



Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

News Release

April 2, 2008

Legal aid continues to garner strong public support

Vancouver, BC — Support for legal aid in BC remains very high, according to the third annual public opinion poll conducted for the Legal Services Society by Ipsos Reid.

This year, once legal aid services were described to respondents, 93% said they support them, with 61% expressing strong support (up from 54% in 2006).

Interviewers told respondents that legal aid provides “low-income people with legal information, advice, and/or representation in court. This can include providing them with a self-help kit, giving them a few hours of legal advice or paying a lawyer to represent them in court for serious family, criminal, or immigration/refugee problems.”

“These results are particularly pleasing,” says Executive Director Mark Benton, “because one of our objectives has been to increase the level of strong support through various service initiatives and our awareness campaign.”

Significant, too, is the large percentage of respondents who identify providing legal aid as important to fairness in all aspects of the justice system, with 96% saying it is very or somewhat important for family court, 94% for criminal court, 93% for other civil legal proceedings, and 85% for immigration/refugee hearings.

“We’re also encouraged to learn that a growing number of people – 85% this year – report that they are aware of our services,” adds Benton.

As in previous years, just over half the respondents believe legal aid is inadequately funded, and three-quarters continue to agree with the statement that “governments should give funding for legal aid the same priority as they give to funding for other social services such as health care, education, welfare, and child protection.”

In each of the three public opinion polls conducted to date, fully 97% of respondents agree that everyone should have the right to access the justice system (with over 80% indicating strong agreement).

One of several surveys LSS uses to measure its performance, the poll was part of the monthly BC Reid Express provincial omnibus survey conducted March 4 to 10. Interviewers asked 730 people a series of 20 questions about legal aid. The margin of error is considered to be $\pm 3.6\%$ 19 times out of 20.

A more detailed summary of the poll results prepared by Ipsos Reid is posted on the [LSS website](#).

For further information, please see the attached [backgrounder](#) and/or contact:

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(for information on poll methodology)

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family, child protection, and criminal issues. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).

Legal information is available through Legal Information Outreach Worker (LIOW) services, LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Family Law in BC, LSS, and LawLINK websites. (See www.lss.bc.ca for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre** and **LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*

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