Ontario is investing over $7 million in Ottawa’s justice system to increase access to justice, reduce delay in the system, and keep staff and the public safe.

With this investment, the province has:
- Increased video capability at the Ottawa courthouse for remands, bail appearances and evaluations to make it easier and faster for accused persons to attend their court appearances.
- Launched a pilot to connect defence counsel via video-link with their clients in custody at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre to reduce unnecessary court appearances and delay.
- Upgraded security features at the Ottawa Courthouse to keep staff, the judiciary, and the public safe, including video camera upgrades and an updated secure card access system.
- Renovations to the County of Carleton Law Association space at the Ottawa Courthouse.

In addition to these operational improvements, the province is also making systemic changes to ensure Francophone and Indigenous communities have equal access to justice services. In 2017/18 the province has:
- Appointed a new and permanent French Language advisory committee chaired by Justice Paul Rouleau, to identify and help reduce barriers in the justice system faced by French speakers.
- Established the new French Language Continuing Professional Development Centre in collaboration with the University of Ottawa, where legal professionals can obtain accredited training in French.
- Supported the opening of Ontario Court of Justice’s Indigenous Peoples Court in Ottawa to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in all aspects of the justice system.
- Funded two Gladue Writers and two Gladue Aftercare Workers in Ottawa.
- Developed and launched an Indigenous Bail Verification and Supervision Program in a number of locations, including the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, which is working with the John Howard Society to provide culturally-appropriate programing.

In addition, of the thirteen new judges announced in 2016, Chief Justice Lise Maisonneuve of the Ontario Court of Justice has assigned two judges to Ottawa.

QUOTES

“Our investments in eastern Ontario reflect our strong commitment to level the playing field and ensure that everyone in Ottawa and across Ontario have access to a justice system that is efficient, modern and responsive to their needs.”

— Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General
“The Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa is proud to partner with the Government of Ontario on access to justice initiatives like pratiquO. This program is the first of its kind in Canada to provide continuing professional development in French to legal professionals so they can best serve the needs of francophone communities in Ontario.”
— Adam Dodek, Dean of Common Law Section, University of Ottawa-Faculty of Law

QUICK FACTS

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms requires that criminal trials take place within a reasonable amount of time. In cases where this time has been exceeded, the judge may choose to “stay” the charges and the case would not proceed to trial.

- In 2017, Ontario in partnership with Ontario’s Chief Justices released the final report on the Seamless Access to Justice in French pilot project and made permanent changes to the Ottawa courthouse to increase access to justice for French-speakers.

- More than 610,000 Francophones live in Ontario. It is the largest number of French-speakers in Canada outside of Quebec.

- As part of the province’s commitment to reconciliation, Ontario has committed to a goal of 42 Gladue Writers and 42 Aftercare Workers in locations across Ontario.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Progress on Ontario’s Plan for Faster, Fairer Criminal Justice
About Ottawa Courthouse Pilot Strengthens Access to Justice in French
pratiquO Continuing Professional Development Centre (in French only)