



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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2015 BC Budget Disappoints Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch President Reacts to Lack of Legal Aid Funding

VICTORIA, BC – The Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch (CBABC) today acknowledged the government’s announcement of a balanced budget, yet remains concerned about the impact no new funding to legal aid will have on access to justice for individuals and families in BC.

“The CBABC has continually reiterated there is a crisis in BC due to seriously underfunded legal aid,” said Alex Shorten, president, CBABC. “Once again we are faced with a budget that ignores our call for action.”

At their annual presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, the CBABC again requested that the budget include a substantial investment in legal aid services; recommending an immediate contribution to legal aid funding of \$10 million over the next three years starting with \$4 million this year and \$3 million in each of the two years following.

“For years now we have stated why legal aid matters. Today I reiterate why legal aid matters now more than ever,” emphasized Shorten.

“Today’s announcement recognizes the need for stable funding for court facilities such as the expansion and addition of courtrooms in the lower Fraser Valley. However, it is difficult to fathom how the government could not have found increased funding for legal aid within the almost \$1 billion surplus announced for the 2014/15 updated forecast or the projected surplus of \$284 million in this

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budget,” questioned Shorten.

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The Canadian Bar Association is the professional organization representing more than 38,000 lawyers, judges and law students in Canada, including 6,700 members in British Columbia.