

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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17 April 2024

The Honourable Niki Sharma
Attorney General of British Columbia
Province of British Columbia
Email: AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca; attention Tanera.Nanninga@gov.bc.ca

Dear Attorney General,

Briefing paper: Bill 21 violations of international human rights law and standards |

This is further to our [letter](#) of 12 April 2024. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) has examined your government's [Bill 21](#), Legal Professions Act, introduced in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (BC) on 10 April 2024.

We provide the attached [briefing paper](#) based on LRWC's analysis of Bill 21 in light of the duties of British Columbia (BC) under international law and standards. Our analysis indicates that Bill 21 fails to ensure the independence of the profession of lawyers and fails to demonstrate how it will substantially improve BC's serious deficiencies of access to justice. The briefing paper explains LRWC's reasons with reference to relevant international law and standards, particularly the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the United Nations (UN) *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

We deeply regret that your government has scheduled the second reading of Bill 21 to occur on 22 April 2024. Since the current legislative session ends on 16 May 2024, this rapid timeframe suggests your government's intention to hastily move the Bill to law without allowing sufficient opportunity for fully-informed public debate.

We call upon your government to withdraw Bill 21, as we find it to be fundamentally flawed and incapable of amendment to bring it up to international law and standards. We urge you to fully and transparently consult and cooperate with the lawyers, notaries, paralegals, relevant judges, law schools, civil society organizations, and the general public. Full public consultation is particularly important given the constitutional and human rights at stake regarding the rule of law and independence of lawyers. See our full recommendations in the attached briefing paper.

Sincerely,

[signed]

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LRWC Co-Chair

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