



The Legal Aid Fax

December 2007



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Happy holidays!

LSS staff throughout the province wish you and your staff a safe and happy holiday. In 2006/2007, you provided representation services for 30,547 legal issues, and provided duty counsel, family advice lawyer, and Brydges lawyer advice services for 134,163 issues!

We thank each of you for your ongoing commitment to helping people with low incomes resolve their legal problems.

Lawyer satisfaction survey update — What we are doing for *you*

The Case Management Section (authorizations) at LSS has identified a number of changes aimed at improving our “customer service support” to you. We are pleased to announce the first of several changes to come:

- Streaming: authorization requests and/or any general inquiries will be “streamed” to our case management assistants according to the first letter of the lawyer’s surname. This way you will have one staff person to deal with for all of your authorization needs.
- When you call the Case Management Helpdesk (604-601-6145), you will get the following options (select the number that matches the first letter of your surname):

Surname	Case Mgt Asst	Press
A – F	Sharon	“1”
G – M	Alaina	“2”
N – Z	Anju	“3”

- We are available to receive phone calls from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. We will answer whenever possible to reduce the amount of voicemail.
- If you find e-mail easier, contact us at case-mgt@lss.bc.ca.

LSS recognizes that a number of changes are needed throughout our organization to improve our service delivery to you. We value your suggestions and encourage you to contact us to share your ideas, big and small. E-mail us at lawyers.resources@lss.bc.ca or

contact Janice Staryk, manager of Operations at 604-601-6148.

Budget consultations

The society’s written submission to the provincial government’s Budget 2007 Consultation is now posted on our website at www.lss.bc.ca/about_lss/reports.asp (click “Evaluations and reports” at the top of the page to get to the report).

Executive Director Mark Benton provided copies of this submission to all members of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services when he and Board Vice-Chair Mayland McKimm gave their presentation at the Surrey consultation hearing on October 11, 2007. They were joined by private lawyer Bruce Clokie, who spoke from the perspective of someone who represents legal aid clients.

New local agent for Vernon & Salmon Arm

Brian Burgess has stepped down as local agent in Vernon and Salmon Arm. Brian and his wife Cheri have been providing local agent services since 2002 and will be missed. We wish Brian well in his new position as Judicial Justice of the Peace and look forward to his continued involvement with LSS as a referral lawyer and family duty counsel.

LSS issued a Request for Proposals to find a replacement and was very pleased with the strong response. Effective December 1, 2007, the new local agent in Vernon and Salmon Arm is Sandra Sinclair. Sandra practised law in Prince George and Quesnel before moving to Vernon in 2005. She has worked as provincial Crown Counsel and more recently, as a criminal defence lawyer. Sandra and her staff are providing services at the Vernon and Salmon Arm courthouses as well as at her office in Vernon. Contact details are posted on our website at www.lss.bc.ca/legal_aid/legal_aid_offices.asp.

SCAP policy updated

For referrals issued on or after November 1, 2007, the SCAP process applies to all cases (regardless of offence category) where the preliminary hearing or trial is expected to exceed a total of 10 half days (see Notice to Counsel 59). For Category I, II, and III cases that exceed

that threshold, LSS will decide, at its discretion, whether the case should proceed under SCAP or remain on the block fee tariff. SCAP remains mandatory for Category IV cases exceeding 10 half days.

LSS recently updated the online SCAP questionnaire to reflect the new policy. If you have a referral for a Category I, II, or III case that is eligible for SCAP but prefer to remain on the block fee tariff, you can indicate your preference by completing only the first section of the questionnaire. If you want your Category I, II or III case to proceed under SCAP, you must complete the full questionnaire. If you submit a SCAP questionnaire but LSS decides that your Category I, II, or III case should remain on the block fee tariff, you are entitled to bill the new tariff item for SCAP administration.

If you have a criminal referral for a case proceeding within SCAP, please remember that you are required to maintain time sheets or dockets to track time spent on general preparation, daily preparation, and court attendance. SCAP cases are paid on an hourly basis, so your time records should show in reasonable detail when and how you spent the time for which you bill LSS.

BCMA change

The *Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs* has been updated to reflect the following BCMA rate changes effective November 10, 2007:

- General Practitioners
\$192 per hour for preparation & court attendance
\$109 per hour for travel time
- Specialists
\$225 per hour for preparation & court attendance
\$127 per hour for travel time

Public service announcements

For the first time in our history, LSS has developed public service announcements (PSA) about legal aid in BC. The announcements are part of our ongoing efforts to raise public awareness of and support for LSS services.

Rethink Communications (see www.rethinkadvertising.com), a cutting-edge advertising firm in Vancouver, produced a 30-second TV spot and a 30-second radio spot using a lot of creativity and some seed money from us. They very generously did most of the work on a pro bono basis.

The announcements have been sent to TV and radio stations across BC with a request that they include them in their PSA rotations (which are free of charge). Any of the stations could air the spots, at any time, over the next year. In the meantime, you can see the TV spot on our website at www.lss.bc.ca/default/Default.asp.

Improved legal aid services for Aboriginal people recommended

A new report, *Building Bridges: Improving Legal Services for Aboriginal Peoples*, is being called an important first step toward filling gaps in legal aid services for Aboriginal people in BC.

The report was prepared for the Legal Services Society by Ardith Walkem. To complete her report, Ardith brought together an Aboriginal Reference Group comprised of Aboriginal elders, leaders, workers, and lawyers to make comprehensive and positive recommendations for change.

As part of legal aid renewal, the society has approved approximately \$1.4 million for Aboriginal initiatives over the next three years. The society also recently approved a new position of Aboriginal services program manager, who will follow up on the report's recommendations.

Building Bridges: Improving Legal Services for Aboriginal Peoples is now available on the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca/about_lss/reports.asp (click "Evaluations and reports" at the top of the page to get to the report). If you would like a hard copy of the report, please contact us by e-mail at distribution@lss.bc.ca.

FPT annual meeting

The annual meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) ministers responsible for justice and public safety was held in November. Their published statement, which summarized discussions on various justice issues, said the following about legal aid:

"Provincial/territorial Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General raised, as their highest priority, their unanimous concern about the ability of Canadians, particularly vulnerable women and children, to access the justice system. Legal aid is an essential element of providing Canadians with this access. In particular, provincial/territorial ministers pressed the federal Minister of Justice to recognize the shared responsibility for delivery of legal aid to Canadians, to increase federal funding for criminal legal aid, and to provide new funding to support civil legal aid. The federal Minister of Justice stated that support for families is a priority area for the federal government. The federal minister also stated that he is committed to raise provincial/territorial concerns with respect to civil legal aid with the federal Minister of Finance and encouraged the provincial/territorial ministers to also raise the issues with their finance ministers." (For their complete statement, see www.scics.gc.ca/cinfo07/830926004_e.html.)

Tariff changes

LSS reviews the *Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs* twice a year, and the next one will take place over the next few months. We welcome your ideas for improvements. Please e-mail us at LawyersResources@lss.bc.ca.

Tariff accounts schedule

The Tariff Accounts Department is closed from December 24, 2007, to January 2, 2008. We will respond to e-mails, voice messages, and faxes the week of January 2, 2008.

Inquiries regarding payment of accounts should be limited to accounts exceeding 30 days.