

Brief remarks for 50th Anniversary book launch

Chief Justice Paul Crampton

October 1, 2021

(Speech delivered in French and English)

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking, as did Chief Justice Noël, the members of the organizing committee and those who supported them during the long journey leading to the launch of this book.

Please be assured that we are aware of the hard work that has gone into conceptualizing the book, planning its execution and bringing that plan to fruition. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the authors of the various chapters, in particular those who wrote or contributed to several chapters and who in addition, took on editorial responsibilities. I refer to Professors Greene, Valois, McCormick and Forcese. The Federal Court is most grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge the special contribution of Justice Simon Noël, who chaired the organizing committee and who, from the very beginning, was one of the driving forces behind this book.

As did Chief Justice Noël, I would like to thank retired Chief Justice Frank Iacobucci for his kind remarks and for being available to those of us on the Court when we have sought to reach out to him.

On June 1, 2021, our formal 50th anniversary, the members of the federal courts held a special sitting to commemorate the event. We also took the opportunity to share some very precious video clips and reflections. I encourage those of you who have not yet seen the video recording of the event to take the time to do so. It is available on YouTube. I can assure you there are some true gems awaiting you.

At that time, I noted that the establishment of the Federal Court of Canada in 1971 was part of a broader goal of establishing a just society. Chief Justice Noel and I also briefly discussed the Court's intellectual underpinnings.

This book skillfully charts the ensuing journey of the Court, the two divisions of which split into what are now known as the Federal Court of Appeal and the Federal Court, effective July 2, 2003.

The book provides rich detail and insights into how the federal courts breathed life into their jurisdiction, and assumed their unique roles in Canada's justice system. Special chapters are dedicated to the various core areas of that jurisdiction that retired Justice Iacobucci just identified.

These chapters provide a very convenient and accessible resource on the contributions of the two federal courts in these areas. They also demonstrate how the courts' intellectual foundations remain as relevant and strong today as they were half a century ago.

Beyond those chapters, the book provides a further treasure trove of information and insights. Among other things, it provides invaluable historical information that builds upon Ian Bushnell's seminal work that covered the first twenty years of the Federal Court of Canada's existence. As a special treat, chapter 5 offers a synthesis of almost 80 interviews of current and retired judges.

And for those who are interested in what the future may hold, I commend the final two chapters, which were written by Chief Justice Noel and your truly, respectively.

As you might well expect, we address the technological transformation that was accelerated over the last eighteen months, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the two courts were well-positioned for that transformation. In the case of the Federal Court, this was to no small degree because of the investment we made in strategic planning.

In addition to summarizing the highlights of our current five-year plan and the preceding five-year plan that was adopted in 2014, chapter 17 provides an overview of the implementation of those plans. It also discusses, for the first time publicly, our 2014 Internal Plan.

Suffice it to say that as the Federal Court transitions back towards a much more significant use of in-person hearings, it will be doing so in a manner that leverages the technological progress that has been achieved and will remain ongoing. There will be no going back to the way things were before, at least not on a generalized basis. There will be a "new normal," which reflects the Court's ongoing shift away from being primarily a paper-based organization to being a more digital, and more accessible court.

During each step of this journey, the Court will remain true to its mission of delivering justice and helping parties to resolve their disputes everywhere in Canada, in either official language, in a way which respects the rule of law and which is independent, impartial, equitable, accessible, efficient and adapted to the situation.

I hope you will like this beautiful book.

Thank you.