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THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TABLES LEGISLATION TO INCREASE NUMBER OF JUDGES IN PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR COURTS

OTTAWA, November 28, 2007 — Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the Honourable Rob Nicholson, P.C., Q.C., M.P. for Niagara Falls, today introduced legislation that would amend the *Judges Act* to authorize the appointment of 20 new judges for provincial and territorial superior trial courts.

"By proposing that 20 new judges be appointed in Canada, this Government is taking leadership to meet two important objectives," said Minister Nicholson. "First, we will be ensuring that First Nations' specific claims can move forward at our proposed independent tribunal, which will be made up of superior court judges. Secondly, we are responding to a clear and pressing need to address backlogs and delays within the superior trial courts."

On November 27, 2007, the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, followed through on this Government's commitment to introduce legislation in the House of Commons that will create an independent tribunal to resolve First Nations' specific claims. The independent tribunal would be made up of the equivalent of six full-time sitting superior court judges.

Today's legislation responds to growing evidence that the superior trial courts in Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Nunavut are experiencing serious and growing backlogs and delays, particularly in their family branches which deal with divorce and, in many locations, with child protection and domestic violence.

The governments and courts of these jurisdictions have provided statistical data and information with respect to their jurisdictions, including:

- The average sitting hours or days per judge;
- Evidence of trends in case volumes, backlogs and delays; and,
- Information on relevant geographical and cultural factors that impact judicial resource needs.

The Government's analysis of this data, which clearly shows a significant increase in the workload of these superior courts, as well as the introduction of the *Specific Claims Tribunal Act* support the need for additional judges.

Allocation of the judges will be made following consultations with the Chief Justices of the affected superior trial courts as well as the provincial and territorial governments.

An online version of the legislation will be available at www.parl.gc.ca.

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