

December 20, 2012

As 2012 comes to an end, I would like to wish you and your organization happy holidays and also provide a glimpse of LSS's work in 2012.

Big moments

There were two notable events in BC legal aid. The first was in February when the Attorney General asked for LSS's advice on justice reform. The second was at the beginning of our fiscal year in April when we received the first installment of \$2.1 million in new funding for family law services. The fact that the government is seeking our input on building a better justice system and is increasing our funding, makes us optimistic for 2013.

Hard work

In 2012, LSS staff worked hard to help as many British Columbians as possible. Here is a statistical look at the past year's work:

- Criminal duty counsel client assists: 60,387
- Immigration duty counsel client assists: 1,211
- Family duty counsel and advice lawyer client assists: 21,473
- Brydges Line (phone services of people arrested, detained and under investigation) client assists: 21,663
- Family law telephone advice calls: 3,271
- Criminal representation: 18,505
- Family representation: 4,047
- Child protection representation: 2,162
- Immigration representation: 905
- 129,000 processed bills with an average turnaround of 5 days
- Distributed more than 190,000 legal information publications

Improvements to call centre

In November, the LSS intake department increased the number of intake workers in our call centre, resulting in shorter wait times. The average wait time for clients calling for legal aid from November 1 to December 14, 2012 was 2.5 minutes, compared to the average wait time of 4 minutes from November 1 to December 14, 2011.

Recognition

This past year, a number of legal aid lawyers were recognized for their dedicated work. Valerie Bonga of Penticton and Michael Newcombe of Kelowna were given the [LSS Chair's Award for Distinguished Service](#) for significant and sustained contribution to legal aid in BC, and [LSS board member Deanna Ludowicz](#) was recognized with the CBA's Legal Aid Leader award for spending her entire legal career helping clients in need. In addition, our longest serving employee, Rod Holloway, who has been with LSS and its predecessor, the Legal Aid Society, for 38 years, was awarded a QC by the Attorney General.

Development

LSS has been working with various groups around the province to advance legal aid. In November, we held a successful provincial advocate conference with more than 100 workers from family support, outreach, youth programs, mental health, and transition houses. In December, LSS and the RICHER Medical Legal Partnership Program co-hosted a workshop to deliver information about legal services in the downtown eastside as well as how legal-medical partnerships can address legal and health issues for families.

Looking forward

As we look back on 2012, we are also looking forward to 2013. Next year will see the expansion of e-tools for lawyers including the province-wide launch of a faster, more efficient electronic system to process disbursement requests and a portal for the management of large criminal cases. Early in the new year, we will report on our evaluation of the new simplified tariffs, offer a centralized helpdesk for lawyers for faster service, and conduct our fourth Lawyer Satisfaction survey.

On behalf of LSS staff and the board, I wish you a happy holidays and a Happy New Year.