



# Legal Aid Alberta The Brief

Your source for information on IAA's innovative and cost effective services for Albertans in need

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

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## Award Recipients

Raj Sharma  
Calgary

Mona T. Duckett, QC  
Edmonton

Graham M. Johnson  
Fort McMurray

Angela L. Howey  
Grande Prairie

Claudia R. Connolly  
Lethbridge

Harry F. Wahl  
Medicine Hat

Kevin G. Schollie  
Red Deer

Kathleen D. Williams  
St. Paul

Miles A.M. Cymbaluk  
Wetaskiwin

Marvin J.H. Braun  
Whitecourt

Andrea Doyle  
Staff Lawyer  
(FLO Edmonton)

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## Access to Justice Awards 2009

### Celebration of Lawyers' Dedication A Province-Wide Success

Following last year's successful Lawyer Appreciation Day, Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) recently held Access to Justice Week 2009 to recognize lawyers who accept legal aid cases. Events occurred in LAA's 11 regions through the week of April 14-17 (with Peace River's event happening on April 24). Each of the regional celebrations included a presentation of the 2009 Access to Justice Award which honoured a roster lawyer for his/her individual contribution to the legal aid program. The Edmonton event also included the presentation of the Access to Justice Staff Lawyer Award. Among the guest around the province were: members of the Judiciary, past and present roster lawyers, elected officials and LAA staff members. Congratulations to all of the recipients and thank you to all who attended the events.

### Nominations & Recipient Selection:

In early March, a public call for nominations went out to stakeholders, lawyers, clients LAA staff and the general public. The nomination were collected and presented to the Selection Committee for review and decision on March 23. Thank you to all who nominated a lawyer (or lawyers) as we received numerous submissions.

### 2009 Selection Committee Members

Peter Michalyszyn, President - Law Society of AB

Diane Young, President - Canadian Bar Assoc. AB

Assistant Chief Judge Allan Lefever, Provincial Court of AB

Justice Neilson, Court of Queen's Bench

Kirk MacDonald, LAA Board Director

Simon Yu, past recipient (2008 Edmonton Region)

Jacqueline Schaffter, President and CEO of LAA

Deb Miller, Senior Counsel FLO

Greg Francis, Senior Counsel YCDO



Red Deer- Robert Oxman (2008 recipient) presents to Kevin Schollie.



St. Paul- LAA's Lillian Sparks presents to Kathleen D. Williams.

## Bail Representation Service

**LAA joins in the mission of providing access to the accused seeking release on bail**

The Minister of Justice, the Honourable Alison Redford, has directed that Crown Prosecutors be assigned to conduct bail hearings at the Hearing Offices in Edmonton and Calgary. Until this directive, the police performed the prosecutorial function before the Justice of the Peace and the accused was usually unrepresented. With the arrival of Crown Prosecutors in this court on a regular basis, the Provincial Court of Alberta has set the expectation that the accused will also have access to representation by a lawyer. As a result, Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) has been directed to provide duty counsel services that complement the level of service provided by the Crown Prosecutors' Office.



LAA has procured the services of four lawyers who, as of April 1, are providing duty counsel service at the Edmonton and Calgary Hearing Offices (Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.). The service is provided by videoconference and/or telephone from the Edmonton and Calgary Legal Aid offices and future plans include extending the hours of operation by year's end. Greg Francis, Senior Counsel at the Youth Criminal Defence Office (YCDO) is coordinating the implementation of this service. Prior to assuming his current position at YCDO, Mr. Francis was a Justice of the Peace in the Calgary Hearing Office for nine years and is enthusiastic to see LAA's new role in bail representation procedures.

LAA will closely monitor the operation and progress of this new service and perform evaluations as needed.

## Helping to Perpetuate the Profession

While University of Alberta law students have a fair amount of opportunities to gain experience in the criminal area of law there are few such opportunities available for family law experience. In an attempt to curb the lack of family law opportunities, and to attract more young lawyers into the family law profession, the Edmonton Family Law Office (FLO) has formed an exciting partnership with Student Legal Services (SLS) that provides law students the benefits of guidance from experienced family lawyers.

The partnership involves a two-year mentoring project in which FLO lawyers will advise, support and local law students with tasks such as reviewing call sheets and conducting Do-Your-Own-Divorce clinics (DYODs) which run four time per year. Participants in the DYOD clinic are instructed on how to prepare their own commencing documents and assisted by SLS student volunteers. The students review the completed documents and then a FLO lawyer, acting as an advising lawyer, steps in to perform a final inspection of the documents before they are filed. The project is headed up by Dawn Nelson and supported by the entire FLO Edmonton team.

SLS already uses the Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) Financial Eligibility Guidelines to determine who qualifies for SLS assistance; therefore, the project works as an extension of existing LAA services. With the building strength of this project family law students will be able to gain valuable experience from FLO mentors and will be encouraged to practice on the family law areas of law upon graduation.

► Each year, over 250 students from the University of Alberta Faculty of Law volunteer with SLS

## Making a Difference

### YCDO Lends a Hand to the Community

The social aspect of legal matters is undeniable. With this in mind, Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) has determined that being an active part of Albertan communities is a priority for the organization. One example of the social, community-based commitments that LAA participates in is exhibited by the Calgary Youth Criminal Defence Office's (YCDO) dedication to the Gear Up program. The program is a collaborative effort shared by the YCDO, Alex Youth Health Centre, Alberta Health Services, the City of Calgary and the Safe Haven Foundation (for homeless youth in the Calgary area) whose mandate is to "... give Calgary youth their future back, through the provision of a financial and support system that stands behind the organization's core values of long-term educational, individuality, respect and accountability." The Gear Up was formed from the realization that youth needed an event tailored to their specific needs that could help them get off the streets and back on track to a successful future. The Gear Up event provides street youth with supplies for winter, health services and direct one-on-one access to service providers.



The Youth Criminal Defence Office's Nicole Mizzi gives her time to help coordinate the annual event (a commitment that runs throughout the year) and is there on Gear Up day to make sure that the event is a success. Nicole is an ambassador helping to extend the helping hand that the YCDO has established through over 15 years of commitment to Alberta's youth. Legal Aid Alberta congratulates Nicole on her commitment and looks forward to future opportunities to contribute to Alberta communities.

## Duty Counsel Expansion Proves Worthwhile

As of Fall 2008, LAA expanded its Duty Counsel Program to include Child Welfare Docket Court. The preliminary period of the project, highlighted in the Fall 2008 issue of The Brief, was announced after a continued high demand in child welfare cases presented itself. The preliminary term of the Duty Counsel expansion has concluded and as of March 2, 2009 has been launched as a continuing program with counsel offering legal support to unrepresented persons.

To aid in the maintenance of the project, Janan Jarrah and Ruth Williams (both Staff Counsel with the Alberta Law Line) have adopted Duty Counsel roles. Both lawyers have demonstrated an enthusiasm for the project and will be sharing the responsibilities at Child Welfare Docket Court in Edmonton. Also, Rebecca Cuthbertson-Hulst, a roster lawyer, has been contracted until the end of May to work as duty counsel at Provincial Court Family Docket in Edmonton.



Family Duty Counsel services are offered in:

- Calgary (Provincial Court)
- Edmonton (Court of Queen's Bench and Provincial Court)

# Front of the Line

## Alberta Law Line Streamlines their Call-in Service

► The Alberta Law Line handled 11,415 cases from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008

The Alberta Law Line is a program of Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) that provides free legal information, referrals, and advice\* to Albertans over the phone. Law Line staff found that collecting the necessary personal and legal issues information from all callers was a time consuming action, so they decided to come up with a way to alleviate wait times by fast-tracking callers.



The result of their forward-thinking has led Law Line to the idea an online application. The Web Application, launching Summer 2009, will allow callers to fill out an easy and comprehensive form that, by way of an identification number that generates once the form is submitted and entered upon calling Law Line, bypasses the caller to the front of the phone cue. The Web Application promises to make calls more efficient for Law Line and more effective for callers. Law Line is pleased to offer their clientele this innovative service and will continue to build on the quality of the services provided to callers.

\*Legal advice is only available to callers who qualify based on LAA's financial eligibility guidelines the nature of their legal problem).



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Legal Aid in Alberta was officially established in July 1, 1970 by an agreement between the Law Society of Alberta and the provincial Attorney General to deal with both criminal and civil matters.

An independent organization incorporated under the Societies Act, Legal Aid Alberta receives the bulk of its funding from the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Justice.

Through eleven regional offices and nine program offices, our mission is to provide a continuum of innovative and cost effective legal services for people in need throughout Alberta.