeatedly been identified as contributing to this problem is the impact of insufficient complaints on the willingness of assessors to do this important and challenging work. On June 8, 2015 TAG will hold a facilitated session about Professional Complaints Against Custody/Access Assessors. This session will convene family justice system participants in order to explore potential solutions and considerations to this significant access to justice problem.

### **Aboriginal Restorative Justice**

In order to develop a strong, collaborative, consultative relationship TAG is focusing on outreach with Aboriginal licensees, organizations and communities. What are the key action items for Aboriginal communities and how can we develop measures that promote Aboriginal justice? At this early stage in outreach we see an emerging role for TAG as a support for restorative justice programs within First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities.

### **In Development**

Additional clusters addressing Mental Health issues related to client service and Public Legal Education are expected to be starting shortly.