



October 7, 2011

Dear Members of the Bar,

The Alberta Lawyers Assistance Society (**Assist**) is an independent, charitable society that helps Alberta lawyers, law students and their immediate families with personal issues.

As Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, I believe it is important to support **Assist** and the work it does for our legal community.

There is a program for judges with a similar aim. The role of lawyers and judges alike, is one that is marked by high expectations. Making good decisions sometimes involves taking positions that may not be popular. Positions taken and represented are often subject to the scrutiny of peers and the public. This, among other things, leads members of the profession to experience unique pressures.

The need to maintain a professional image of competence, while meeting the significant responsibility as lawyers and judges makes it difficult to ask for help. There is no shame in seeking the support of a professional or a peer, when needed.

**Assist** has a history of lawyers helping lawyers. In addition to professional counselling services, **Assist** has embarked on a formalized peer support program. The program matches lawyers encountering struggles with a lawyer who has an understanding of the issue and is willing to offer encouragement and hope. This is a significant initiative towards prevention. I encourage you to avail yourself of these confidential services and for you to support a colleague or family member, if help is needed. On the other hand, you may want to participate as a peer support volunteer, committee or board member and enjoy the fulfillment this unique opportunity affords.

Your involvement in **Assist** will help strengthen the profession and the legal community.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil C. Wittmann', written over a horizontal line.

Neil C. Wittmann