

**For Immediate Release
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ALBERTANS SHOW OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR LEGAL AID

Edmonton, AB – A recent public opinion poll has revealed that there is widespread support for legal aid services in Alberta. An overwhelming 96% of Alberta residents polled support legal aid services, with a strong agreement that legal aid should be given the same funding priority as other social services.

“We are extremely pleased with the high level of support for legal aid,” says Nancy Brown Medwid, Executive Director of Legal Aid Alberta. “Legal Aid Alberta helps over 140,000 Albertans in need each year. This number represents some of the province’s poorest and most vulnerable people, including women and children fleeing from domestic violence and people involved in family law disputes. Although the face of legal aid is often lost among other social programs in our province, these results bring to the forefront just how much value Albertans place on an equally accessible justice system.”

While there is support for all legal aid civil and criminal law services, the highest level of support is for family law, with almost 70% of Albertans describing legal aid for family law as very important. Further, 65% of respondents agreed that legal aid should be given the same funding priority as other vital social services such as health care, education, welfare, and child protection.

“Albertans have spoken and their opinions clearly reflect our own firm belief that an effective and adequately funded legal aid system can help increase access to justice to those that need it most,” says Brown Medwid.

Legal Aid Alberta’s mission is to provide a continuum of innovative and cost effective legal services for people in need throughout Alberta and is committed to anticipating and identifying the unmet legal needs of low income Albertans, and developing programs and services to ensure those in need obtain equal access to the justice system.

The poll was conducted by Strategic Communications Inc. (Stratcom) Opinion poll results are based on a telephone survey conducted on 604 Alberta residents from October 23rd to 31st, 2006 using the random household selection method. The margin of error was +/- 4.0%, 19 times out of 20.

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For more information please contact:

Jennifer Fowler, Communications Director
Legal Aid Alberta
(780) 427-8742
jfowler@legalaid.ab.ca
www.legalaid.ab.ca