



AFCC ONTARIO NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6. NUMBER 3 Association of Family and Conciliation Courts – Ontario Chapter Fall 2010

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A FOCUS ON FAMILY JUSTICE INITIATIVES ACROSS CANADA

Whether something is in the air or times they are a changing is hard to know these days. Almost everywhere you turn there is a focus on family law reform/initiatives—to make the ‘family law system’ more effective, efficient and accessible for families undergoing change, circa, 21st century. Is this a response to the lack of a response from the federal government—hard to tell?

Alberta led the pack by making both procedural and substantive changes to their *Family Law Act*, in 2005. They added an intake/case flow manager, a dispute resolution officer, duty counsel, and adopted a child-centred perspective to the best interests of children. The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family (CRILF) conducted an evaluation in May, 2009. The Report is just over 200 pages and makes for interesting reading—for example, where a form-driven process exists, human resources (qualified professionals), programs and services are required to meet the needs of families.

See the attached report



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Editor: Rachel Birnbaum

Communication Committee: Justice George Czutrin, Justice Debra Paulseth, Steven Benmor, Maggie Hall, Tami Moscoe, & Jill St. Clair

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Following suit, British Columbia has been conducting stakeholders meetings for the last several years. They produced 14 government papers and have now released their White Paper, July, 2010 on family law initiatives. It too, calls for sweeping procedural and substantive family law reforms. Of the many changes is adding parenting coordination as a dispute resolution approach. The BC Ministry is looking for comments on the proposed changes by October 8, 2010. See the report at: www.ag.gov.bc.ca

In Ontario in late 2009, the Honourable Chris Bentley, Attorney General of Ontario, committed to making the family justice system faster, more affordable and less confrontational.

The Four Pillars

by Katie Wood, Counsel, Family Policy and Programs Branch, Court Services Division, Ministry of the Attorney General

The Attorney's approach is based on four pillars of reform:

- More information upfront to help people understand the effects of a relationship breakdown on adults and children and the options available to them to resolve disputes;
- An intake or triage approach to identify people's legal and non-legal needs and direct them to appropriate and proportional services;
- Greater access to legal advice and alternatives to litigation; and
- A streamlined and simplified process for those cases that must go to court.

The foundation of the four pillars is a family-focused approach viewing information, supportive services and access to alternative dispute resolution as key components to achieving meaningful and lasting solutions for families.

Implementation of the Four Pillars

Milton and Brampton were chosen as the first two sites to implement the four pillars, and work is underway in both locations to ensure that changes respond to local needs. Implementation teams have been established in each site and are made up of local judiciary, court administrators, Legal Aid Ontario representatives, members of the bar, mediators and other community representatives.

Mandatory Information Program

As a result of the combined efforts of all of these participants, the first pillar has now been fully implemented in Milton and Brampton. A Mandatory Information Program, or MIP, was launched in both locations in June 2010. All parties to a contested family law case at both levels of court must now attend an information session reviewing the effects of separation and divorce on families and children, legal issues, alternatives to litigation and the court process. MIPs

are delivered by volunteer mental health professionals and lawyers. The commitment to the program in each community has been demonstrated by the number of volunteers who have come forward.

Information sessions are two hours in length and delivered on-site at the courthouse once weekly in Milton and twice weekly in Brampton. Parties are automatically scheduled to attend separate MIPs and provided with a MIP Notice when a case is started. Each party must bring their MIP Notice to their scheduled session, where it is signed by one of the presenters to indicate that the party fulfilled the mandatory requirement. Each party must then file their Notice with the court prior to their first appearance before a judge.

The mandatory nature of the program is outlined in judicial practice directions issued by each court. The purpose of the MIP is to help parties make better decisions for themselves by giving them information about options to resolve their disputes. The MIP cannot be used to delay a case; a case conference can be scheduled regardless of whether both parties have completed the program. Where appropriate, a judge may impose sanctions for non-attendance.

Informal feedback from the first MIP sessions has been positive, with attendees indicating that they found the content helpful and informative.

Dispute Resolution Officers and First Appearance Court

June 2010 also saw the launch of a Dispute Resolution Officer program for motions to change in the Superior Court of Justice in Brampton, Milton and Newmarket. Dispute Resolution Officers, or DROs, are volunteer senior members of the bar in each community who meet with parties to discuss the merits of their positions and help them either reach an early resolution or move their case toward a meaningful appearance toward a judge.

Dispute resolution conferences are case conferences authorized by Rule 17(9). Parties must file case conference briefs and any other documentation required in their case before their dispute resolution conference, and they can proceed from a dispute resolution conference directly to a motion or settlement conference, a case conference before a judge or another dispute resolution conference.

In the Ontario Court of Justice, the role of first appearance or domestic assignment court is being enhanced. At the first appearance, parties will attend before a court clerk to ensure that they have complied with their obligations and exchanged all necessary documents.

This is another means of ensuring that parties do not appear before a judge until they are ready to do so, and it also provides additional opportunities for the parties to engage in settlement discussions. Wherever possible, DROs and first appearance clerks have same day access to a judge to enable parties to obtain an order when an agreement has been reached.

Increased Legal Aid Services

As a result of the Ministry's recent investment in Legal Aid Ontario, enhanced legal supports are now available for LAO clients in Milton and Brampton, including more duty counsel in both courts and increased services in the Family Law Information Centre in Milton and a new Family Law Service Centre in Brampton. Duty counsel will be available on first appearance and dispute resolution conference days to ensure parties who are able to reach an agreement receive the necessary information and advice. Wherever possible, those cases that reach a temporary or final agreement or require judicial intervention will be able to proceed directly before a judge.

Ontario Court Forms Assistant

The Ministry has developed an online tool to provide parties with information and assistance when completing a number of family court forms, including the application, answer and parenting affidavit. The Forms Assistant asks a series of plain language questions and uses the answers provided to populate the chosen court form. The Forms Assistant includes a number of help features, including "more information" buttons that provide explanations about key legal concepts like custody and access, detailed instructions on where to take a completed form and a "Links and Resources" page.

Next Steps

Local implementation teams and other stakeholder groups continue to work to identify innovative ways to implement the four pillars, including an intake and triage approach that supports early issue identification and referral, and responds to the needs of litigants. It is expected that this service will be provided by a combination of LAO and court staff and that its focus will be on identifying urgent cases and providing families with information and access to community supports and alternatives to litigation.

As new services take hold in Brampton and Milton and best practices are identified by local committees, the Ministry is looking to expand implementation of the four pillars to more communities. The Ministry is excited to be collaborating with LAO and seeking guidance from all three family courts as reforms are developed. In addition, an Expert Advisory Group, drawing on the expertise of lawyers, mediators and court administrators from across the province, has been established to provide its advice and recommendations as the four pillars are rolled out more widely.

To access the Forms Assistant, go to the Family Justice page of the Ministry of the Attorney General's website at <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/> and click on "Ontario Court Forms Assistant" on the right side of the page.

ONTARIO'S FAMILY LAW PROCESS REFORM: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

Lisa Cirillo
Acting Executive Director
Downtown Legal Services

Despite the fanfare surrounding the AG's announcement, very little detail was offered as to the specifics of the pillars or a firm timeline for implementation. One point was made emphatically clear: there is no new funding available to invest in the system.

Set out below is a brief summary of some of the issues that arise with respect to these initiatives – the promise and the pitfalls.

1. Increasing access to upfront information about family law and process:

The suggestion that families entering the family justice system should have access to information about their rights and responsibilities, their process options and the impact of separation seems obvious. However, it is no small feat to provide plain language, accessible public legal information to diverse populations of people, many of whom are in crisis.

In Toronto, “parent information sessions” have been available for a number of years. These sessions are mandatory for all parties in Superior Court proceedings, and optional for parties with matters before the Ontario Court of Justice. Until recently, there was one standard script for these sessions, regardless of the parties' individual circumstances or information needs. For example, women who experienced abuse and were forced to attend these sessions would still hear the benefits of ADR extolled without regard for the safety risks such a process might expose them to; parties without children or with adult children would still hear about the impact of separation and divorce on children; and the script used did not account for the large spectrum of educational and literacy levels of the participants. Although the program has been *mandatory* in Toronto for years, there was no provision to make these sessions available in languages other than English and French. No doubt many parties sat through these sessions, as directed by their counsel or court staff, to get their certificate of attendance so that their matter could proceed, without having understood one word of what was said.

It is vitally important for families to have access to reliable, relevant and accessible information so that parties can make better informed decisions for themselves and their children. Therefore, the promise of increasing access to justice must also include

factors such as – language, literacy level, the stage of the proceedings and the parties’ unique information needs. One script will not fit all.

(2) Screening and triaging cases with the goal of streaming the bulk to various forms ADR:

Screening and triaging are often confused, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Although they are connected, each process has a different and distinct purpose. Screening is not listed as a separate pillar, but is implicit as part of the triaging process, the third proposed pillar of reform. Typically, a screening process in the family law context involves asking the parties a series of questions designed to elicit information to establish the presence of certain factors which, if they exist, increase the complexity of the case and must be accounted for in any future step in the process.

One of the most significant factors that will impact on the efficacy of any screening process is the skills of the individual screener. The screener must have excellent communication skills, a sophisticated understanding of the issues that the tool is trying to identify and the ability to recognize when to probe deeper or when to move on. Ideally, screeners are social workers or mental health practitioners. Screeners should also receive training on how to administer the test in circumstances where an interpreter is present and how to guard against cultural stereotyping in the process.

There is a large body of research literature on designing screening tools – what kinds and how many questions should be asked. How the screen is administered can also impact on the effectiveness of the tool. Parties must be screened separately, and screening should be done in a private, safe and comfortable environment. Screening should not be seen as a one-time event. Families in the family justice system are in transition, and as such, their needs, and in this context, the potential safety risks, are constantly changing. It is critical that the system provides the opportunity for ongoing screening and risk assessment, as required, throughout the family’s involvement in the system.

Finally, screening raises a number of procedural issues and confidentiality concerns. If the purpose of screening is to foreclose certain dispute resolution mechanisms, what happens if a party disagrees with or disputes the screening? Can a party appeal the “decision”? What happens to the information disclosed as part of the screening process? Can the screener be subpoenaed in later proceedings? Can the process give rise to a duty to report to child welfare authorities? All of these questions must be considered in the design of the screening process to ensure that all stakeholders – families, the screeners, court officials and ADR practitioners are aware of the limits of confidentiality of the screening process.

When done properly, screening can be a very effective tool for assisting family justice systems in identifying those cases that require a differentiated response. However, designing an effective screening tool is complicated, and requires a careful consideration of the manner, process and purpose of screening to ensure that the process used meets the needs of the parties and the system. This is a very tall order, and given the accelerated pace and cost-neutral mandate of the current reform package, seems unlikely to be met.

As noted above, triaging is related to screening and raises many of the same issues flagged above. However, whereas screening is focused on *identifying* the presence of red flags, a triage process is broader, and includes both identifying and prioritizing the family's needs.

One of the first process design questions that arise in creating a triage process is whether the definition of "needs" is limited to "legal needs". In most jurisdictions, triaging is for the purposes of "managing" cases and exploring ADR options. However, there are some examples where the triage function is more holistic, and includes detailed and comprehensive processes for connecting families with other support services to address all of their service needs, including income maintenance programs, housing support, counselling, etc.

Like screening, it is critical that triaging be done by skilled professionals with expertise in intake, assessment and referrals, and that the system is designed to allow renewed triaging opportunities, as required, throughout the process. Similar questions also arise with respect to the confidentiality of the triage process, the information obtained, whether the recommendations are binding on the parties, and if so, what rights the parties have if they disagree.

Some other system design questions that require consideration include the question of when and how parties come into the triage process. Is the point of entry pre or post-filing? Will triage be mandatory or can parties opt out? Will there be a fee for this service? Any user fee would create an additional barrier for low income families. The format of the information gathering process must take into account the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations. To assist clients with literacy and language barriers, meetings are preferable to requiring written documentation, and provision should be made to allow for telephone meetings where required to accommodate a party's work or child care responsibilities.

While there was tremendous pressure on the government to "do something" about family justice, the lack of an opportunity for meaningful consultation with key

stakeholders reflecting the needs of the diversity of Ontario families accessing the family justice system is unfortunate. These reforms, though laudable in principle, require careful consideration. There are numerous operational and policy decisions that will dramatically impact on the effectiveness of these new systems to perform the functions assigned to each step. Will there be any evaluation to see whether these new processes are beneficial?

The speed of the reforms, the requirement that the reforms be cost neutral, and the lack of consultation with low-income and high needs communities does not inspire confidence let alone meet the unique needs and service challenges of low-income and other vulnerable populations.

For the full version of the paper, please email Lisa at: lisa.cirillo@utoronto.ca

.....like I said, the times they are changing.

At the AFCC, Ontario, we continue to strive to make a difference in families lives. But, we also hope that we are making a difference in your professional life. If you have any suggestions about how to improve the Chapter, we're always ready to listen. Please contact us at: afcc.ontario@gmail.com.

A Note from the President

This is my last *Note from the President* as I bid you farewell. My term as President will end in October at our next Annual General Meeting. I wish that I could express in words my pride in this chapter, its board of directors and its members. It took a great deal of effort to receive our chapter charter status and build a foundation for AFCC Ontario's future. The Board of Directors – Justice Craig Perkins, Justice Deb Paulseth, Dr. Barbara Fidler, Dr. Rachel Birnbaum, Dena Moyal, Steven Benmor, Maggie Hall, Deborah Moskovitch, Anthony Macri, and Lynn Lavery – was instrumental in this. They are a hardworking, creative, intelligent, supportive and extremely funny group of people. I am truly blessed to have worked with them. To the 2009/2010 AFCC Board of Directors – thank you so very much!

I have also been truly fortunate to meet and enjoy my time with so many of you – the members. AFCC Ontario belongs to you. You are the ones who built this association into what it is today – a chapter that continually presents outstanding multidisciplinary conferences and training programs, that builds working groups that take on difficult questions, answers them and provides innovative solutions to family law's unique problems. I can't begin to tell you how thrilled I am that so many of you answered the call to volunteer your time and effort when AFCC Ontario needed your assistance. Thank you, thank you, and thank you.

I look forward to seeing you in October. As you know, our own AFCC Ontario conference is scheduled for October 14 and 15, 2010 at the University of Toronto Residences at 89 Chestnut Street, Toronto (next to Nathan Phillips Square). Tickets are on sale now – just go to www.afccontario.ca. Come hear about the Future of Family Law in Ontario! My special thanks to Board members Anthony Macri, Justice George Czutrin, Dr. Barbara Fidler and all the committee members who have performed incredible feats to develop this conference.

Speaking of www.afccontario.ca, have you checked out our website yet? If not, I really encourage you to do so. Board member Dr. Rachel Birnbaum was an incredible asset who took the project into her very capable hands and, seemingly, without too much effort, our website was born. Rachel made this task look easy when I am very aware that she devoted endless hours and a lot of effort in launching it. So, thank you, Rachel, for all of your hard work in accomplishing this task and giving us a great website.

Our Outreach Committee, chaired by Board member, Deb Moskovitch, has developed an outstanding toolkit to bring the AFCC chapter to communities across Ontario. Are you interested in hosting a lunch and learn; a movie night or an educational event in

your community? Let Deborah know and she will be able to assist you - deborah@thesmartdivorce.com

Board member Dena Moyal, along with ADR-LINK, is chairing a conference, entitled Appropriate Dispute Resolution: a Menu of Choices. The conference will be held in Windsor on October 7, 2010. The conference is about choices: what choices exist and which choice to choose. Sign up for this stimulating conference on www.afccontario.ca.

Justice Stan Sherr and Lorne Glass have been working with me to organize a child protection training program for new lawyers. Imagine our surprise when the program reached full capacity within a few short weeks. This program will teach new(ish) lawyers how to practice child protection law. It is yet another example of AFCC Ontario's response to complex problems. Ontario needed more child protection lawyers, so AFCC Ontario developed a program to train these new lawyers. This is just another example of AFCC Ontario's innovative solutions for families in crisis in Ontario.

A notice went out a few months ago about a working group whose goal is to develop a template for the Ideal Family Court in Ontario. It's chaired by AFCC Ontario Board members Justice Craig Perkins, Justice Deb Paulseth, Dr. Barbara Fidler, and Dr. Rachel Birnbaum and meets regularly to discuss how to achieve this monumental task. The group is putting everything that they have into developing the ideals of a family court in Ontario.

Board member Anthony Macri also has been extremely busy setting up and chairing the Parenting Capacity Assessors Working Group. The group creates a forum for exchanging ideas and best practices, developing mentorships for assessors and discussing protocols for assessments. This, also, was a prevalent need within the family law community and I thank Anthony for all of his work in providing this forum for Parenting Capacity Assessors.

I asked Board member, Steven Benmor, to chair a working group that would discuss and create a Public Information program. Once again, we saw a problem and looked for a solution. Thank you to Steven and his working group for all of the work that they put into this very important project.

Finally, I want to thank others who were instrumental in getting the AFCC Ontario off the ground – Justice Craig Perkins, the incoming President; Dr. Barbara Fidler, the Vice- President; Justice George Czutrin who gave his advice freely and often; Justice Emile Kruzick, the parent AFCC's past President; Peter Salem, the Executive Director

of the parent AFCC; and Leslye Hunter, the parent AFCC's Associate Director. Without these very special individuals, we wouldn't have a chapter in Ontario – so, I thank all of you.

And lastly, I want to thank my very patient, six year old daughter, Maggie, who put up with mommy being up at night while I worked on AFCC Ontario business. Thank you, all!

AFCC ONTARIO INITIATIVES

SPECIAL EVENT NOTICE:

An **Appropriate Alternative Dispute Resolution** Information Day and special ADR event in Windsor, Ontario will take place on **October 7, 2010**. This is open to all in the area and is co-sponsored by the Ontario Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC-Ontario Chapter) and the Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System or CCFJS (formerly the London Family Court Clinic).

CCFJS's Program entitled **ADR-LINK** links families involved with Children's Aid Societies who are seeking to resolve matters outside of court with ADR practitioners in the South West Region of the province and wishes to help spread the word about successes with ADR. In co-sponsoring this event, **AFCC-Ontario Chapter** is hoping to increase awareness about AFCC in the South West Region (SWR) and to share in bringing to life what has been happening in the field of ADR.

The *menu for the day* will cover multiple perspectives ranging from the legal community, a welcome from one of the new local judges (The Honorable Justice Barry Tobin), knowledge from those who provide ADR in the form of Child Protection Mediation or Family Group Conferences, guidance from the Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL), different ideas from other trainers in the field including an aboriginal consultant (Kelly Brownbill), as well as feedback from families and others that have already experienced an ADR process. Included in the day will be a presentation by Alf Mamo on "Adaptive Parenting Coordination." ***Do not miss this exciting event*** and the first Annual ADR Day in the SWR. For more information about the full program and registration details look for the link at the AFCC Ontario Chapter website.

Go to <http://www.afccontario.ca/conference> and when it asks for which conference go to the drop down menu and select the October 7, 2010 conference in Windsor, and while at it do not forget to also register for the second annual Ontario Chapter conference at the same time.

FYI,

Dr. Dan T. Ashbourne, C. Psych.

Director of Clinical Services and Consultant for ADR-LINK,

The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (CCFJS)

www.afcc.on.ca/adr-link

<http://www.afccontario.ca/conference/>

BACK TO THE FUTURE: CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR LAWYERS

SOLD OUT!

As part of an AFCC Ontario initiative, Justice Stan Sherr and Lorne Glass are co-chairing a *Child Protection Intensive Training Program for new lawyers*. The four training days have been set – October 20-23, 2010; the venue has been chosen – the Donald Lamont Learning Centre at the Law Society of Upper Canada; and the speakers have been chosen – a fantastic list of dedicated, fantastic individuals who, unfortunately, are far too numerous to mention.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE: Chaired by Deborah Moskovitch

AFCCO is committed to supporting and educating AFCC members' province wide. We are very excited to announce that an outreach committee has been formed, and is working on developing a multidisciplinary networking/education program that can be easily implemented. This outreach community program will be available by the spring.

If anyone is interested in facilitating this informative program in their community, please let us know. Almost everything will be done for you; the outreach committee is dedicated to supporting your needs.

To hear more about the Committees and Task Forces and how you can contribute, please contact: afccontario@gmail.com.

**FRAME
FREE CHILD PROTECTON LEGAL CLINIC**

FRAME (Family Rights in Action & Meeting Expectations Works)
located at 40 Wellesley St. East, Suite 203, Toronto, ON
Tel : 416-961-3781

Current hours of the clinic are: Tue evening 4-7pm, Wed 10-2pm,
4-7pm, and Thurs 10-3pm

Area served: Ontario

This free legal clinic, under the auspices of the Canterbury Clinic provides free summary legal advice to those involved with child protection agencies. This service is provided by private funding for a one year trial and assists families to create a customized service plan to deal with protection concerns highlighted through discussions with the staff lawyer and social worker. This clinic acknowledges that with waiting lists and timelines, every day counts and the goal is to connect people with resources and engage them in the process immediately.

The clinic has already received calls from Barrie, Hamilton, and the Kawarthas area, so, it is not exclusive to the Greater Toronto catchment area. The clinic has already experienced assisting a number of people putting forward kin plans in a child protection context.

The clinic maintains a list of experienced child protection lawyers.

If you wish to be included on this list please contact the clinic directly.

Michael McCrimmon - Canterbury Clinical Director

Rebecca Kingdon - Staff Lawyer

Carla Cavalheiro - Staff Social Worker

UPDATE FROM THE NORTH

ADR CONTINUES TO GROW IN THE NORTH

In the last AFCC Ontario newsletter, I reported that family mediation training was ongoing in Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. Since then, nine mediators (6 in Thunder Bay and 3 in Sault Ste. Marie) have become accredited family mediators (OAFM) and in June, these 9 mediators (2 of these mediators are conditional) completed their Ontario Child Protection Mediation Training. They are now child protection mediators on the Ontario Child Protection Mediation Roster which was a main goal of the Eliminating Barriers and Building on Successes (EBBS) grant received from the Child Welfare Secretariat.

Under a second EBBS grant, mediation training is now underway in Sudbury, North Bay, Manitoulin Island and Parry Sound. The basic family mediation course was held in May and the advanced training and domestic violence course was held in June. The Honourable Mr. Justice Keast addressed the 20 participants in the training and strongly endorsed the need for trained family and child protection mediators in these communities.

Eight interns from these communities have now started their 100 hours of supervised practice in family mediation. As an added bonus, these communities are now being offered family mediation services with no user fees, for the duration of the training period. Anybody wishing more information on these services should contact Luc Rodrique at the Children's Community Network in Sudbury (705-521-7376).

To further build on the community excitement, The Honourable Mr. Justice Harvey Brownstone will be bringing his own special magic to Sudbury on September 27, 2010 where he will be speaking to local professionals from the perspective of the bench with respect to family court and ADR. I expect that like all Justice Brownstone's speaking engagements....it will be a memorable and highly entertaining event!

Maggie Hall

**ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS
(ONTARIO CHAPTER)
SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE**

THE FUTURE OF FAMILY LAW



**THURSDAY OCTOBER 14 (EVENING)
&
FRIDAY OCTOBER 15, 2010
89 CHESTNUT CONFERENCE CENTRE, TORONTO, ONTARIO**

**AFCC(O) IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS
DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
THROUGH THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT.**

Join us on the evening of Thursday, October 14 and Friday, October 15, 2010 for the Second Annual General Meeting of the AFCC's Ontario Chapter. This year we will be exploring the future of family law. The last ten years has seen a number of changes for families that are experiencing separation and divorce and the next promises to be no different. What are the issues that will be driving decisions for the next ten years, what skills will you need and where should you position your practice to best take advantage and adapt to changes in family law?

The conference begins with a networking opportunity. Come and meet old and new friends at the Hail to the Chiefs opening reception. The Chief Justices of the three Ontario courts will give their thoughts on the future of family law followed by a commentary by Professor Nick Bala where he will share his perspective on the issue.

Friday begins with the Annual General Meeting. Come and meet the Ontario Chapter's Executive and Board of Directors. Share your thoughts on where you believe your chapter should be going in the future. We will then explore one of the most contentious topics in family law: how should custody and access be structured and should there be presumptions about time spent with separated parents. This panel will explore the diversity of opinions on this subject.

Following is a choice between learning what science tells us about children's statements and their reliability, and what experts need to know about testifying in court. The courts are demanding more from experts when they testify and these experts need to know what is expected of them and how they can assist the court based on their expertise.

The afternoon presents a number of choices for attendees with three concurrent sessions. It is guaranteed that there will be something for everyone who attends. The first sessions offers advice to assessors and how they can improve their practice, advice on how you can distinguish between good and bad social science research, and a third choice on the new DSM-V and how alienation fits or does not fit into a psychiatric criteria.

The second sessions provide insight into efforts made to address high conflict families and insight into the future of mediation and arbitration. A distinguished and international panel will explore the hot issues facing the future of child protection.

The third sessions provide practical advice on what practitioners need to know about the Family Law Rules and how they shape the course of a case, advice on how the changing concept of the family will shape your practice and advice on how to best take advantage of the new legal aid regime.

The day will conclude with a frank discussion from leading experts in the fields of social science, psychology and law as they share their advice to the Attorney General of Ontario on what they believe should be the future of family law.

Please join us for this unique opportunity to make friends, build relationships and improve your practice.

A LOOK AT SOME AFCC ONTARIO MEMBERS

Family Matters: Justice Harvey Brownstone's new online TV talk show

Justice Brownstone's new online TV talk show, "Family Matters", has now been launched. You can see the first episodes at www.familymatterstv.com. Six more episodes will be filmed in Victoria during the National Family Law Conference. These shows will take public legal education to a new dimension. The show topics that have been filmed so far are:

The fundamentals of child support;
When does a child need a lawyer?;
What is a "smart divorce"?;
Mediation;
Collaborative Law;
Child Protection;
Prenups;
Elder Abuse; and
How to Get the Most out of your Family Law Lawyer;

Six more episodes will be filmed in the fall, including:

Spousal Support;
Case management;
Same sex parenting;
Mental health and parenting;
Access; and
Adoptions (in particular, Open Adoptions)

Justice Brownstone is making no money from this show, but instead has directed the production company to forward 25% of the profits to the Children's Wish Foundation.

This is a great resource and highly recommended. Go to www.familymatterstv.com
You won't want to miss it!

Lorraine Martin (The President's Award)

The President's Award is given at the discretion of the President to someone who exemplifies AFCC and all that it stands for. Lorraine Martin was this year's recipient at the AFCC Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado

Justice Emile Kruzick spoke to the 1000 delegates at the Annual Conference and said,

"The person I have chosen to be the recipient of the President's Award is a person who works tirelessly and modestly behind the scenes choosing to put the spot light on others. Over the years this person has made an incredible contribution to AFCC in so many ways while at the same time maintaining a professional career which recognizes all the objectives of AFCC.

This person has served on the Board and Executive Committee member of AFCC for two terms totalling 8 years. She is (and now you know the person is a woman), on the editorial board of AFCC of the Family Court Review, a prestigious academic journal. In 2007 she was chosen as one of 37 experienced practitioners from North America to participate in the AFCC "Think Tank" on Domestic Violence and Family Courts, Wingspread Conference Centre. The product of that Think Tank has served as a spring board for numerous initiatives in the work and study of Domestic Violence at and beyond AFCC.

Together with her Co-chair, William Austin, the recipient chaired the Child Custody Evaluation Standards Task Force which led to the development of AFCC's Model Standards for Child Custody Evaluations, published in May 2006. These are invaluable standards now followed around the globe in the field of Child Custody Assessments.

She has also over the years presented as speaker and panelist at numerous AFCC Conferences. This remarkable woman is none other than my dear friend and fellow Ontarian, Lorraine Martin. This woman is simply one of the most amazing professionals and truly worthy of the prestigious President's Award.

Lorraine is the Clinical Coordinator at the Office of the Children's Lawyer, Ministry of the Attorney General for the Province of Ontario in Toronto, Ontario. She has a clinical background in children's mental health and special needs, marriage and family therapy, and divorce mediation, and a management history that includes directing family court services in Manitoba and Ontario. She is a Past President of Family Mediation Canada and has served as the Clinical Co-ordinator of the Office of the Children's Lawyer since 1993. She has managed a province wide program delivering services in the field of Custody/Access. This program is delivered regionally with a Clinical Panel of 186 clinicians. The program completes approximately 1300 Custody Evaluations per year. In addition, the Clinical Panel assists lawyers representing children in approximately 500 Custody Dispute cases per year."

That is what I said about Lorraine Martin in Denver.

Lorraine encouraged me to come back to the Board of AFCC and look where I am now. This woman indeed works miracles.

For all her talents Lorraine can also be a rascal. I am sure we will also hear about Lorraine "the party animal". Lorraine also has the knack to defuse what can sometimes be difficult or stuffy situations. For example, at the Family Court Review Board meeting held in Denver, when everyone was asked to introduce themselves, each cited their important titles and work, Lorraine simply said, "I am Lorraine Martin and I am an Emile Kruzick Groupie". The tension and stuffiness of the meeting was immediately diffused as everyone broke into gales of laughter. That is the other side of Lorraine!

I could go on and on in my praises of you, Lorraine. I will let others give their remarks. Let me simply say, Lorraine that here in Ontario, in Canada, at AFCC and beyond, you have all done us proud.

On behalf of all of your AFCC friends and with all of our love and admiration for you, Lorraine, I have this bouquet of flowers signifying all of our good wishes for a happy and healthy retirement. All the best, dear friend".