

Association of Legal Aid Lawyers Statement re Court Security

January, 2024

Recent news reports about serious death threats made to defence counsel in a high-profile murder trial, including the revelation that a loaded handgun was brought into the courtroom, have made defence counsel extremely concerned about their safety.

Defence counsel play a vital role in the criminal justice system. They have a legal and ethical responsibility to advocate for clients charged with criminal offences, all of whom are presumed innocent. ALL strongly supports the right of defence counsel to fulfill their constitutional responsibilities safely, without intimidation or threats of violence or death.

Defence counsel are justice system participants. Threatening or intimidating a justice system participant is a very serious criminal offence, carrying a maximum sentence of 14 years.

A.L.L. urges other justice system participants to support measures to ensure that our Courts are safe and that defence counsel do not feel marginalized or ignored when they raise issues about their security.

Association of Legal Aid Lawyers

Richard Fowler KC, Director

rfowler@fowlerbloklaw.ca

604-961-2685