

Province Moves Forward With Legal Aid Transformation

McGuinty Government Resolves Legal Aid Boycott

NEWS

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Ontario is transforming the province's legal aid system, to help ensure that Ontarians have access to the legal services they need, regardless of their ability to pay, and to drive reforms in the family and criminal courts.

Over the past four months, the government has engaged legal aid service providers and legal organizations and established five advisory groups to focus on how the \$150 million investment could best support Legal Aid Ontario's clients and help drive substantial court reforms.

Ontario has reached an agreement with the Criminal Lawyers' Association to end the boycott of large criminal cases in Ontario.

The government will be moving on:

- Allocating additional funding for enhanced family law and poverty law services
- Instituting block fees for standard criminal cases
- Providing greater quality control and ensuring greater accountability of legal aid lawyers
- Increasing the hourly fees for criminal, family, immigration and refugee and mental health lawyers by an average of 5 per cent per year for the next seven years
- Increasing legal aid fees for expert defence witnesses, and
- Implementing the Code and Lesage recommendation of creating enhanced fees for highly qualified lawyers who work on the most complex major criminal cases.

QUOTES

"Our investment in legal aid in this time of economic restraint demonstrates our government's commitment to providing a strong, stable legal aid system that provides excellent support to clients and is effective and sustainable for the future."

— Chris Bentley, Attorney General

"This step in the transformation of legal aid significantly improves the compensation to certificate lawyers and better reflects the importance of the work they do in addressing the legal needs of low income individuals."

— John McCamus, Board Chair, Legal Aid Ontario

"The Law Society of Upper Canada shares the government's commitment to access to justice for Ontarians, regardless of their ability to pay for legal services. These reforms will help to strengthen the legal aid system, better serving people across the province."

— W.A. Derry Millar, Treasurer, Law Society of Upper Canada

"We're pleased that the government has listened to the advice of the legal aid advisory groups and is moving forward with a tariff increase. Ontario's transition to a new legal aid system will help in the daily challenges faced by victims, offenders, community groups and service providers across Ontario."

— Carole J. Brown, President, Ontario Bar Association

"The County and District Law Presidents' Association is pleased to have been part of the advisory groups and that the government is moving forward quickly with a plan to increase support for the clients who depend on the legal aid system, as well as those who deliver the services."

— Robert Zochodne, Chair, County and District Law Presidents' Association

QUICK FACTS

- The first hourly rate increase would be effective February 1, 2010, pending approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- On September 8, 2009, the government announced a \$150 million increase in funding for Legal Aid Ontario over four years, the largest funding increase in the history of legal aid.

LEARN MORE

Read the advisory group's [recommendations](#).

Learn more about [Legal Aid Ontario](#).

Read about Ontario's legal aid [transformation plan](#).

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