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### Tariff simplification

One of LSS' priorities is to streamline our administrative processes so that both LSS and the tariff bar can focus more resources and efforts on client services. Our first initiative is the change to the SCAP threshold, as announced in Notice to Counsel #71 (see below for background). The second initiative is to simplify the tariff.

Over the past 20 years, the tariff has become overwhelmingly complex for lawyers and increasingly expensive for LSS to administer. There are now almost 200 tariff items (most of which are rarely used) that result in 130,000 accounts annually. The tariff guide now exceeds 400 pages, compared to just 28 in 1981.

We are exploring a simplified model with a limited number of tariff items that represent all the work done for each stage of a case. Many Canadian and Commonwealth legal aid programs have already adopted a simplified tariff and found considerable advantages to this system.

The benefits for lawyers include greater clarity of the tariff and appropriate payment for services. For LSS, there will be greater cost certainty and a more flexible tariff that can easily respond to changes in practice or budget. A simplified tariff will also make it easier for both LSS and the bar to explain to clients the specific services included in a legal aid referral.

We have consulted with our tariff advisory committees and they have provided valuable feedback. In the coming months, we will consult more broadly with the legal aid bar. We anticipate implementing the Criminal, Family, and CFCSA simplified tariffs in spring/summer 2010. More information will be provided in a future *Legal Aid Fax*.

### NTC #71 — SCAP threshold increased from 10 to 20 half days for all criminal cases

As announced in Notice to Counsel #71, we are increasing the threshold for cases under the Strategic Case Assessment Program (SCAP) from 10 half days to 20, and making SCAP applicable to all cases over the 20-half-day threshold regardless of category.

The notice also includes transition provisions for pending SCAP requests.

LSS implemented SCAP in 2001, beginning with Category IV cases. SCAP assists us with predicting costs in lengthy criminal cases and ensures appropriate allocation of legal aid funding for those cases. In 2007, we expanded SCAP to Category I, II, and III cases where we determined the SCAP process better suited the needs of the case.

After a review of SCAP, we have determined that the process is not necessary in shorter cases, but that it should apply to all longer cases regardless of category. Changing the SCAP threshold streamlines the administrative process and allows both LSS and the tariff bar to focus resources on client services.

### Lawyer survey

In early January 2010, Synovate, Inc. will e-mail you a link to the online LSS Tariff Lawyer Satisfaction Survey. Synovate, Inc. is conducting the survey on our behalf. We value your input on our services and direction and encourage you to respond to the survey to let us know what you think of our performance over the last three years. We will compare the results of this survey to the feedback from our 2004 and 2007 surveys. A report on the survey results will be available in spring 2010. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Janice Staryk at 604-601-6148 or [janice.staryk@lss.bc.ca](mailto:janice.staryk@lss.bc.ca).

### December/January cheque run schedule

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

- **December 22, 2009** (moved up)
- **December 31, 2009** (cancelled)
- **January 7, 2010** (resume regular schedule)

### Tariff Services Department

We will have reduced staffing levels in our Tariff Accounts and Case Management sections during the holiday season, from **December 21, 2009** to **January 1, 2010**. We will be available for helpdesk calls or e-mails, and will continue processing accounts and authorization requests as quickly as possible; however, our reduced levels may impact our response times.