

**WELCOME to our second issue of the
"NGO JUSTICE SUMMIT
NEWSLETTER"**

Our goal is to promote awareness among NGOs about the opportunities arising from the Alberta Summit on Justice. This newsletter is intended to inform NGOs about what is happening with the implementation of Summit recommendations and how to get involved.

What is an NGO?

Non-government organizations, also known as community agencies or non-profits, provide a variety of services and activities in the community and at various stages of the justice system. They are governed by volunteer boards of directors and make extensive use of volunteers in providing programs.

Many of these organizations work on the front lines, witnessing daily the impact of poverty, unemployment, substance abuse and violence. They have come to understand how these factors relate to involvement in crime. This is one of the many reasons why NGOs have an interest in the Justice Summit.

Exciting Times Bring Forth New Plans

Welcome to our second NGO Justice Summit newsletter. It has been two years since the Alberta Summit on Justice, and six months since our first newsletter in August 2000. We apologize for the delay in producing the second update. The delay was due to staff turnover combined with the need to take extra time to plan initiatives that will involve NGOs in a meaningful way.

In this issue:

- ? In September 2000, Alberta Justice produced a report card on how the Department is progressing on each of the Justice Summit recommendations. In its report card, the government assures us that it is "committed to fulfilling its part of the bargain." See highlights on page 3.
- ? We are suggesting initiatives that urgently need your consideration and input. We are doing this because, just as we are

relying on the government to fulfill its part of the bargain, we believe that each sector represented at the Justice Summit must remain committed to its role in the process as well.

It is an exciting time to be involved in the Justice field. Tremendous changes have taken place since the Summit in 1999, and the changes are creating further changes in a domino effect. We think that there is great potential for development and co-ordination work in the area of crime prevention. The question is whether NGOs are interested, motivated and willing to grab the opportunities that await us.

You know the old cliché "Strike while the iron is hot." Well, the iron is downright sizzling. We hope that you are enthusiastic about staying involved in the change process. Please see page 2 and page 4 for more details.

We would greatly appreciate feedback on this issue and the ideas that are being proposed.

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What Does PLE Mean To You?

PLE stands for Public Legal Education and we're betting that your agency offers some form of PLE to your clients.

You may recall that one of the areas of concern during the Justice Summit was the availability of public legal education in Alberta. Participants were very eager to see that this area of justice service was expanded.

There were three main PLE themes identified during the Summit:

- ? justice education in the schools as a curriculum item;
- ? adult education through information and media campaigns, continuing education and other approaches; and,
- ? government, media, educators and other sectors sharing responsibility for PLE.

The Justice Summit theme of improving knowledge, education and awareness is one of the priorities of Alberta Justice. The Department launched its new web site in May 2000. Since then, Alberta Justice has been working to develop partnerships with outside interested parties.

“Alberta Justice will initiate discussions with organizations committed to Justice issues....to find ways to better informing Albertans about the Justice system.”

As part of their partnership strategy, Alberta Justice has appointed an Education Coordinator, Karen Machura, who is working hard at collecting information on who is doing what in terms of PLE. The Education Coordinator's role is defined as “helping to improve Albertans' knowledge and understanding of the Alberta justice system.” The goals of the Education Coordinator project are to:

- ? Work with partners to help determine how justice education can be improved through curriculum change, the development of new resources and other joint strategies.
- ? Work in partnership with schools and communities to enhance justice mentoring programs.
- ? Work with partners to find better ways of informing Albertans about the justice system.

Alberta Justice sees a diversity of potential partners in its PLE project, such as: public legal education organizations, non-government organizations, legal professionals, First Nations, Metis, post secondary institutions, media and others.

As part of the process of connecting with partners, the education coordinator is compiling a database of PLE information which lists PLE providers, the type of product or service that they provide and the topic areas they cover. Right

now the database is a list of what is provided by traditional PLE agencies and sectors. It has yet to include the multitude of non-traditional work that we know is being done out there, possibly by your organization.

CALLING ALL NGOS:

PLEASE SEND US COPIES OF ANY PLE RESOURCE MATERIALS THAT YOU PRODUCE .

We believe that many NGOs are providing PLE within their work, such as brochures on custody and access, assistance with maintenance enforcement or restraining orders, or educating the community on the work of their agency. If you provide information to your clients or the community about any part of the justice process, you can be considered to be providing PLE.

Therefore, to ensure that your innovative work is included in this project, we are asking you to help develop this database. If you produce materials such as brochures, posters or videos, then please send us a copy. Our address is listed on page 1 of the newsletter. We will collect the information on behalf of Alberta Justice.

Ready, Set, Go: Recommendations In Action

As you know, the Justice Summit of 1999 was very successful in involving the participants to help define a vision for Alberta's justice system. Since then, Alberta Justice and the sectors have worked constructively to try to implement recommendations and to meet the needs of Albertans involved in the justice process.

Alberta Justice has produced a report card on the progress that has been made by the Department since the Justice Summit. We have highlighted some of the key changes in the system that may have implications for your agency and your clients. If you want further details, please access:

www.gov.ab.ca/just/annrep2k/overview5.htm

Increasing Accessibility to the Law:

The Family Law Information Centres (FLIC) have produced 27 booklets that provide general instructions on how to make applications in the Court of Queen's Bench (QB) in family law matters. The booklets are available from FLICs in Calgary and Edmonton, your nearest QB Clerk's office, or by ordering them from the Queen's Printer. The cost is \$8.00 for the set or you can download them from FLIC's web site:

www.albertacourts.ab.ca/familylaw/booklets.htm

Legal Aid has had an infusion of \$4.7 million. More low income Albertans will have access to Legal Aid than before, with an increase of 5% in the income eligibility amount.

The Civil Claims Mediation Project in Edmonton, which allows resolution of disputes without trial, has been made permanent and it is now supplemented with a Mediation Centre that includes a new Legal Aid Centre and, therefore, makes legal help more accessible.

Victims of Violence:

Alberta Justice has initiated a Calgary Domestic Violence Court Pilot Project, which brings together the parties to violence, the justice system and community services into one court that deals with domestic violence matters only.

The provincial government has also passed the Protection Against Family Violence Act which gives the police additional powers to protect family members immediately through Emergency Protection Orders and

long term protection through a Queen's Bench Protection Order.

First Nations and Metis:

A partnership between the Tsuu T'ina First Nation and Alberta Justice is forging ahead, incorporating Aboriginal justice traditions within the rules and regulations of the Provincial Court of Alberta. The new court will be staffed by members of First Nations communities and presided by an Aboriginal judge. The partnership includes the office of Peacemaker.

The federal government has provided funding for the Metis settlements in Alberta to develop and implement community justice programs and the provincial government has signed a deal to help the Metis settlements implement this strategy.

Youth:

Although Alberta Justice has retained responsibility for administering young offender programs, they worked closely with Child and Family Services to provide input into the Premier's Task Force on Children at Risk. The two departments have also collaborated to produce a handbook on Responding to Child Abuse.

Crime Prevention:

Alberta Justice announced a new crime prevention strategy that included a \$200,000 grant fund to support community based crime prevention programs. This was part of a \$600,000 supplement to \$1.5 million provided by the federal government to tackle crime prevention. It includes greater access to public information on crime prevention and improvements to existing programs, such as initiatives involving Aboriginal communities.

We hope that the above-mentioned examples give you an idea of the breadth and scope of change that the Justice Summit has brought about.



Fulfilling Our Part Of The Bargain

As you have seen from the previous articles, there has been a good deal of activity towards putting Summit recommendations into practice. Many of the justice system sectors who were involved in planning the Summit are now busy making the changes indicated by Albertans, Summit delegates and the sectors.

As representative of the NGO sector, I have been watching this activity with interest, looking for opportunities for members of the NGO sector to get involved. It strikes me that sectors achieving results are those that are organized, have a lead or key organization, or have the machinery in place to help them mobilize for action.

Unfortunately, this cannot easily be said of the NGO sector. I was asked by the Minister to represent this “sector” that is quite large, very diverse and not well organized to mobilize in the justice field. I spent time deciding what agencies the sector included and creating a database of NGOs that was inclusive yet manageable. The next step is to communicate with NGOs, which is the goal of this newsletter.

The limitation of a newsletter is that it is only one-way communication. To be most effective in representing you on the Policy Advisory Committee, I also need to be talking with you and taking your issues and your agendas forward to the Minister and the other sectors.

You may recall that during the Summit planning phase, I met with interested NGOs in 6 Alberta communities to get input into the Summit. The topic focus for our meetings was crime prevention, recognizing that NGOs are active in crime prevention through social development in all their front-line programs. NGOs’ clear messages about the importance of early intervention and social development in preventing crime were heard during the Summit, and a number of Summit recommendations called for action similar to what NGOs had suggested.

When you look at what has been achieved since the Summit, it becomes clear that the leadership shown in this area by the NGO sector and the messages about crime prevention through social development (CPSD) need to be reinforced. NGOs are the “do-ers” of CPSD. We understand the devastation in people’s lives that may lead them to crime. We know what needs to be done to prevent the devastation.



I believe that NGOs have an opportunity to show leadership in helping the government better understand, more fully commit to and more effectively implement CPSD. Social development is the common strength of our sector; it is the critical piece around which we came to a common understanding during Summit planning and around which our leadership can be evident again.

I plan to visit 6 to 8 communities in May and June to meet with NGOs again on the issue of crime prevention. I am confident that together we can help to define a crime prevention policy for Alberta and provide direction on the difference that can be made in people’s lives when we address social issues early and with long term goals in mind.

I look forward to seeing you in the spring.

One of our goals is to ensure that information about the Justice Summit is shared with Alberta NGOs.

We encourage you to pass the word. Please circulate this newsletter, promote these Summit related opportunities in your own publication, and/or let us know what other organizations might like to receive our newsletter.

**WE APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE
IN SPREADING THE WORD**

If you would like us to remove your organization from our mailing list, please let us know.