



Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
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News Release

December 15, 2008

80 percent of low-income British Columbians face legal problems

VANCOUVER – More than 80 per cent of low-income British Columbians experienced a legal problem in the past three years that was serious and difficult to resolve, says a poll commissioned by the province's legal aid program.

Consumer, money, and housing issues topped the list of legal problems with employment and family relations following close behind.

"The high incidence of legal problems is troubling," said Mark Benton, QC, Executive Director of the Legal Services Society, the organization that provides legal aid in BC. "This survey, along with other research in Canada and abroad, shows that legal problems have a serious impact on a person's physical and emotional health which, in turn, has a significant impact on health care and social service programs."

Benton added that the incidence of legal problems among low-income people is not likely to decrease given the recent economic downturn.

"In times of economic hardship, it is particularly important that people have access to reliable information and advice so they can address their legal problems quickly and effectively," Benton explained. "Otherwise, their problems will quickly cascade into more serious issues that require other resources such as health care and social assistance."

Benton said the Legal Services Society commissioned the poll to "get a better understanding of the current legal needs of low-income people and to learn more about how best to meet those needs."

The Ipsos-Reid poll involved 1,189 online surveys of British Columbians 18 or older with a household income of less than \$50,000 a year. The results are considered accurate to within 2.8 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

[Survey results](#) are posted on the Legal Services Society's website.

The Legal Services Society is an independent, non-profit organization founded in 1979 to provide legal aid to people with low incomes in BC. The society provides legal information to anyone free of charge through its websites, publications and outreach workers; legal advice to financially eligible people through duty counsel at court houses and telephone services; and representation where appropriate through private lawyers. The society is funded primarily by the provincial government. It also receives generous support for many of its programs and services from the Law Foundation and Notary Foundation.

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