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**LEGAL AID ALBERTA INCREASES ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH
ESSENTIAL CHANGES TO CLIENT ELIGIBILITY**

EDMONTON, AB – September 25, 2008 – Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) is pleased to announce the launch of its new Net Income Financial Eligibility Guidelines (FEGs), which will increase access to legal aid coverage for more Albertans.

“Alberta’s thriving economy has resulted in increased wages—with that has come an increased cost of living. Changes to Legal Aid Alberta’s guidelines will enable more of the working poor to access essential legal services.” said Alison Redford, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. “We are seeing more unrepresented people in the courts and broadening legal aid financial guidelines will help to support people who need assistance in navigating the justice system.”

Currently, the FEGs are gross income-based, but the new guidelines, in addition to increasing the qualifying income levels, will focus on an applicant’s net income, allowing LAA to apply a principled approach to client eligibility.

“Legal Aid Alberta’s aim with our new guidelines is to assess our client’s true ability to pay for a lawyer. The key question is, ‘Can this person of limited means afford to hire a lawyer?’ Net income will allow us to truly assess our clients’ financial circumstances,” said Glenda Graham, Chair of the Board of Directors of Legal Aid Alberta. “Every person, regardless of their financial situation, has the right to equal access to the protection and benefits of the law. Changes to our guidelines will mean greater access to justice for an additional 6400 Albertans.”

The new guidelines are a part of Legal Aid Alberta’s overall mission to provide a range of innovative and cost effective legal services for people in need throughout Alberta.

For more information on Legal Aid Alberta, please visit www.legalaid.ab.ca.

About Legal Aid Alberta

Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) works to provide a continuum of innovative and cost effective legal services for people in need throughout Alberta. LAA was officially established on July 1, 1970 by an agreement between the Law Society of Alberta and the provincial Attorney General. For more information about Legal Aid Alberta and its many services please visit www.legalaid.ab.ca