

April 19, 2024

Attorney General Niki Sharma, KC  
Ministry of Attorney General

Sent via email

**Re: Introduction of the *Legal Professions Act***

Dear Attorney General,

Thank you for taking the time to engage with lawyers throughout the province at our Through the Looking Glass: Independence and Regulation Conference on April 12 and our Town Hall with you on April 18. Our members appreciated the opportunity to hear directly from you about Bill 21, the new *Legal Professions Act*, which was introduced in the Legislature just last week on April 10. We write to request the BC government slow the proceedings of this legislation to allow for more consultation.

CBABC is now hosting twelve engagement sessions between April 19 and 30 with lawyers and articling students (including our 7,900 members) to give them the opportunity to discuss the legislation and provide their feedback. This includes a specific session with members of CBABC's Aboriginal Lawyers Forum and our Truth & Reconciliation Committee, the latter of which leads CBABC's efforts to develop and advocate for law and policy reform that achieves meaningful change for Indigenous peoples.

We held engagement sessions during the consultation period following the Intentions Paper release in September 2022 and the Public Update in March 2024. **The twelve upcoming engagement sessions are the first following the release of the details outlined in Bill 21. There are over 130 pages of legislation in the Bill, including over 300 sections. We are asking for all lawyers to review, understand and consider this legislation, while they continue provide services to their clients and support the administration of justice.** In the engagement sessions, lawyers will share their comments, concerns, and suggestions. Once these sessions conclude, CBABC will review the collective feedback, as well as our Professional Issues Committee's analysis, to inform our further conversations with government and other affected parties.

This engagement is essential to ensure that the future regulation of legal professions has the intended effect of establishing a modernized regulatory framework for all legal professionals, while maintaining the independence of the regulator and the independence of lawyers in the interests of the public.

**Given the significance of the extensive changes set out in Bill 21, we request that government not proceed to pass the legislation until it receives responses about the details of the legislation from the affected parties, including our members.** Allowing this time for discussions amongst our profession will enable us to have effective and productive dialogue with government, the Law Society of BC, and other organizations and associations. **We also suggest that you bring these parties together to discuss and resolve the concerns.** The process to date has not enabled that collaborative process, despite the expectation of meaningful collaboration contemplated in Bill 21.

We look forward to discussing this matter further as we work on our shared goals of protecting the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and the Bar and improving laws, the justice system and access to justice in BC.

Sincerely,

[original signed]

Scott Morishita  
2023-2024 President

cc. BC United Party, Attention: Michael Lee  
BC Green Party, Attention: Adam Olsen  
BC Conservative Party, Attention: John Rustad