
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Attorney General

NEW ACT CREATES CONSISTENT PROCEDURES FOR TRIBUNALS

VICTORIA – Legislation introduced today by Attorney General Geoff Plant will create a new, comprehensive set of standards and practices for B.C.’s administrative tribunals making them more open and accessible to the thousands of British Columbians who rely on their services each year.

“Statutory powers for administrative tribunals have developed one tribunal at a time over more than 80 years,” said Plant. “Some of the current powers of these tribunals are merely outdated or unworkable, some have resulted in lengthy and costly litigation and some are either too heavy-handed or not strong enough for the purposes for which they are now used. The act addresses these inconsistencies and ensures the administrative justice system will operate fairly and effectively.”

British Columbia has more than 30 independent administrative tribunals that hear appeals from the decisions of public officials, administer public regulatory programs, resolve disputes between opposing parties and make decisions affecting people’s legal rights. The new legislation will apply to tribunals as diverse as the Workers Compensation Appeal Tribunal, the Expropriation Compensation Board, the Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal and the new Community Care and Assisted Living Appeal Board.

In 2001, the government initiated the administrative justice project, the first-ever comprehensive review of this key component of the province’s justice system. Through a white paper released in 2002, the government received more than 50 recommendations for reform, including the reforms in the act introduced today.

The Administrative Tribunals Act will:

- Codify the common law by introducing clear and consistent practices across the administrative justice system.
- Provide most tribunals with express authority to use alternative dispute resolution processes like mediation.
- Address the unique requirements of tribunals in their use and disclosure of confidential information.
- Establish an innovative approach to the resolution of complex constitutional questions.
- Enact clear legislation setting out standards for the courts in their review of administrative decisions.

The Administrative Tribunal Appointments and Administration Act, passed last fall to introduce a merit-based appointment process, will be rolled into the new Administrative Tribunals Act so that a single act will govern the administration of tribunals.

“Administrative tribunals are often the public’s only point of contact with the justice system,” added Plant. “This act will ensure that tribunals operate in a consistent and easily understood manner and will strengthen public confidence in the administrative justice system as a whole.”

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