



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Crown Prosecutors Respond to Minister's Announcement on Justice System Resources

EDMONTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2017 – The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, The Hon. Kathleen Ganley, today announced that her government would provide for additional funding to the justice system of \$14.5 million in the 2017-2018 budget. She indicated that this would include the hiring of 35 Crown Prosecutors, in addition to 15 currently being recruited, as well as 30 court clerks.

While we welcome Ms. Ganley's recognition that there is a serious resource shortage in the criminal justice system, the Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association does not believe the announced positions will be sufficient to bring criminal court caseloads to manageable levels.

As we understand the Minister's announcement, the announced Crown Prosecutor positions are in two groups. First, 35 existing but vacant Crown Prosecutor positions will be filled. These are positions that were not filled as prosecutors have retired or resigned since 2015. Second, additional Crown Prosecutors will be hired to conduct first appearance bail hearings – a new responsibility which the Prosecution Service is required to take on beginning in August 2017. These bail prosecutor positions will not ease the pressures that are requiring prosecutors to stay crimes due to lack of resources.

The additional positions for bail prosecutors are in response to a February 2017 Alberta Court of Queen's Bench ruling that determined that police officers should not represent the Crown in first appearance bail hearings. The ruling allowed until August 2017 for the Prosecution Service to take over this responsibility.

Similarly, we understand that the announced hiring of court clerks are not new positions. Rather, we understand that the Government is easing the hiring freeze which it had imposed on that area, such that some—not all—vacant court clerk positions can be filled. This would not increase the capacity of the courts beyond that which existed before the start of the hiring freeze in 2015.

Our Association has reached out to Minister Ganley's staff today to clarify this announcement; however, we have not yet received a detailed response. We hope that Minister Ganley will clarify today's announcement and advise whether it will result in an

increase in trial prosecutors beyond previously approved staffing levels and, if so, how soon these new prosecutors would be hired. To be clear, the last time the Government formally reviewed whether the Prosecution Service was adequately resourced was 2007. We believe the positions announced today will do no more than bring the Prosecution Service's staffing levels back to those set in that 2007 review.

As Ms. Ganley acknowledged in her announcement, the Government of Alberta needs to do more to increase resources to the criminal justice system. While we welcome the filling of the 35 existing and vacant Crown Prosecutor positions, we hope the Government will accept our submission that an additional 50 Crown Prosecutors are needed to meet the Prosecution Service's trial court responsibilities.

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About the Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association

The Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association, founded in 1971, is incorporated under the Societies Act. Its members are Crown Prosecutors employed by the Government of Alberta.

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