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Press Release

RE: New Rules of Court for Streamlined Trials & Family Justice in Alberta

The Alberta Family Lawyers Association (AFLA) welcomes amendments to the Rules of Court in Alberta aimed at faster and more affordable access to justice for families embroiled in legal disputes.

Prolonged conflict has a devastating impact on families.

Family lawyers in Alberta have long been advocating for access to more expedient and less costly hearings to bring finality to Family Law disputes when all other avenues to a full and final resolution have been exhausted.

Trials are unavailable to the average Albertan due to cost and wait times.

The concept of a Streamlined Trial, understood as faster, shorter and less costly, is generally supported by Family lawyers as a more accessible and proportionate process for resolving family disputes. However, with the wait times in our Courts, the new Rules may prove meaningless for Albertan families.

Due to chronic under-funding of justice services and judicial infrastructure, and simply not enough judges in keeping with our growing population, the reality is that most Albertans are waiting far too long to access the Court when needed.

The efficacy of the new Rules for Streamlined Trials will be impacted by wait times.

Justice delayed is justice denied.

AFLA calls on the Court to implement specific procedures and protocols to accompany the new Rules to fast-track family disputes to Streamlined Trials which are indeed proportionate and more accessible to Albertan families.

If the new Rules of Court for Streamlined Trials do assist in getting family disputes on a path to full and final resolution in a faster, shorter, and less costly manner, then AFLA welcomes this as a positive development in access to justice.

However, **Rules of Court are never enough.**

AFLA calls on the Government of Alberta to prioritize the wellbeing of Albertan families and an accessible system of Family Justice through investments in:

- Adequate funding for infrastructure and staff to relieve our overburdened Courts;
- Adequate funding for Legal Aid Certificates and Duty Counsel, as the cornerstone of access to family justice for vulnerable Albertans; and
- Continued progress towards a specialized Unified Family Court, with specialized judges, accessible and affordable Court processes, and ancillary services to assist families resolve their disputes out-of-Court whenever possible.

AFLA welcomes stakeholders to consult with our membership of over 400 Family lawyers representing Albertan families and children throughout the Province.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA FAMILY LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Steering Committee:

Doug Moe, KC, Wayne Barkauskas, KC, Sue Channan, Moosa Jiwaji, Tracy Brown, Ken Proudman, Ashley Cox, Melissa Oakley, Krista Cossar, Emma Benarzi, Justine Fallu, Mathieu Maillet, Linda Goid