



Ministry of the Attorney General

Court Services Division
Annual Report 2008/2009



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Message *from the* Deputy Attorney General

The *Court Services Division Annual Report for 2008/2009* outlines the progress made in delivering on the Division's mandate to provide a modern and professional court service. I encourage everyone to take the time to read this report and share any comments with the Ministry by e-mail at attorneygeneral@ontario.ca

The Court Services Division continued its outstanding commitment to providing quality customer service, while delivering a modern and professional court system that supports accessible and effective justice services.

Notable achievements in 2008/2009 included moving forward on the Honourable Coulter Osborne's Civil Justice Reform Project recommendations. The report addresses 18 areas of procedural and substantive law, including small claims, simplified procedure, trial management, the discovery process, technology, and proportionality.

The Division also made significant improvements to the accessibility of its services for people with disabilities. An on-site accessibility coordinator function was established at each full-time courthouse, to coordinate the provision of accessible court services and accessibility information to court users. This service will be expanded to remaining courthouses by January 2010. A Divisional Accessibility Working Group continues to identify existing barriers to accessibility and recommend solutions.

In 2008, the Division further strengthened the positive relationship between the Ministry and the Superior Court of Justice by signing a *Memorandum of Understanding* that speaks to their close collaboration in the administration of justice.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Court Services Division staff for taking the time to share their thoughts with me during the Deputy Town Hall meetings. I was very encouraged by the commitment and enthusiasm I witnessed along

with the innovative ideas for improving service delivery that emerged from these sessions.

I would also like to thank Court Services for their ongoing support of the Justice on Target initiative, the objective of which is to create a faster, more effective criminal justice system in Ontario. Justice on Target is a key priority for our ministry and court services staff is an important partner in achieving this objective.

The Division's continued dedication to excellence in serving the people of Ontario and to working collaboratively with our partners in the administration of justice is greatly appreciated. Congratulations to the Division on a successful year. I look forward to continuing to work with the Division as we begin another busy and productive year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Murray Segal'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Murray Segal
Deputy Attorney General



Foreward *by the* Assistant Deputy Attorney General

I am very proud to present the sixth publication of the *Court Services Division Annual Report*. This report, for the fiscal year 2008/2009, provides an opportunity for our Division to communicate on the progress that we have made in fulfilling our mandate — which is “to provide a modern and professional court service that supports accessible, fair, timely and effective justice services.”

Over the past year, a great deal has been accomplished. Public information about the justice system has been strengthened. For example, commonly asked questions and answers were added to the website in the areas of custody and access, child support and divorce. In addition, the Division created a bookmark in English and French to help family court clients find this new material, and the new Justice Ontario service, which provides basic information about justice issues in 170 languages. Further enhancements to the website are underway for next year, in our ongoing effort to provide information to our clients. We are also enhancing public information about the small claims court by creating new materials (including one-page guides and flowcharts) that are succinct, focused, and visually simple but that can link to more detailed guides.

The Civil Rules Committee completed its review of the Civil Justice Reform Report prepared by the Honourable Coulter Osborne and in December 2008, the Attorney General announced important reforms to the civil justice system. These reforms include, for example, increasing the monetary limit of the Small Claims Court from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and raising the monetary limit for Simplified Procedure cases from \$50,000 to \$100,000, which will come into effect in January 2010.

The Division also supported the important work that resulted in an historic memorandum of agreement with the Superior Court of Justice. This document has strengthened our

collaborative efforts to address joint issues in administering the courts.

As well, the Division continued its important work on enhancing accessibility in the court system. We collaborated with our ministry colleagues on the development of a multi-year accessibility strategic plan, identified and trained accessibility coordinators at all base court locations, and consulted regularly with the members of the permanent Ontario Courts Accessibility Committee.

New strategies were also employed to achieve efficiencies and conserve resources. The Court Business Solutions Branch received a Showcase Award in the category of Green Technology for the successful use of Microsoft’s Live Meeting Tool as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly method to train staff in over 80 base court locations across the province. In addition, the *2009 Court Services Division Client Satisfaction Survey* was conducted online across the province. This enabled the Division to significantly reduce the past paper-based process and to receive results from every courthouse in Ontario. A summary of the results of the survey can be found in Chapter 5 of this report.

I look forward to continuing to work together with the judiciary and our justice partners in the coming year as we proceed with the many initiatives underway focusing on modernizing court services and improving access to justice. I would also like to thank our excellent management team and staff for their dedication and ongoing commitment to delivering quality justice services.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Merritt". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Ann Merritt
Assistant Deputy Attorney General