



LSS to complete tariff renewal in July 2007

LSS is winding up its tariff renewal project, and will consider further tariff system improvements within the framework of legal aid renewal, the society's new strategic priority (see "Legal aid renewal" below). "As a result of the various tariff initiatives over the past few years, we have been able to implement numerous improvements for lawyers," says LSS Executive Director Mark Benton.

These improvements equalled \$3.9 million in 2006/07. We expect their dollar value will increase during 2007/08, for an annualized amount of \$6.2 million. Some highlights of the project include:

- The elimination of holdbacks
- Tiered rates to recognize experience (5% or 10% increases for most lawyers)
- Increases to hourly rates and selected block fees
- New tariff items and services such as:
 - an administration fee for each referral
 - a fee for preparing an appeal opinion letter
 - in the family tariff, additional preparation hours and new services, including extended family services and dispute resolution services
 - in the criminal tariff, new fees for visiting clients in custody and for multiple information guilty pleas
 - in the immigration tariff, payment for actual attendance at IRB hearings and increased preparation hours for refugee hearings
- More online resources (e.g., forms, contact lists, and e-billing for duty counsel and Strategic Case Assessment Program accounts)
- Quality assurance support (e.g., access to online legal resources, experts database, bursaries for CLE seminars, and mentoring opportunities for less experienced lawyers)

The final steps in the tariff renewal project will take place this July, when LSS introduces some additional changes, primarily in the criminal tariff. The project will then be incorporated into legal aid renewal, the society's new strategic priority designed to ensure legal aid services benefit clients. "This work will include finding ways to provide lawyers with broader resources and support so they can take a more integrated approach to solving clients' legal problems," says Mark.

Tariff renewal was designed to improve rates as well as the tariff structure, promote better results for clients, and encourage private bar lawyers to participate in the legal aid system. The process began during the tariff review the society conducted in 2004/05, which involved consultations with the private bar and other justice system participants, and extensive research on LSS tariff history and legal aid reform in other jurisdictions. The October 2005 final report of the tariff review, *Managing for Results: LSS Tariff Renewal*, recommended a number of changes to improve tariff compensation rates and structures, as well as LSS administration. A more detailed summary of the tariff renewal improvements is provided in the LSS report *Overview of LSS Tariff Review and Tariff Renewal*, which will be posted on the LSS website at the end of May 2007.

During the remainder of 2007/08, LSS plans to evaluate the tariff renewal initiatives and welcomes your feedback (e-mail lawyersresources@lss.bc.ca).

Legal aid renewal

LSS is developing concrete strategies for legal aid renewal in BC. These will build on the society's recent successes to ensure programs in all areas of law benefit clients. Beyond ensuring the justice system provides fair process, this involves developing concrete steps to ensure legal aid:

- helps clients reach positive, lasting solutions to their legal problems;
- forms part of a holistic approach to meeting clients' overall needs (i.e., services must be seen in a broad social context);
- encourages clients to constructively participate in solving, or avoiding, legal problems; and
- is available where, and when, clients need the services.

Disbursements block payment

LSS recently announced a new disbursements block payment that can be claimed in lieu of standard low-cost office expenses on certain case types. Please refer to [Notice to Counsel #56](#), dated April 18, 2007, for complete details.