



The Legal Aid Fax

November/December 2006

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December cheque run schedule

To accommodate the upcoming holiday season, LSS has revised the cheque run schedule as follows:

Tuesday, December 19, 2006 (moved up)
Thursday, December 28, 2006 (cancelled)
Thursday, January 4, 2007 (resume regular schedule)

Reminder: change in timing of payments

Effective January 31, 2007, LSS will be changing the timing of payments by cheque from weekly to bi-weekly. Payments made by direct deposit (EFT) will continue to be paid on a weekly basis. See the [October LAF](http://www.lss.bc.ca) for more information at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Legal Aid Fax).

GST

On July 1, 2006, the GST rate was reduced to 6%. At that time, LSS reduced the calculation of GST to the new rate. For accounts that were pending, LSS made the change effective on the payment date. Ultimately, LSS was advised to apply the change on the date billed by the lawyer. This resulted in underpayment of GST for cases billed prior to July 1, but paid after July 1.

LSS has assessed the underpayment. In accordance with our policy, LSS will be issuing cheques to counsel before the end of January where the discrepancy is greater than \$50.00. Counsel will be responsible for remitting this payment to government and recording it in their accounting systems. Counsel concerned with potential amounts less than \$50.00 should contact the LSS Finance Helpdesk at (604) 601-6111.

November 2006 tariff revisions

The [November 2006 tariff revisions](http://www.lss.bc.ca) are now posted on the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs).

Hourly rate increase reminder

Just a reminder that LSS increased all its hourly legal rates (except criminal enhanced fees) on all accounts received on or after September 12, 2006.

When submitting your accounts, claim the tier 1 rate of \$83.90 (even if you were authorized at \$80/hour). The LSS accounts processing system will *not*

automatically make the adjustment from \$80.00 to \$83.90. If you are eligible for tier 2 or 3 rates, LSS will automatically adjust the amount when processing your account.

Family services initiatives update

LSS introduced significant new family law services on November 1, 2006. The new services reflect an emphasis on early consensual dispute resolution for family cases and a closer examination of efforts to resolve cases before further time will be authorized. The new initiatives include:

- Family duty counsel services extended to case conferences in selected locations (Kamloops, Kelowna, Port Coquitlam, Prince George, Surrey, Terrace, Vancouver, and Victoria). Additional locations will be introduced in the New Year.
- Mediation and collaborative practice included in all tariffs, not just the Emergency Services Tariff.
- Dispute Resolution Services (DRS) referrals replace Limited Scope referrals. DRS referrals will be available for proceedings in both the Provincial Court and the Supreme Court.
- The Extended Services Opinion Letter has been changed to focus on efforts to settle not just on the outstanding issues.

These enhancements are in addition to our previous family services. Legal representation will continue to be available for eligible clients in emergency situations.

Dispute Resolution Services (DRS) referrals will be issued for cases identified by LSS as having significant custody/access issues or financial security issues. DRS referrals will permit counsel to assess the case, negotiate with the opposing party, initiate proceedings if necessary, prepare disclosure, engage a mediator, and/or attend the case conference as appropriate. DRS referrals do not permit counsel to conduct contested hearings. Counsel with a DRS referral can seek authorization to continue litigation if required by submitting an Extended Services Opinion Letter. We will expect counsel to have made a written offer to settle with the opposing party before requesting extended services. If it is not possible to make such an offer, the reason should be stated in

the opinion letter. Our ability to provide Extended Services authorizations will reflect our remaining available budget.

These initiatives are described in detail in [Notice to Counsel #54](#) at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Notices to Counsel) and the related [Background](#) (under For lawyers > Online resources > LSS programs and policies).

BCMA rate changes

For information about the new BCMA rates (effective Dec 1/06), see [Notice to Counsel #55](#) at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Notices to Counsel).

Disbursement tip: accommodation rates

Accommodation rates changed as of June 1, 2006, as a result of changes in rates paid by the BC government. There are now different rates for different seasons, as set out below:

Summer	May 1, 2006 – August 30, 2006
Shoulder	March 1, 2006 – April 30, 2006 & September 1, 2006 – October 31, 2006
Winter	November 1, 2006 – February 28, 2007

Rates for each location are set out on the BC government's Purchasing Commission website at: www.pc.gov.bc.ca/travel/hotels/accommodationlisting/index.html

We continue to expect counsel to choose the most reasonable accommodation at BC government rates in each location. For more information, please see [Notice to Counsel #51](#) at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Notices to Counsel) or contact Tariff Services at (604) 601-6145 or by e-mail at helpdesk.disbursements@lss.bc.ca.

Changes to vendor contact information

For inquiries relating to new or existing vendor numbers, direct deposits, or any other remittance related queries, contact the Finance Helpdesk at (604) 601-6111 or e-mail helpdesk.finance@lss.bc.ca (the lssvendorinfo@lss.bc.ca e-mail address was disabled November 30, 2006).

To change your contact information, please submit a [Private Bar Vendor Number Application and Change Form](#) and fax it to (604) 682-7967. This form is at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Online resources > Forms).

Referral eligibility policy

LSS has revised its policy on [referral eligibility](#) for lawyers. This policy, effective September 26, 2006, outlines the entitlements of legal aid clients, the responsibility of lawyers, relations between lawyers and LSS, and the steps LSS may take to address quality concerns. The policy is at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Online resources > LSS programs and policies).

Direct deposit (EFT) testimonials

I have used both the E-billing and Direct Deposit since each became available. I can say without hesitation that both have met all of my needs without exception. The specific advantage I have experienced is the reduced turnaround time from submitting my accounts online to receipt of payment. I would highly recommend its use.

— R.B., criminal lawyer, New Westminster

This has been the best service to come out of Finance since E-billing. I am extremely pleased. Thank you so much. The best aspect about this service is the quick turnaround from the date of billing to receipt of payment. I was paid today for a billing I did two days ago. You guys are doing a fantastic job. Simply superb. Once again, a big thank you. P.S. I refuse to go back to receiving cheques in the mail. You can't make me.

— A.Y., immigration lawyer, Vancouver

Since this is my first EFT, I thought I'd confirm that it did go into the correct bank account. Thank you for the prompt payment. I'm a believer now!

— A.P., criminal lawyer, Burnaby

Criminal lawyers' listserve

Lawyers who agree to accept 12 or more legal aid referrals in the next 12 months will get their enrolment fee for the Trial Lawyers Association of BC Criminal Defence Litigation Group Listserve paid by LSS. To sign up, fax a completed [application form](#) to LSS at (604) 601-6195. The application form is at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Online resources > Quality assurance initiatives).

This program is made possible with financial support from the Law Foundation of BC.

Give us your feedback

If you have any comments or suggestions on what types of articles, billing tips, etc., you would like to see in future issues of the Legal Aid Fax, please send an e-mail to legalaidfax@lss.bc.ca or fax (604) 601-6195. We appreciate your feedback!



LSS wishes you & your staff a safe & happy holiday. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to helping low-income people in British Columbia with their legal needs.