



Schedule change for payments to lawyers

Due to the successful introduction of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), the Legal Services Society (LSS) will be changing the timing of payments by cheque from weekly to bi-weekly, effective January 31, 2007. Payments made by EFT will continue to be made on a weekly basis.

Lawyers can register for the EFT service via our website at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers > Online resources), by e-mail at helpdesk.finance@lss.bc.ca, or by calling the Finance Helpdesk at (604) 601-6111.

Tariff changes

Changes to criminal block fees

Effective October 3, 2006, LSS implemented changes to selected block fees for key non-trial services to better reflect the effort of counsel and the relative importance of the services, and to encourage early resolution where appropriate. The changes result in an overall increase of 5% in tariff spending, and include:

- increases to guilty plea block fees for Category I and III offences,
- increase to the sentencing block fee for Category III offences,
- increases to bail hearing block fees for all offence categories,
- increases to block fees for breaches of conditional sentences for all offence categories,
- increases to the arraignment court block fees for Category I and II offences,
- a reduction to the block fee for stay of proceedings for Category IV offences (these are quite rare on the block fee tariff and are typically dealt with as part of SCAP), and
- reductions to block fees for no charge sworn/represented diversions to recognize that previous rates were significantly higher than those for stays of proceedings.

The block fee increases apply to accounts submitted on or after October 3, 2006, so you should claim the new (higher) fee regardless of when you received your referral or provided the service. For those few items where block fees have been reduced, the reductions apply only to referrals issued on or after October 3, 2006, so you should claim the previous (higher) fee for referrals issued before that date.

Improvements to LSS family law services

LSS has adopted a new policy statement as its objective for family law services:

To help eligible people resolve their family law legal problems by focusing on the needs of children and families, encouraging the use of non-adversarial settlement processes, and supporting court processes to resolve disputes when non-adversarial approaches are not appropriate or effective.

To further this objective, LSS will launch several new family law initiatives that reflect a more discretionary approach to coverage decisions and emphasize consensual dispute resolution. The changes are based on the recent Evaluation of LSS Family Law Services and responses to the discussion paper issued in June 2006. The evaluation is now available on our website at www.lss.bc.ca (under > About LSS > Reports > Evaluations and Reports).

The new initiatives will take effect on November 1, 2006, and LSS will provide more details in an upcoming Notice to Counsel.

Lawyer satisfaction survey

LSS is preparing for the launch of its second lawyer satisfaction survey in January 2007. Your responses to our first survey in January 2004, along with our tariff review, encouraged us to implement a series of tariff improvements. We value your opinion of our performance over the last three years.

The survey will again be conducted via the Internet (we will send you an e-mail with a link to the survey). To ensure that we have your current information on file, please e-mail us at lawyersresources@lss.bc.ca and tell us:

- your name and LSS vendor #,
- the name of your law firm (if applicable), and
- whether you share a computer with someone else, and, if you do, whether you enter your own user ID.

If you do not have access to e-mail, please advise us by fax at (604) 601-6195 so we can make alternate arrangements for you to participate in the survey.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Janice Staryk at (604) 601-6148 or at janice.staryk@lss.bc.ca.