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| Law 435C.001 | Personal Injury Advocacy | 2020 Term 2 |
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**WEEK 1: Introduction to personal injury claims in Canada**

* + 1. **Introduction**
* Welcome
* Our backgrounds
* Your backgrounds
  1. **Teaching Objectives**
* Interactive
  + We will call upon everyone to participate in class.
  + We want to make it a practical class that gives you something more than a surface understanding of personal injury law. In order for all of us to meet that goal, it is important that you all participate.
  + We base 25% of your mark on participation.
* Overview of course materials, readings, and grading.
* Readings & class notes – all found on the KazLaw website under “UBC Law”, not all updated yet.
* Putting personal injury in context: PI is prevalent for lawyers working in Canada because most people will suffer a significant personal injury causing disability during their lifetime and 25% of all civil claims are personal injury matters.
* Bias in personal injury claims: we have to acknowledge this bias when advocating in PI claims and the goal of this course is to develop strategies to mitigate against this bias.
* Types of personal injury claims: motor vehicle accidents, occupier’s liability, assaults (including sexual assaults), sporting injuries, professional negligence, municipal and government liability, etc.
* Types of insurance regimes in Canada: no-fault, optional no-fault, and full tort rights.
* *Hot Coffee* discussion and tort reform movements in US and Canada.
  1. **Introduction**
* The focus of this course is to demonstrate how to successfully advocate for an injured plaintiff. The skills you learn in the course are, however, broadly applicable to any case where you are advocating for your client.
* PI has become increasing prevalent for anyone who has a litigation practice.
* Traditionally, PI was practiced primarily at small firms that either specialized in personal injury or had this as a component of their general practice. More recently, there is a trend where bigger firms are also developing practices.
* The statistics for personal injury in Canada are daunting: most individuals will suffer a significant personal injury during their lifetime, injury/trauma is the leading cause of death for children and young adults, and injury is the dominant cause of disability for Canadians.
* The statistics for personal injury litigation in the British Columbia Supreme Court are equally significant: personal injury claims accounts for nearly 25% of all civil pleadings filed and 20% of all trials.
* Given these statistics you can appreciate that PI litigation is essential for anyone considering a litigation practice.
  1. **Bias against personal injury**
* How do you think the public regards lawyers generally? Are we hated? The usual jargon: lawyers defend criminals and get them off on technicalities, they charge lots of money, they advance fraudulent or frivolous claims….
* How do you think the public regards personal injury lawyers – even worse? Ambulance chasers, preying on innocent victims, charging exorbitant fees for frivolous claims….
* Why do you think lawyers, and particularly personal injury lawyers, have this negative reputation?
* Does this pre-existing bias impede an injured plaintiff’s access to justice?
* Example 1 - Do you think the ICBC adjuster handling a MVA claim simply accepts the claim for chronic pain or is he or she skeptical from the start?

Example 2 - How about the judge deciding the case where the unemployed plaintiff has been involved in four accidents – do you think he or she looks at this as a cash grab or a legitimate claim? When considering this issue reflect on the comments of McEachern C.J.S.C. (as he then was) in *Butler v. Blaylock* (7 October 1980), Vancouver B781505 (B.C.S.C.) and consider if the Court is articulating a new standard of proof in these cases:

*I am not stating any new principle when I say that the Court should be exceedingly careful when there is little or no objective evidence of continuing injury and when complaints of pain persist for long periods extending beyond the normal or usual recovery.*

*An injured person is entitled to be fully and properly compensated for any injury or disability caused by a wrongdoer. But no one can expect his fellow citizen or citizens to compensate him in the absence of convincing evidence ‑‑ which could be just his own evidence if the surrounding circumstances are consistent ‑‑ that his complaints of pain are true reflections of a continuing injury.*

* Or how about the 8 jurors tasked with deciding these cases – do you think we, as plaintiff personal injury lawyers, can ignore the fact we are hated, and that they are skeptical? Can the jury pool be influenced by subtle advertisements suggesting that plaintiffs are fraudulent? See:
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWS1VXjP6JA>
  + and [ICBC’s anti-fraud advertising: purely educational or jury interference?](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/682071_a7f8208b36544a4b82e9f295c21a824f.pdf), The Lawyers’ Daily, May 25, 2017
* The majority of this course is devoted to answering one question: how do we effectively advocate for an injured individual when the overwhelming pre-existing prejudice and belief is that these are fraudulent or exaggerated claims? Our task is to give you strategies and techniques to ensure that truth and justice prevails.

**1.5 Course format:**

* This course is quite different than most of the other courses you have taken. It is ***interactive*** and we will be calling upon everyone in the class to participate. It is ***practical*** and meant to give you the background and skills to practice personal injury law.
* The course is broken into two distinct sections and taught with specific case examples:
  + The first five weeks are the fundamentals of tort law – case law, statutes, legal issues and heads of damage.
  + The following five weeks are focused on trial advocacy and procedure specific to personal injury.
  + We refer to many real cases that we or our colleagues have handled to try to ensure our lesson plans are as practical as possible.
  + We will have guest lecturers to provide other perspectives, including from the defence.
* By the end of the course we expect you will understand:
* The relevant statutes and key judicial decisions governing personal injury claims in Canada with a particular emphasis on British Columbia.
* The structure of a personal injury claim including the various heads of damage, the anatomy of a personal injury claim, and defences to a personal injury claim.
* The advocacy skills required to advance a personal injury claim.
* There is no text for this course and the majority of the readings are case law and select excerpts from various texts and articles posted on the KazLaw website. We recommend the following as supplemental reading if you intend to practice personal injury:
* *British Columbia Civil Trial Handbook,* 3rd ed. Continuing Legal Education Society of BC, 2010.
* *David Ball on Damages.* 3rd ed. National Institute for Trial Advocacy, 2011.
* Rick Friedman, *Rules of the Road: A Plaintiff Lawyer’s Guide to Proving Liability.* 2nd ed. Trial Guides, 2010.

**1.6 Course Evaluation:**

* The course evaluation is based on the following criteria:
* Final Exam (75%)
* Class Participation (25%): Students attend and participate in class discussions and are required to provide weekly feedback/reflections on each lecture.

**1.7 Contact Details:**

You can reach us by email or phone and all of the course information is on the website.

* Email: [mak@kazlaw.ca](mailto:mak@kazlaw.ca) and sk@kazlaw.ca (make sure to include “UBC” in the subject line)
* Phone: (604) 681-9344 at the office; (604) 657-3128 (Marc’s cell); (778) 991-3335 (Sandy’s cell)
* Website: <http://www.kazlaw.ca/index.php/ubc> or click on “UBC Law” on [www.kazlaw.ca](http://www.kazlaw.ca). Included on the website is the following information:
  + Course Materials: course description, schedule, etc.
  + Lecture Notes: Our lecture notes for class will be updated and posted week-to-week.
  + Assignment: detailed information on the written assignment.
  + Resources: Relevant websites, papers, etc.

1. **Defining Personal Injury**

**2.1 Personal Injury is a subsection of tort law**

* This course is titled “personal injury” – a subsection of tort law.
* The three elements of a tort:
* negligence / fault,
* causation,
* damages (compensable harm).

In a personal injury claim you need someone (the defendant) to have committed a negligent act that caused a compensable injury.

* Does a person have a compensable claim if any one of these elements are missing – no!
  1. **Defining “Personal Injury”**
* The term “personal injury” is tossed around without any thought given to what it means. What do we mean when we use the term “personal injury”:
* “Personal” references the fact that the harm, or the injury, is something that happens to the person, as opposed to property, reputation, etc…
* “Injury” - Physical, emotional or psychological injury inflicted to a person.
* Do we have any further criteria for personal injury – for example:
* does it have to be objectively verifiable,
* does it have to be caused by a specific incident or can it be caused by a series of incidents occurring over a period of time,
* does it include aggravations of a pre-existing injury or does it have to be a new injury, or
* does it include emotional or psychological injuries?
  1. **Types of Personal Injury Claims:**
* Is there any limit to the different types of personal injury claims?

1. Motor Vehicle Accidents:

* The most common of personal injury claims are MVAs. This includes any and all types of MVAs such as multi vehicle accidents, single vehicle accidents, pedestrian accidents, cycling accidents, etc.
* These claims are governed by statute, the *(Insurance (Vehicle) Act* and associated *Regulations* in BC) and the common law.

1. Occupier’s Liability:

* Occupier’s liability includes
  + slips and falls on premises,
  + social or commercial host liability,
  + injuries resulting from improper safety, maintenance or design considerations such as deck collapse at house or injuries in pools.
* Most provinces have occupiers’ liability legislation (exception is New Brunswick which relies upon common law and Quebec has a civil code).

1. Product Liability:

* There is a never-ending list of product liability cases, for example, Toyota class action related to the sudden acceleration problem, Suzuki Tracker vehicle rollover caused by negligent design, medical product failures such as the Zimmer hip, failed medications such as Vioxx (which may cause heart disease), broken bike frames such as the Cannondale Gemini, etc…

1. Assault and battery:

* Assault and/or battery are claims arising from harmful/offensive non-consensual contact. This includes historical sexual abuse, fights in bars, intentional motor vehicle accidents, failing to disclose sexually transmitted diseases, etc…
* Civil liability vs. criminal negligence – different burdens of proof

1. Professional Negligence/Malpractice:

* A common personal injury claim arises out of professional negligence – this includes medical malpractice, dental malpractice, physiotherapy malpractice, chiropractic malpractice, improper psychological counseling, etc..
* The test is whether the professional owed a duty of care to the injured party, whether he or she breached the requisite whether standard of care, and that breach is what caused the injury and resulting damages.

1. Sports Injuries:

* Some sporting injuries are compensable. The primary issue is one of consent and the courts have consistently ruled that there is a voluntary assumption of risk in sporting activities. However, at a certain point the defendant’s conduct goes beyond the normal expectations of the participants and the resulting injury is compensable. For example, hockey with fights or hits from behind into the boards(*Moore v. Bertuzzi*), improper tackles in soccer, rugby injuries in the scrum causing paralysis, etc..

1. Municipal Liability:

* Failing to salt or clear the road or sidewalk in hazardous conditions, failing to prevent rock fall near highways, failing to put up guardrails to protect motorists when driving near a cliff, recreational facilities including pools, Walkerton contamination of water supply causing deaths of seven people and numerous injuries, etc...
* These claims are governed by the *Local Government Act* and the common law.

1. Government Liability:

* Residential school claims, Hep-C class action in which the government failed to screen blood donations and infected thousands of Canadians with contaminated blood, etc.
* These claims are governed by the *Crown Proceeding Act* and the common law. In *Canadian Tort Law* (5th Edition), Justice Allen Linden summarized the *Just* decision and government liability by saying:

*"The government must be entitled to govern free from tortious liability. It cannot be a tort for government to govern. However, when a government is supplying services, that is, doing things for its people other than governing, it should be subject to ordinary negligence principles."*

1. Distinguishing Personal Injury from Wrongful Death Claims:

* Wrongful death claims are the subject of much debate in BC because the compensable damages are severely restricted.
* These claims are governed by the *Family Compensation Act* and the common law. The *FCA* takes into account ONLY the direct financial losses resulting from death, however, it fails to acknowledge non-pecuniary damages for pain and suffering. Therefore, if your child dies, you likely have no claim for anything other than funeral expenses, unless you can establish an economic loss.
* The following categories of losses are paid under the FCA:
* Compensation for lost *family* *income* which would have been earned in the future by the deceased from which the dependent would have benefitted;
* Compensation for the value of lost *household services* which would have been performed in the future by the deceased; and
* For surviving children, some compensation is made for the “loss of parental guidance” which would have been provided by the deceased in the future.
* The campaign for change:

<http://intheirname.ca/about/>

* Article: ["A matter of life and death: Urgent call for a new wrongful death statute in BC"](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/682071_8134f6e58bdc4ccfbd972118000fcce1.pdf)
* Note that BC is different from many other provinces and territories that allow damages for grief and loss of companionship.
  1. In Alberta, section 8 of the *Fatal Accidents Act* allows certain close family members of a deceased killed by a wrongdoer the right to claim compensation from that wrongdoer for the grief and loss of companionship suffered by the family. In Alberta, once a claim is made and the liability of the wrongdoer established, the amount of compensation is automatic ($82,000 for a spouse, $82,000 to parents, and $49,000 for each child of the deceased) and there is no requirement for the family members to prove their grief. The family members entitled to make a claim are the spouse, parents and children of the deceased. This compensation is often referred to as bereavement damages.
  2. The Yukon government recently amended its legislation in 2014, including a claim for bereavement damages of $75,000 for a surviving spouse, $45,000 to a child, and $74,000 to parents (or $37,500 to one parent.

There is a movement in BC to amend the *Family Compensation Act* to allow for bereavement damages, but this has yet to be achieved. Why?

* 1. **Various Tort Regimes Applicable to Motor Vehicle Claims:**
* There are four types of tort regimes applicable to motor vehicle accidents in Canada: full tort rights, no fault insurance, optional no-fault Insurance, and insurance that has thresholds (caps or deductions) on damages.

1. Full Tort Rights

* Accident victims in BC have full tort rights and may be entitled to two types of compensation in a motor vehicle accident:
* **No-Fault Accident Benefits:** Everyone in BC who is injured in an MVA is entitled to no-fault “accident benefits”. Even if an individual is at fault for the accident, ICBC will pay these benefits, so long as the individual meets the conditions of the insurance.
  + Generally, these benefits include temporary total disability (TTD) wage indemnity benefits (i.e., disability benefits for lost income to a maximum of $740 per week (up from $300 / week), as well as medical and rehabilitation benefits. Part 7 benefits are capped at $300,000 for medical payments, recently raised from $150,000, for collisions occurring on or after April 1, 2019
* **Damages:**  Everyone in BC injured in a MVA caused by another person’s negligence has a “tort” claim and is entitled to “damages” for pain and suffering, lost past and future wages, future care, out-of-pocket expenses and other losses. These tort damages are indemnified by the defendant’s insurance policy. These damages awards aim to put an injured person in the same position they would have been in had the accident not happened (as far as money can do this).
* Until recently, BC was the only jurisdiction in Canada that had full tort rights in motor vehicle claims. On April 1, 2019, caps were introduced for “minor injuries”.
* From ICBC’s website: <https://www.icbc.com/claims/injury/Pages/Minor-injuries.aspx>

What is a minor injury?

B.C's minor injury definition includes:

* sprains
* strains
* general aches and pains
* cuts
* bruises
* road rash
* persistent pain
* minor whiplash
* temporomandibular joint disorder or TMJ (pain in your jaw joint and in the jaw muscles)
* mild concussions
* short-term mental health conditions.

A medical professional – not ICBC – will diagnose your injury, and this diagnosis will determine whether it is minor or not.

Minor injury and your compensation

The determination of an injury as minor only affects your compensation for pain and suffering. This is just one part of your claim and is separate from your medical treatments and benefits to help you recover.

**As of April 1, 2019, a limit of $5,500 will apply to pain and suffering payouts for minor injuries.**

Your injury may have been determined to be minor after the crash, but if the injury turns out to impact your life for more than 12 months - for example, you're still not able to go to work or school, have to modify your work hours or duties, or you're unable to care for yourself - it will no longer be considered minor and will not be subject to the payment limit.

In the case of concussions or mental health conditions, the limit on pain and suffering will not apply if there is significant impairment beyond 16 weeks.

What if you want to dispute a determination that your injury is “minor” and subject to the cap?

* From April 1, 2019 and onward, the [Civil Resolution Tribunal](https://civilresolutionbc.ca/) (CRT) is available to address certain disputes between customers and ICBC, including minor injury determination disputes.
* The CRT is independent of ICBC and can solve some disputes “without involving legal representation” [emphasis added].

The Trial Lawyers’ Association of British Columbia

<https://www.tlabc.org/index.cfm?pg=issuescampaigns>

* On April 1, 2019, TLABC commenced legal proceedings that challenges the constitutional validity of the ICBC-NDP scheme to cap damages and force most matters to the CRT. Initially TLABC was the only named party. It was always intended that individual plaintiffs would be added later to eliminate any standing concerns and to provide an individualized factual context for the challenge.
* On December 2, 2019, Chief Justice Hinkson added four individuals as plaintiffs: Philip Whealy, Khadija Ramadhan, Sahra Liedtke, and Melissa Rondpre. Those individuals are post-April 1 accident victims who allege “minor injuries” that would be subject to the non-pecuniary damages cap, and the jurisdiction of the CRT. The defendants in those individuals’ tort claims were also added, but ICBC was not. All orders ultimately went by consent although only after all material was prepared and the application about to proceed.
* Now that the parties are assembled, plaintiffs’ counsel will take steps to move forward on the merits. The parties are next to apply themselves to developing a plan and schedule for the litigation, with direction from the Chief Justice as necessary.

***Is a “No Fault” regime on the way?***

**January 17, 2018**<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-ndp-rejects-recommendation-to-lower-auto-insurance-rates/article37653718/>

[An] Ernst & Young study, left on the table when the NDP assumed power in July, outlines four options for government to tackle rates. The most dramatic change would reduce rates if ICBC moved away from the present litigation-heavy model to a comprehensive-care model.<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-ndp-rejects-recommendation-to-lower-auto-insurance-rates/article37653718/>

The proposed change "would see British Columbians paying less for insurance in 2019 than they do today," the briefing notes prepared for cabinet state.

The report found that vehicle premiums could be reduced by more than 13 per cent if the government would switch to the no-fault system used in other provinces. The change would include "significantly enriched" accident benefits that focus on care and treatment for injured claimants, but it would end lump-sum payments for pain and suffering. As well, the right to sue would be reserved for cases involving criminal negligence.

**November 7, 2019**<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-s-attorney-general-raising-the-spectre-of-no-fault-auto-insurance-legal-opponents-say-1.5350958>

"There are a number of different measures that we think we could bring in that would reduce rates and would reduce costs, especially legal costs, which is what no-fault systems tend to address," Eby said in a media scrum.

And he warned if trial lawyers continue to fight the remaining two reforms, the province could be forced to take drastic action.

"If those were to fail in court, it would be catastrophic and we would have to look at absolutely everything," said Eby, "because that's about $1 billion a year, plus the savings available to us."

"I've told the trial lawyers very clearly that in going after these reforms, they need to be careful what they wish for, because there won't be many options for government after that," said Eby.

**DIFFERENT SCHEMES IN DIFFERENT PROVINCES**

* In most provinces, motor vehicle insurance is purchased through private insurance companies, including in the Yukon and Alberta.
  + BC, Manitoba, SK 🡺 government provides basic mandatory insurance. Premium payments are collected by the provincial governments
  + QUE 🡺 government covers personal injury; private insurers cover vehicle damage.

1. No-Fault Insurance:

* Means you get compensation from your own insurance company rather than having to deal with the other motorist’s insurer.
* Manitoba and Québec: These provinces operates in a “pure” no-fault environment, meaning that all injured claimants (regardless of liability) are entitled to statutory wage loss and rehabilitation benefits provided by the government-run insurer. The injured claimant cannot sue for damages beyond these statutory benefits.

1. Optional No-Fault:

* Saskatchewan: An individual has the option of paying less for the Personal Injury Protect Plan (PIPP) no-fault insurance that provides statutory benefits, or paying more for the tort option that allows the injured individual to sue for non-pecuniary damages (subject to a $5,000 deductible) and pecuniary damages.

1. Thresholds, Deductibles and Caps Applied to Tort Claims:

* Ontario: The individual can sue for non-pecuniary and pecuniary damages subject to a threshold and deductible of $15,000 or $30,000 depending on the injury. The threshold distinguishes injuries causing a “permanent serious impairment of an important physical, mental or psychological function” from lesser injuries. If the injuries meet the threshold there is no deduction or cap on the claim. If the injuries do not meet the threshold then the injured individual receives accident benefits and may sue for further damages subject to a $30,000 deductible.
* Alberta:
  + Minimum insurance for third party is $200,000; caps on no-fault benefits for medical payments ($50,000), funeral expenses ($5,000) and disability ($400/week for 104 weeks).
  + The individual can sue for non-pecuniary and pecuniary damages, however, there is a limit/cap of $4,777 cap for minor injuries pursuant to the *Minor Injury Regulation* (MIR). A “Minor Injury” is defined as a sprain, a strain, or a Whiplash Associated Disorder (‘WAD”) injury caused by an accident that does not result in a serious impairment. Damages for such injuries are limited to the legislative amount, plus an allowance for inflation. The adjusted cap amount for general damages is $4,777; however, it should be noted that other heads of damages (lost wages, out of pocket expenses, etc.) are not affected by the MIR. The issue that arises is establishing criteria for what should be considered a “serious impairment” for the purposes of the MIR.
  + Note that the MIR was challenged in *Morrow v. Zhang*. The constitutional challenge was initially successful before Associate Chief Justice Wittmann (now Chief Justice Wittmann) at the Alberta Court of Queen’s Bench. Justice Wittmann found that the MIR violated an injured plaintiff’s right to equality under Section 15 of the Charter on the basis that the distinction between victims who sustained soft tissue injuries and those who sustained other injuries was discriminatory and that such a limit reinforced the stereotype that individuals so afflicted are malingers. The Crown appealed on the grounds that Justice Wittman failed to consider the MIR in relation to the rest of the legislative scheme when conducting his Constitutional analysis. The MIR and related legislation were introduced in 2004 as a control mechanism for rising insurance premiums. Justice Rowbotham fo ra unanimous Court of Appeal held that the cap on non-pecuniary damages was a justifiable concession and the regime would ensure immediate access to care without any interference from an insurer. Both Justice Wittmann and the Court of Appeal dismissed various arguments that the MIR violated the Plaintiffs’ “life, liberty and security of person” rights under Section 7 of the Charter. The Supreme Court of Canada denied leave to appeal in December 2009.
* The Maritimes: the individual can sue for non-pecuniary and pecuniary, however, there is a limit/cap of $8,200 in Nova Scotia, $7,500 for non-pecuniary damages in New Brunswick and $2,500 in Newfoundland and Labrador where the injuries are “minor” and/or “non-permanent injuries”. Note that the move to caps was precipitated by an “insurance crisis” in which the private insurers stated they could no longer afford to insure drivers in the Maritimes. This crisis has been challenged and there is a move in Nova Scotia to revisit the cap on minor soft tissue injuries.

1. Discussion

* What is the rationale/justification for no-fault insurance?
* What is the rationale/justification for caps, deductibles, and thresholds on soft tissue injuries and none catastrophic injuries?
* What is the rationale/justification of full tort rights in British Columbia?
  1. **Hot Coffee and Tort Reform**
* Let’s define “tort reform”: refers to proposed changes/reform of civil justice systems that would reduce tort litigation or damages. This includes procedural limits on the ability to file claims and capping the awards of damages.
* What is the rationale/justification in favour of tort reform?
  + The primary criticism of the tort system focuses on an economic analysis and asserts that the costs of litigation and compensation payouts raise the cost of insurance (and products generally). Because most tort claims will be paid from the pockets of insurance, and because the public generally pays into insurance schemes of all kinds, tort reform proponents assert that reducing tort litigation and payouts will benefit everyone who pays for insurance.
  + Frivolous lawsuits clog up our courts and drive up the cost of doing business for industry.
  + The tort system is an expensive and inefficient way to compensate those injured.
* What is the rationale/justification against Tort Reform?
  + "...tort law serves two legitimate purposes. First, the law serves to compensate victims for their losses. Second, the threat of liability serves to deter future accidents."
  + Limitations on damages and other restrictions on plaintiff's traditional rights will reduce corporate accountability. Because corporations typically engage in a cost-benefit analysis before considering whether to stop a wrongful action (such as polluting or not enacting proper measures for safety), corporations will decide that the cost of changing a wrongful practice would be greater than the cost of continuing it, unless there is the chance that the cost of continuing will be made greater by a successful lawsuit.
  + There is no objective or reliable evidence supporting a crisis in our justice system that requires tort reform.
  + There are no savings associated with tort reform.
* Examples of tort reform in Canada: the cap on pain and suffering from the 1978 Trilogy, statutory caps/deductions/thresholds on soft tissue injuries, costs, limitation of actions against government and municipalities, limitation against juries in claims against government, etc.

***How many of you have heard of the McDonald’s Hot Coffee case from the U.S.?***

What do you know about the case – write it down.

* Was this the first claim against McDonalds for a hot coffee burn injury?
* How old was the plaintiff?
* Was the plaintiff seriously injured?
* Did the plaintiff cause her own injury – meaning did she spill the coffee into her lap?
* Was this a frivolous or fraudulent claim?
* How much money did the plaintiff receive?
* How many of you think the plaintiff was paid too much money?

We are going to watch the first 40 minutes of a documentary called Hot Coffee – make some notes and we are going to discuss this at the end of the class.

***Class discussion regarding “Hot Coffee”***

* Do you think the jury award was reasonable in the circumstances of that case?
  + Remember that Liebeck initially asked McDonalds to pay only her medical bills and they refused. The jury ultimately awarded Liebeck $160,000 in compensatory damages (for medical bills and the like) and $2.7 million as punitive damages against McDonald's. This amount was reduced to reflect Ms. Liebeck’s contributory negligence.
* Reflect on the jurors’ task:
  + The job of a juror is one of the hardest and most solemn jobs a citizen ever may have in a democracy. Each day, all over the country, the jury's deliberative work is the embodiment of one of the few inherent powers of the governed over the governing.
  + Alexis de Tocqueville wrote hundreds of years ago in glowing terms about the jury. He saw in it both a form of grassroots democracy—individual citizens rendering judgments that became part of the body of the law—and a civic virtue—individual citizens playing a direct role in their own governance and learning from it.
* Was there a tipping point or piece of evidence that was particularly compelling?
  + the temperature of the coffee was absurdly high,
  + least 700 other McDonald's customers had been injured by hot coffee,
  + the photographs of the burns were shocking to see,
  + the company showed no signs of reducing the temperature in its coffee makers,
  + the punitive damage amount equaled only two days’ worth of McDonald's coffee sales.
* Why do you think we showed you this movie – why is it relevant or important?
* Why do you think this case has been so widely misrepresented in the media?
* What do we mean by tort reform?
* What is the impetus or motivation for tort reform – what is the basis for the allegation that tort systems are unfair, costly and inefficient?
* Do we have tort reform in Canada – caps on pain and suffering from the trilogy, caps on minor and/or soft tissue injuries, limitations or waivers of liability that are interpreted strictly, move towards reform of joint and several liability (in BC we sever liability if the plaintiff is contributory negligent but this does not happen in other jurisdictions), no damages for wrongful death,
* Who benefits from tort reform? Insurance companies, public,
* Does eliminating liability reduce personal responsibility and safety innovations?
* Do you think that fraudulent or frivolous claims are widespread in Canada?
* What safeguards are put in place in Canada, compared to other countries such as the United States, to prevent frivolous lawsuits?
* Further discussion and perhaps the subject of your first weekly reflection – look up the issue of fraudulent claims, the incidence of fraudulent claims, etc.

See also: there is an excellent article in *The* *Economist* , “Closing the Lottery”: <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2011/12/10/closing-the-lottery>