

## Transforming Legal Aid Ontario

September 8, 2009

Ontario is increasing access to legal aid for Ontario families by investing an additional \$150 million over four years in Legal Aid Ontario. This will increase Legal Aid Ontario's base funding by \$60 million a year by 2012. As part of the plan, the Attorney General will work to develop and seek approval on an automatic indexation that would be implemented in 2013.

Ontario's transformation plan includes four key impact areas:

- **Clinic Law Services** – The increased legal aid investment will mean that the clinics can serve more people. They will also be a central part of new coordinated legal supports that respond to the full range of issues — from landlord and housing issues to employment issues — that those in difficult situations are faced with every day. Initiatives include:
  - More people served, and a broader range of information available with more upfront access to it
  - Integration of inter-ministerial anti-poverty measures and social services/clinics
  - Establishment of an advisory group
- **Supporting our Families** – Legal Aid Ontario will develop an approach to family law where children and their parents will have access to a faster, less confrontational, and simpler system. Initiatives include:
  - Provide necessary support for clients and service providers to participate in collaborative and non-confrontational approaches that provide solutions for the future of children and their parents
  - Earlier supports and information services – such as enhanced family information centres that can help poor and middle income Ontarians determine the right direction for resolving their disputes as quickly as possible
  - Establishment of an advisory group to advise on the implementation of the new investment
- **Promoting Justice Effectiveness** – As part of the government's justice reforms, this legal aid investment will support the [\*Justice on Target\*](#) objectives by increasing the availability of early, upfront support and moving to block fees. Initiatives include:
  - The use of block fees (a set amount paid regardless of how many hours are spent on a case) to encourage effective decision making
  - Increasing fees for experts
  - More rigorous quality management
  - Establishment of an advisory group
- **Improving Big Case Management** – Various reports and members of the bar recommend increasing accountability and rigorous quality management for the largest criminal cases. These new resources will ensure efficient, focused, and effective defense of cases that avoid unnecessary steps, expense, delay and wrongful convictions. Initiatives include:

- Establishment of a big case management office
- Establishment of an advisory group.

Working advisory groups will be established immediately to work on the details of the transformation plan in the four areas outlined above. These groups will provide front-line advice on how to make this investment work effectively and how best to support the people who are providing legal aid services.

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