

Court Services Online

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries



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Agenda

1. The Court Services Online Project - Overview
2. Preview of Electronic Filing (e-filing)
3. Implementation of Electronic Search (e-search)
4. Questions and Comments



Court Services Online Project



Overview

- An initiative of Court Services Branch, Ministry of the Attorney General and the BC Judiciary
- Objective is to develop an electronic court registry to provide court services via the Internet
- Leverages the benefits of new case tracking systems recently implemented in the court registries
 - CEIS (Civil Electronic Information System) for civil court matters in the Provincial and Supreme Courts
 - WebCATS (Court of Appeal Tracking System) for matters in the Court of Appeal



CEIS

CEIS (Civil Electronic Information System)

- Replaced existing case tracking system used by court registries for tracking civil matters in the Provincial and Supreme Courts
- Implementation began in December 2003 and was completed in May 2004 - now used in all registry locations across the province
- CEIS provides the data repository required to support Court Services Online



Court Services Online



The core services to be provided through CSO are

- Electronic Search (e-search)
 - online search and access to Provincial and Supreme civil court information, and Court of Appeal case information from all court registries in the province
- Electronic Filing (e-filing)
 - online transmission of Provincial, Supreme and Court of Appeal documents for filing at any court registry in the province



Status and next steps - e-search

- E-search
 - pilot completed - September 2004
 - launch - October 2004
 - access to Provincial and Supreme civil court record information
 - coming in 2005
 - access to court lists for small claims and Supreme Court chambers
 - access to information on Court of Appeal matters



Status and next steps - e-filing

- E-filing
 - completed
 - e-filing prototype
 - draft court rules to support e-filing pilot
 - amendments to the BC *Evidence Act* to support electronic court documents
 - currently in progress
 - model for processing electronic documents
 - coming in 2005 - 2006
 - e-filing pilot - fall 2005
 - e-filing launch - spring 2006



E-filing Preview



E-filing vision



- The electronic court registry
 - electronic court documents delivered via the Internet anytime, anywhere, 24/7
 - review and processing in electronic form by the registry
 - documents stored in the “electronic court record” and printed only as, and if, required
 - electronic documents accessed in the court room by judges
 - electronic court record updated in real time by court clerks



Benefits of e-filing

- Increased access
 - any computer with Internet access
 - any registry in the province
 - file anytime, 24/7
- Increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness
 - Allows for automated document processing in court registries
 - Potential for reduced printing and photocopying costs
 - Facilitates service and delivery of documents by e-mail



Scope of e-filing

- All levels of court
 - Provincial Court
 - Supreme Court
 - Court of Appeal
- Types of documents
 - e-filing will be available for most court documents
 - court rules will restrict some documents from e-filing
 - affidavits and other signed documents may be scanned and e-filed



Who can e-file?

- Anyone who registers with CSO for e-filing
 - lawyers
 - paralegals
 - legal assistants
 - registry agents
 - lay litigants
- Requirements
 - access to high speed Internet connection
 - software to convert documents to PDF (Portable Document Format) files



Overview of e-filing process



1. Become a registered user
2. Prepare document for filing and convert to PDF format
3. Log in to CSO and complete an online form to initiate the filing
4. Attach the document to the online form
5. Pay the statutory filing fee and the e-filing service fee, and submit the document for filing
6. Retrieve the status of a document any time after submitting it for filing



1. Become a registered user

- Purpose of registration for e-filing
 - identifies filer
 - allows for access to status of filed documents
- Benefits of registration
 - monthly statements of e-filing activity
 - option to register payment information
 - ability to manage multiple users under one account



2. Prepare the document

- All document preparation is done “off-line”
- No changes to current document preparation process are required
- Convert and save the document as a PDF (Portable Document Format) file



3. Log in and initiate filing

- Go to CSO website and log in
- Complete an on-line form
 - acts as a “cover sheet” for the filing
 - requires information to identify the filing, e.g.:
 - file number
 - style of cause
 - type of document
 - registry location



4. Attach the document



- Attach the document (in PDF format) to the online form
 - similar to attaching a document to an email



5. Payment and submission



- Confirm the payment amount
 - statutory filing fee
 - e-filing service fee - \$7.00 per filing
- Payment is processed and document is submitted to the registry for filing



6. Retrieve the status of filings

- Go to the CSO website and log on
- Status
 - pending
 - accepted
 - rejected
- View and download copies of accepted filings
- If rejected, view the reasons for rejection



E-filing timeline

- E-filing system development
 - Ongoing to August 2005
- E-filing pilot
 - September 2005 to February 2006
- E-filing launch
 - March 2006



Implementation of e-search



E-search launch



- E-search available from October 1, 2004
 - Provincial Court small claims
 - Supreme Court civil
- No service fee during October and November 2004
 - after November, \$6 per file service fee will apply
 - payment by Visa or Mastercard
- Coming in early 2005
 - access to daily court lists for small claims and Supreme Court chambers (a free service)
 - access to information on appeals in the Court of Appeal



Information available



- Information entered by court registry staff, e.g.:
 - file number
 - name of registry
 - type of file
 - date the file was opened
 - style of cause
 - hearing dates and results
 - terms of order
 - names of parties
 - name and telephone number of counsel
 - list of documents



Access limitations

- No access to Provincial Court family and Supreme Court adoption
- Limited access to Supreme Court family and other matters individually by court order
- Currently no access to court documents



Historical information

- Historical data converted from previous case tracking system to CEIS
 - all registries except Victoria have information dating from 1989
 - Victoria registry Supreme Court files from 2002
- Historical information may be lower “quality” than information now being entered into CEIS



Registration for e-search



- Registration is not required to use e-search
- Benefits of registering for e-search
 - optional monthly statements of e-search activity
 - ability to manage multiple users under one account
 - option to register payment information with Provincial Treasury payment system to reduce data entry
- Registration process
 - obtain a BCeID or MyID
 - apply for a CSO subscription account on the Court Services online website using the BCeID or MyID



Registration (cont.)



- BCeID/MyID
 - single ID and password for services provided by the government

- MyID
 - for individuals and those who do not wish to manage multiple users
 - one-step online registration



Registration (cont.)

- BCeID
 - for companies and organizations who wish to authorize multiple users under a single entity
 - provides functionality to independently set up and manage multiple user accounts
 - “level 2” authentication requiring independent confirmation of identity prior to issuing
 - two-step process
 - online application
 - written verification and online activation



E-search Questions from VALL



Questions

Q - The CSO record does not show supporting affidavits. We thought that all documents in a registry file would show on the CSO record. What else is currently being omitted from the e-search records?

A - At a minimum, all of the following types of documents will appear in the CSO record:

- initiating documents
- responding documents
- documents requiring a court appearance
- orders



Questions

Q - It is very important when searching records for the purpose of seeking a default judgment to know how current the CSO record is. Have you considered indicating the currency of data for users?

A - The currency of information is dependent on data entry by registry staff and therefore may vary. We will be providing more information on our data entry practices and standards on the CSO website to assist users.



Questions

Q - Currently, the CSO search engine is not very complex. This can be problematic with due diligence searches, particularly because corporate names are not consistent across CSO records. Is an “advance search” option being considered?

A - Yes, an advanced search option is being considered, but will not be implemented in the short term.



Questions

Q - Is there a definitive way to tell from a CSO search if reasons for judgment have been issued in a matter? Could judgments be made more prominent and linked to the Courts website?

A - Reasons for judgment will show as an order in CSO, with the specific reasons entered as terms of the order. Some kind of link with the reasons published on the Judiciary's website is being considered, but any direct link between a specific file and the corresponding published reasons is a longer term prospect.



Questions and Comments