



Action Recommended

CBABC calls on the B.C. government to increase access to restorative justice services in communities across the province, including Indigenous communities. Steps to take include:

- Develop and fund a Restorative Justice Strategy and Action Plan in consultation with Indigenous partners, legal stakeholders and restorative justice providers.
- Increase funding for restorative justice providers to enable service delivery in all parts of B.C. so existing providers can focus on service and standards rather than search for continued funding.

Issues

While the value of restorative justice programs has been well demonstrated, they remain on the fringes of the criminal justice system. Restorative justice is an approach that provides an expanded set of tools that complement and can work within all levels of the traditional justice system. By looking at the needs of those harmed and the community first, restorative justice recognizes that, while crime offends society as a whole, crime is primarily an offence against people. Restorative justice involves the person harmed, the offender and their communities in the search for outcomes that meet the needs of those who have been harmed and address the underlying causes of the act. These outcomes may include restitution, counselling, apology letters and/or community service, but restorative justice also invites creative solutions determined by key stakeholders.

A robust and comprehensive restorative justice program, which can be accessed at the discretion of both police forces and Crown counsel, has potential for significant cost savings to both the judicial and corrections systems. Building this type of program would require:

- A funding model for community-based restorative justice organizations that allows them to accept all referrals from both police and Crown counsel, constantly improve upon programming, provide high-quality training to staff, retain staff and provide a viable career path for those who wish to excel as restorative justice practitioners.
- The development of common standards and training regimens across B.C. that will enhance the reputation of restorative justice organizations while allowing them, at the same time, to retain their close community ties and reflect the nature and needs of their local communities.



- Amended government policies guiding Crown counsel to permit expanded referrals to restorative justice programs.
- A plan to educate players in the justice delivery and response system about the benefits of restorative justice programs.

Why It Matters

A coordinated approach and a sustainable funding model would increase the effectiveness of the restorative justice approach, reduce administrative waste and enable service providers to focus on service and standards, reducing the need to search for continued funding. A Strategy and Action Plan would enhance coordination and accountability which would lead to enhanced public confidence in restorative justice as one method to address community needs in response to behaviour that offends the community's standards.

Key Resources

[*On Matters of Indigenous Justice in British Columbia*](#), Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch (Nov 2021)

[*Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan: 2022-2027*](#), Province of British Columbia (Mar 2022)

[*Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act: 2023-2024 Annual Report*](#), Province of British Columbia