

OPENING OF COURTS

3 SEPT. 2015

Judicial colleagues, Counsel and Guests

LAD Harper - mixup on dates - vacation

RSJ Turnbull - ✓

Fmr LAD Arell ✓

Fortunately LAD Harper provided me with his report
[Read]

First opportunity since 2002

- was LAD but had agreed to temporarily assume the
responsibilities of the RSJ for the region

- what I said: [Read]

- didn't know . . . almost 5 years, until supernumerary

Now into my final year . . . March 1982 to 30 June 2016

- last Op Cts Ceremony

- want to take this opportunity to publicly express
my appreciation to:

- court house staff

- court room staff

- bar

- judicial colleagues

- all involved in the administration of justice

We ~~all have~~ together have a responsibility to
ensure that the public of Brantford and Brant Co
is well and properly served. You have all fulfilled
that responsibility. It continues to ~~be~~ my
pleasure to serve with you.

Opening of the Courts Brantford

September 4, 2014

R J H Introduction

I want to welcome all of you to this 15th Brant County Joint Opening of Courts for this upcoming judicial calendar.

What a great turnout.

Report

I am pleased to tell everyone that we are doing very well in the SCJ in Brantford. However, the challenges that face the administration of Justice are many.

The increase in self-represented litigants brings unique challenges for everyone. Our attempts to deal with those challenges, however, must always keep as an overriding goal access to justice and not merely access to the process.

In most of our courts in the Central South we have available guides to assist self-represented litigants.

I know that our administration here in Brantford does an excellent job of assisting SRLs. That continues to be a very difficult task.

I also know that many of the judiciary make every effort to inform without jumping into the fray.(Also a monumental task at times).

We could use the assistance of more duty counsel time and I will work with legal aid in this regard both with respect to numbers and scheduling.

The front end family law services of Information referral coordination, Mandatory information and mediation both on site and off sight are working. The services do assist families at creating their own solutions to the problems in a timely way. They also provide valuable information to litigants early in order for them to make informed decisions.

I continue to urge the formation of a liaison committee consisting of bench, bar and administration. This committee can help deal with issues before they become problems and help shape the way we meet the challenges in this community. Everyone is busy and I can say that I have met with the bar and Crown Attorney. I will continue to move this forward in a more formal manner. I was extensively involved with such a committee in Hamilton when I practiced law and I know they work.

Criminal matters and Family matters take priority in scheduling. I am pleased to advise that our time outs in this jurisdiction are not long and once again we always strive to do better.

Criminal work is up and in particular the length of criminal matters.

Matters pending approx same

Civil matters in this jurisdiction are within acceptable time lines.

New civ proceedings have tipped

The SCJ in Brantford needs a jury assembly area and another jury courtroom. Money for capital expenditures is hard to come by. However, prioritizing needs such as this is what I hope we can all do in order to get this on someone's short list. Last year I stated that the jail has been closing here in Brantford since I believe 1852 I'm told. This rumor continues. There might be some space there. We shall see.

I thank everyone for their hard work and very professional efforts.

I leave everyone with one item of priority. Security of this courthouse needs to be increased. We need to have perimeter security. We can no longer wait to react to a tragic event. It is not an answer that there is no budget and money is tight. This is a matter of the safety of the public, the bar and the bench. It is real, it is not something that is remote. Proactive planning is essential and I will continue to push for results in this regard.

Thank you for your time and your attendance today.

R John Harper

Brantford, that has not always been possible. There have been occasions when some scheduled matters could not be heard. I am sorry that that has occurred and I offer to those involved in those matters my public apology for the inconvenience created by the necessity to reschedule their matters. While the ordinary operation of the Superior Court at Brantford has always required and received the full co-operation of the Bar, that co-operation has been called upon to an even greater extent this year. I am pleased to be able to report that the increased co-operation has been forthcoming and I thank the Bar for that.

[The Chief Justice assured me that my responsibilities as Acting Regional Senior Justice would only be temporary. I am confident, even though Chief Justice LeSage has just stepped down, that a replacement will be appointed for the Regional Senior Justice in the relatively near future.]

Last year, at the opening of court, I expressed concern about the manner in which this heritage building and its surrounding grounds were being maintained. All decisions concerning the building are made by persons located in another city. Understandably, the pride taken in a heritage building has a tendency to diminish in such circumstances. As you can see, however, action is being taken. I hope that the current re-habilitation will continue in both the interior and exterior of the building as well as on the grounds. To give credit, I should acknowledge that at this event last year I mentioned the failure to return the grates from the original front doors of the building. By coincidence, they were returned fairly shortly after I publicly expressed my concern.