
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Attorney General

INTERIM COMMUNITY COURT EVALUATION RELEASED

VANCOUVER – An interim evaluation report released today on Vancouver’s Downtown Community Court shows the court has been able to achieve a high level of integration and co-location of services to support victims and offenders.

This interim report, one of three planned to assess the community court model, is only the first step in the evaluation process. It focuses on the court’s design and start up and the efficiency of court processes during the first year of the pilot’s operations, which began in September 2008.

Since opening its doors, the community court has managed a high volume of summary conviction offences originating downtown. Because the first report is an early stage in the evaluation, measures used to gauge outcomes for offenders need to be monitored over a longer period before valid conclusions can be drawn.

The report observes there was extensive planning prior to the community court’s opening. But some elements of the planning -- for example, how justice, health and social service agencies would adjust to working together and caseload sizes -- could only be determined after the court began operating.

Key observations made in the interim evaluation report include:

- Of 2,034 accused who attended the community court, 1,226 concluded their cases in the community court. The remainder were still before the community court or chose to plead not guilty and go to trial at another court.
- Of 3,616 criminal cases that had one or more hearings in the community court, 23 per cent (830) disputed their charges and were set to proceed to trial at another court.
- Activities carried out by police and Crown counsel prior to hearings were completed more promptly in the community court than in other courts.
- Offenders managed by the integrated case management team had more access to support services.

The second evaluation report, planned for spring 2011, will look at offender outcomes (except recidivism) and the court’s second year of operation. The final report in spring 2012 will report on changes in offenders’ behaviour and reoffending rates. It will determine if the community court model is more successful at resolving offences -- for victims, offenders and the community -- and whether it helps the justice system operate more efficiently and effectively.

The framework for evaluating the court's work was developed by a team of researchers from Simon Fraser University's school of criminology. The report was written by staff of the ministries of Attorney General and Public Safety and Solicitor General, with advice and analysis from the SFU research team.

The community court is located at 211 Gore Ave. and is a partnership of justice, health and social service agencies working with community organizations.

The report is available at: www.communitycourt.bc.ca.

-30-

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