



ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 22





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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The rate of change at Legal Aid Alberta since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic has been astounding. From quickly shifting to a work-from-home position to continuous innovations in protecting disadvantaged Albertans, the LAA team has proven itself to be nimble, collaborative and highly effective. In my first year as Board Chair, I've seen LAA's leadership response to challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic expand. For example, when its front-line lawyers noticed that some incarcerated people appearing at docket courts had not had a chance to phone LAA due to institutional COVID prevention measures, the entire organization responded by pulling together and developing an intake procedure to speed the applications of these individuals.

That's just one example. This year's Annual Report is filled with accounts of innovative problem solving in the service in disadvantaged Albertans and the judicial system as a whole.

The same is to be said of the LAA Board of Directors. Our Board team is dedicated to ensuring LAA is well supported for a changing future to serve clients and enhance justice system functioning.

To this end, governance renewal has been in full swing over the past year. This has included updating bylaws, development of a new board manual, and initiating new strategic planning and objectives.

LAA is concluding its governance renewal project which began with a 2020 third-party governance review. Based on that review, several recommendations including new governance documentation, updated bylaws and policies and the creation of a governance authority matrix are being implemented to enable optimum operation of LAA's Board of Directors.

In addition, the board will be working with senior executive and staff to finalize LAA's Strategic Plan.

Our board was once again able to operate effectively in a virtual environment, but we are aware of the many advantages and camaraderie that grows while working literally side by side and are looking forward to reconvening in in-person settings in the coming year.

Some of our board members stepped down and some terms ended. We are grateful for the contributions of former board members Deanna Steblyk and Christine Hutchinson. And we look forward to the contributions of new members recruited to the board under a revised recruitment plan.

RYAN CALLIOUX
*Chair, Board of Directors,
Legal Aid Alberta*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As Legal Aid Alberta front-line lawyers and support teams across the organization pressed on through the COVID-19 pandemic with empathy, knowledge and innovative solutions, the Board of Directors continued a campaign of renewal to support enduring, effective access to justice for Albertans in every corner of the province.

The board supports LAA's goal of providing legal services and expertise, providing access to justice and fairness for all Albertans. The Board of Directors works with LAA in serving the public good and remaining accountable to Albertans.

Direction and decisions of the Board of Directors and the strategic plan are implemented by the Executive Committee to support the legal aid business plan.

RYAN CALLIOUX, BOARD CHAIR

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2016

Called to the Alberta bar in 2002, Ryan is an Edmonton-area Indigenous Lawyer who has dedicated his professional legal career to helping families and children. Having practised family law for the past 20 years, he is an experienced litigator on family and child welfare cases and has advised government on risk management initiatives to reduce domestic violence and enhance legal services to protect children.

OWEN EDMONDSON

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2017

Retired after a 32-year career in finance and utility regulation, Owen serves on the boards of directors of a number of not-for-profit organizations. Currently Owen is the interim chair of the Safety Codes Council, chair of the Handling Commission Review Committee of the Beverage Container Management Board, finance committee member of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and a director of L'Arche Edmonton. Owen has a B.Sc. and an MBA from the University of Alberta and is a CPA, CGA.

BRAD PICKERING

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2021

Brad is a retired Government of Alberta deputy minister, having served 17 years in various senior leadership roles as deputy minister of Municipal Affairs, chief executive officer of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring and Reporting Agency, deputy minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, deputy solicitor general/ deputy minister of Public Security, and deputy minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Prior to joining the Government of Alberta, he spent 20 years in the municipal government sector.

KENT TESKEY, QC

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2021

Kent is a criminal lawyer at the firm of Pringle Chivers Sparks Teskey, practising across Western Canada at both the trial and appellate level. He is a past president of the Law Society of Alberta.

CATHERINE BRAEUER

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2021

Catherine is a CPA, CA whose career has focused on finance, technology and corporate governance consulting for a variety of organizations including publicly funded health care, education, children's aid and legal aid entities. She currently leads the Global Financial Reporting Transformation Team for Finning International.

NANCY PECK

Calgary, Alberta
Director since 2016

Nancy is chief financial officer of ATB Capital Markets Inc. She is a CPA, CGA with more than 30 years of financial experience and has completed The Director's Education Program with the Institute of Corporate Directors.

HILARY ROSE

Edmonton, Alberta
Director since 2016

Hilary chairs the audit committee of Legal Aid Alberta. She is a CPA, CA with broad experience in government, industry and academia. She has served on the boards of several not-for-profit organizations including Legal Aid Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Alberta Insurance Council. She is a governor of the International Development Research Centre (a federal Crown corporation) and a trustee of the National Film Board of Canada. Hilary is a member of the Institute of Corporate Directors. She holds a BA in economics and political science and certifications in internal audit, risk management and client server computing systems.

MICHAEL WAITE, QC

Calgary, Alberta
Director since 2018

Michael joined the Alberta bar in 1999. He practises health law, employment law, estate litigation and general commercial/civil litigation. Michael has served on non-profit boards for more than 20 years and has extensive board governance experience.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Driven by a fierce commitment to supporting disadvantaged Albertans, Legal Aid Alberta continued delivering uninterrupted service, responding with inventive thinking and bold actions to overcome every challenge the COVID-19 pandemic presented. We innovated. We strengthened and improved. We created new access to justice pathways by solving challenges —old and new—in concert with our justice system and community partners.

Change over the past two years has occurred at an incredible rate. Justice system advances that might have taken years are now embraced. What was once thought impossible is now routine.

Just consider a new service called Early Appearance Assistance that allows individuals facing charges to call LAA staff lawyers for advice during the 14 days prior to their first court appearance. We now see more effective first appearances, fewer court appearances overall, and a decrease in failure-to-appear charges.

Creative solutions continued when enhanced institutional COVID-19 procedures inadvertently restricted access to phones for people being held in custody. We devised a system in which our staff lawyers collected basic information from incarcerated people who weren't able to phone us, and forwarded it to our contact centre staff to begin their application for LAA support. In the first two months of this initiative, we received and processed approximately 900 such applications through this method alone and received wholehearted support from the judiciary.

We are now blending this program with a pilot project we created to support non-incarcerated people who are unable to connect with us by phone. The communications technology most of us carry around and take for granted is simply unavailable to many Albertans who need our support. We are improving access to justice for these people by enabling designates such as staff duty counsel or JP Bail lawyers—or trusted third parties—to submit a person's information to LAA to begin their application for legal support.

And with the creation of four new Drug Treatment Courts and one new Indigenous Court, LAA is providing experienced,

compassionate duty counsel services to these specialty courts, where teamwork, relationship-building and restorative justice come to the forefront.

LAA also made tremendous strides in organizational effectiveness and accountability:

- We introduced a new Roster Agreement that provides a clear framework for our working relationship with the private-practice lawyers we rely on across the province and updated policies on client eligibility, case management and roster and panel management.
- Albertans are receiving improved service with the introduction of upgraded telephone technology in our contact centre.
- We established three new panels of lawyers protecting youth in the criminal justice system, children in high-conflict parenting situations, and witnesses and complainants (especially complainants in sexual assault trials) who need immediate court representation.

We are continuing to adapt and improve our service, finding ways to reconnect and move forward. Virtual and remote communications are game changers, but we have gained a new appreciation for personal connections among colleagues in the workplace and with our clients and partners. We are gradually returning to offices and re-establishing collaborative bonds. We are building a culture of sharing and connectedness, re-evaluating how and where we work, and attracting exceptional talent to our centre of excellence.

We rely on one another's experiences and expertise and we thrive when working together.

LAA changed the justice landscape while working "Together, Apart" during the pandemic. And now, working "Together"—whatever shape that takes—we are poised to continue leading the way in delivering access to justice.

G. JOHN PANUSA
*President and CEO,
Legal Aid Alberta*



EXECUTIVE TEAM

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the fact that solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems are possible when justice system stakeholders work together towards shared goals.

The LAA executive team led our organization to a leadership role in responding to new challenges—and removing long-standing barriers to justice. The team led important improvements in organizational effectiveness and change to better serve

disadvantaged Albertans and to remain accountable to the public we serve.

LAA's executive team leads our operations, policies, plans and budgets in alignment with our strategic plan. Taking direction from the Board of Directors, this team ensures LAA is fulfilling its mission of supporting fairness in the justice system.



G. JOHN PANUSA
President and Chief Executive Officer

John is responsible for the overall operations of the organization and leads LAA's executive management team. He has overall responsibility for creating, planning, implementing and integrating the strategic direction of Legal Aid Alberta. He is responsible for co-ordination of the provincewide legal aid plan in accordance with the Governance Agreement. He is also LAA's liaison with the judiciary, the minister and Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, the Law Society of Alberta, the federal government, other legal aid plans in Canada, the legal community at large and the general public.



LORI HAUGHIAN
Vice-President, Justice Services

Lori is primarily responsible for providing executive oversight for Justice Services within Legal Aid Alberta. This includes client intake and assessment services, appointing, client recoveries and certificate and tariff administration. She also guides and oversees the day-to-day operations of the LAA staff lawyer functions encompassing client certificate files and Duty Counsel Services throughout the province.



DOUG INGERSOLL, B.Sc., LLB
General Counsel and Advisory Counsel Services

Doug oversees LAA processes, training and strategic initiatives to safeguard quality of services for clients. Together with his Advisory Counsel Services Team, he ensures that LAA conducts business to the highest ethical standards and ensures it aligns with best practices and eliminates or mitigates all legal, regulatory and commercial risks. This includes managing high-cost cases and client coverage appeals, providing legal advice to staff counsel on complex client matters, representing the interests of LAA or LAA clients at all levels of court, and advising senior management on internal legal matters.



STEVE BURFORD, CPA, CGA
Vice-President, Finance and Technology

Steve leads all Finance and Technology services within LAA and ensures our systems and infrastructure enable our front-line staff to deliver high-quality legal services to our clients. This includes preparing budgets, business plans and sustainability plans for the board of directors and LAA's funders. He oversees the Information Technology, Finance and Accounting, Business Solutions and Reporting, and the Purchasing and Facilities departments.



LAURIE WANG, BA, MBA (Cand.)
Executive Director, People, Culture and Communications

Laurie oversees the Communications and Public Relations, Culture, and Human Resources functions at Legal Aid Alberta. She is responsible for strategic oversight of LAA values, people, culture and brand – telling the LAA story, recruiting and retaining the best talent, and engaging teams and stakeholders.

EVERY DAY ACROSS THIS VAST PROVINCE, LAA ADVOCATES FOR PEOPLE'S RIGHTS. FROM URBAN CENTRES TO REMOTE COMMUNITIES, FROM DOWNTOWN TO SMALL TOWN, THOUSANDS OF DISADVANTAGED ALBERTANS ARE DEPENDING ON US.



ABOUT LEGAL AID ALBERTA

Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) is a not-for-profit organization that provides legal representation and support for Albertans facing legal issues.

A registered society incorporated under the provincial Societies Act, LAA is independent from government but accountable to Alberta's Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and to the Law Society of Alberta.

LAA provides legal services to clients in support of fairness in Alberta's justice system—services that help ensure Albertans in all circumstances understand and can defend their legal rights.

LAA operates on a hybrid service delivery model. LAA staff provide legal and other support services directly to Albertans, while the remaining services are provided by LAA roster lawyers. Members of the roster are independent Alberta lawyers who have registered with LAA to provide services on behalf of the organization.

Within its mandate, LAA is uniquely positioned to provide services that have a positive impact on the justice system and the lives of Albertans. This includes

services like duty counsel for all Albertans in courtrooms and elsewhere, services in support of emergency protection orders, services for Indigenous Albertans at the Siksika Nation, and support workers for youth and families in crisis.

When directed to do so by the courts, LAA also provides legal services on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General to those who would not normally qualify.

LAA strives to be an employer of choice and a centre of excellence where employees are, and are recognized to be, some of the top experts in their fields. We are committed to sharing knowledge within the legal community, working to support improvements to the Alberta judicial system.

Working with its funding partners, stakeholders and community, LAA provides targeted training for practising Alberta lawyers and the legal community on a range of topics, with the goal of better outcomes for the clients they represent.



PEOPLE WORKING HERE GENUINELY BELIEVE IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SOCIETY, AND THAT OPPORTUNITY ARISES EVERY DAY.

— ANDREW HOLKO, LAA STAFF DUTY COUNSEL



VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

The LAA vision statement focuses on tomorrow, on where we want to be, and on the direction our organization is headed. Our mission statement focuses on today, and on what we can do now to move toward our ideal future state.

VISION

An Alberta where everyone is able to understand and protect their legal rights.

MISSION

We provide legal services and expertise to individuals and the legal community to support fairness in the justice system.

VALUES

Our organization strives to always focus on what matters, and to stay true to our values in everything we do. These values are the underpinning of our organization, reflecting on what is truly important to us. They guide us in the decisions we make every day.

WE ARE ONE

We work together in a collaborative and supportive manner to deliver unwavering and innovative services to our clients as one unified organization.

WE ARE PROTECTORS

We serve Albertans, often the most vulnerable of us, and work tirelessly to protect their rights and to ensure a fair process.

WE ARE EXCEPTIONAL

We are experts at what we do and we continually strive for improvement.

WE ARE INDEPENDENT

We operate and provide legal counsel free from outside involvement.



OUR CLIENTS

At Legal Aid Alberta, we help some of Alberta's most disadvantaged citizens—many of whom are facing more dire circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some facts about the people we serve:

<\$10,000

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME

21%

HAVE NO INCOME

80%

OF LEGAL AID ALBERTA CERTIFICATES
ARE FOR CRIMINAL MATTERS

The primary source of funding comes from the Government of Alberta through the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. Funding from the Government of Canada is sent to the Government of Alberta and then distributed to Legal Aid Alberta through the budget process.

Nearly 80 per cent of LAA's budget is allocated to Charter of Rights and Freedoms matters and Duty Counsel Services integral to the functioning of the justice system.

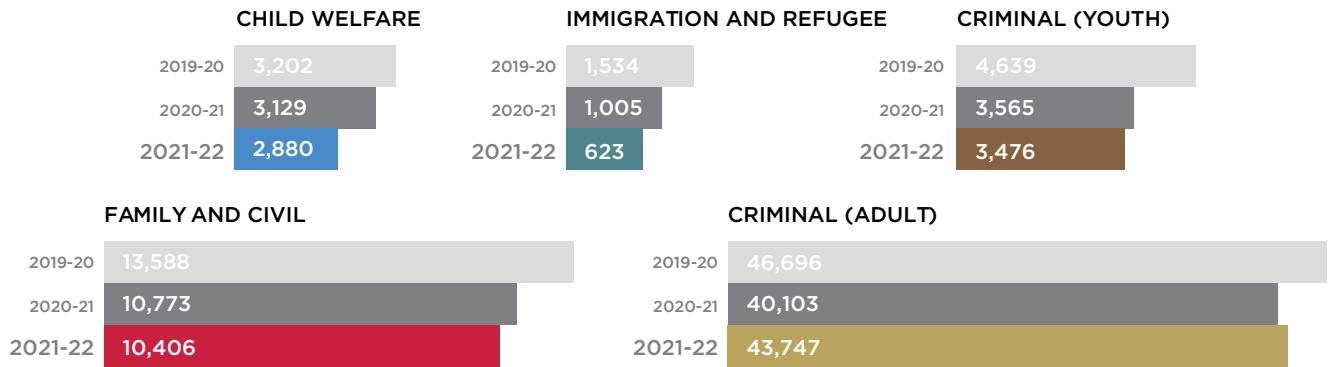
Our clients face a variety of unique circumstances and situations in addition to their extremely limited financial resources.

LEGAL AID ALBERTA HELPS:

- Clients with mental health and addictions issues
- Clients with high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores
- Clients who find themselves newly disadvantaged by sudden life events or changes
- Clients facing chronic homelessness
- Clients facing family breakdown and lack of family supports
- Indigenous clients affected by intergenerational trauma
- Youth involved in the justice system
- Clients with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- Clients with a history with child welfare, many of whom have been in care
- Victims of domestic violence
- Clients with previous involvement in the criminal justice system
- Clients who are incarcerated

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

ACTIVE REPRESENTATION CERTIFICATES



AVERAGE TIME FOR LAWYER TO ACCEPT OFFER (DAYS)*



*with increased choice of counsel requests, acceptance time increases

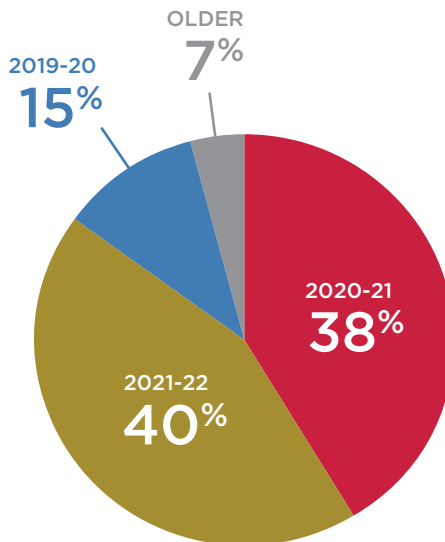
AVERAGE AGE OF CLIENTS



AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST



PERCENTAGE OF LAWYER INVOICING BY YEAR OF CERTIFICATE ISSUE



DISTINCT REPRESENTATION CLIENTS



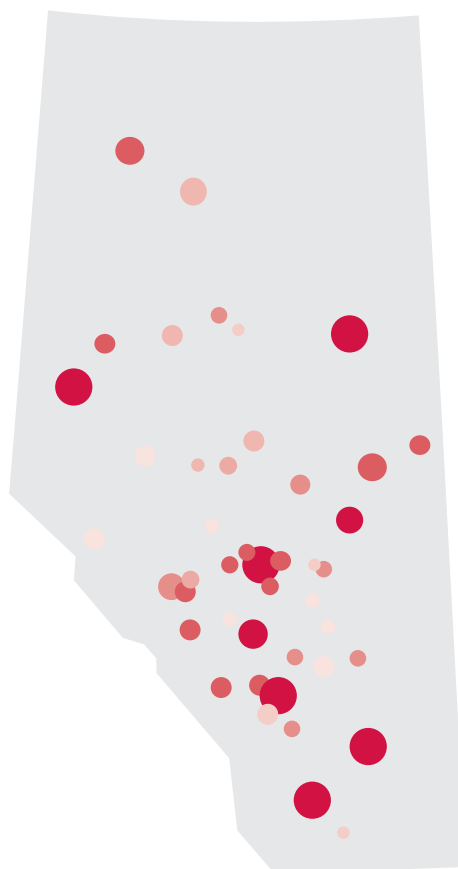


CERTIFICATES BY LOCATION

| LOCATION | CERTIFICATES |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Edmonton | 19,718 |
| Calgary | 16,367 |
| Red Deer | 2,800 |
| Lethbridge | 2,247 |
| Grande Prairie | 1,560 |
| Wetaskiwin | 1,416 |
| Medicine Hat | 1,270 |
| St. Paul | 1,074 |
| Fort McMurray | 1,007 |
| Stony Plain | 717 |
| High Prairie | 617 |
| Rocky Mountain House | 527 |
| Leduc | 509 |
| Peace River | 484 |
| Fort Saskatchewan | 476 |
| Cochrane | 421 |
| Cold Lake | 418 |
| Sherwood Park | 414 |
| Cardston | 376 |
| High Level | 363 |
| Airdrie | 349 |
| Lac La Biche | 337 |
| Bonnyville | 316 |
| Lloydminster | 299 |
| Vegreville | 294 |
| Didsbury | 292 |
| Whitecourt | 288 |
| Camrose | 285 |
| St. Albert | 273 |
| Wabasca-Desmarais | 266 |
| Drumheller | 257 |
| Strathmore | 253 |

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Morinville | 238 |
| Ponoka | 237 |
| Edson | 225 |
| Hinton | 223 |
| Pincher Creek | 215 |
| Drayton Valley | 211 |
| Okotoks | 209 |
| Slave Lake | 208 |
| Westlock | 199 |
| Valleyview | 193 |
| Fort Macleod | 183 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Brooks | 174 |
| Fort Vermilion | 172 |
| Stettler | 155 |
| Barrhead | 149 |
| Chateh | 143 |
| Athabasca | 138 |
| Wainwright | 132 |
| Red Earth Creek | 125 |
| Vermilion | 121 |
| Boyle | 121 |
| Canmore | 109 |
| Taber | 98 |
| Turner Valley | 85 |
| Breton | 83 |
| Fairview | 81 |
| Mayerthorpe | 79 |
| Evansburg | 65 |
| Grande Cache | 51 |
| Alexis First Nation | 48 |
| Killam | 47 |
| Coronation | 47 |
| Falher | 44 |
| Supreme Court of Canada | 43 |
| Fox Creek | 36 |
| Rimbey | 33 |
| Glenevis (heard in Mayerthorpe) | 21 |
| Jasper | 21 |
| Bowden Institution | 20 |
| Spruce Grove | 3 |
| Unknown | 1 |
| Grey Nuns Hospital | 1 |
| Red Deer Remand Centre | 1 |





2021-22 IN REVIEW: LEADING THROUGH A YEAR OF CHANGE

Legal Aid Alberta didn't simply respond to change—we drove it. We created new ways of protecting disadvantaged Albertans in every corner of the province, operating effectively and staying accountable.

WE ARE PROTECTORS

| SUPPORTING ALBERTA'S MOST COMPLEX CRIMINAL CLIENTS

A new Criminal Trial Group is combining the knowledge and experience of youth and adult criminal trial lawyers to improve access to justice for vulnerable Albertans. These lawyers are protecting our most complex clients—many of whom are struggling with mental health issues, housing and addictions that complicate their lives and make it difficult for them to deal with their legal matters. In many cases, these clients have changed lawyers multiple times. The CTG team takes a holistic approach to supporting these complex clients. At the end of its first year, the CTG had active cases for about 265 adults and 300 youth. These cases included trials and appeals, providing full service to clients.

| IMPROVING QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

LAA established three specialized panels of roster lawyers with interest, aptitude and experience representing (a) young people facing criminal charges, (b) children in high-conflict parenting matters, and (c) complainants and witnesses who have the right to respond to applications in criminal prosecutions. This last type of case usually involves sexual offence trials in which the complainant's medical or sexual history comes into question. Creation of these panels increases the quality of representation, allows a select group of staff and roster lawyers to gain more experience in a unique area of practice, and ensures disadvantaged Albertans are represented by lawyers with specialized training and experience.

| PREPARING CLIENTS FOR PRODUCTIVE FIRST COURT APPEARANCES

It's important to get legal advice to Albertans quickly. A new service called Early Appearance Assistance gives Albertans facing legal charges the ability to connect with Legal Aid Alberta duty counsel over the phone during the 14 days before their first appearance in court. This first point of contact helps callers understand what to expect at their first appearance, prepare for it, and therefore have a productive experience. The EAA is improving access to justice, decreasing the number of court appearances people make before their cases are resolved and reducing "churn" in the justice system.

| CHANGING LIVES IN ALBERTA'S GROWING DRUG TREATMENT COURTS

In the past year, Legal Aid Alberta has helped open new Drug Treatment Courts in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie, bringing a new collaborative approach to courts outside of major urban centres to help break the cycle of crime and addiction. Drug Treatment Courts have been operating in Edmonton and Calgary since 2005 and 2007 respectively. Legal Aid Alberta staff lawyers play a key role, representing people accepted into the Drug Treatment Courts across the province.

Participants are bound to an exhaustive list of rules, from frequent drug testing and curfew checks to reporting to probation officers, completing community service volunteer work, and attending detoxification and addictions treatment. Failing to follow rules can end up in short stays in prison, as a wake-up call. Participants can be removed from the program and sent back to regular courts.



Stop sending my client to jail and start helping her and restoring her to the community, where she can make meaningful contributions.

- Jessica Buffalo, LAA staff duty counsel, Calgary Indigenous Court

| SOLVING PROBLEMS AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Barriers to justice are falling, thanks to a new Access to Justice service enabling trusted partners or designates to help Albertans connect with Legal Aid Alberta.

The service blends two initiatives started early in 2022. The first one, called the Removing Barriers to Justice Pilot Project, arose from recommendations of a working group that met to find ways to help Albertans with extremely limited access to phones apply for support from LAA.

Their solution? To allow designates such as duty counsel and justice of the peace bail lawyers, or a trusted justice system partner such as Native Counselling Services of Alberta, to collect a person's basic information via a secure online form. From there, members of our contact centre team take the information and begin to process the application.

The second program began as a temporary measure in January. During a spike in COVID-19 cases at some remand centres, LAA lawyers noticed many people in custody showing up to court without having called LAA due to being in isolation. No access to a phone meant no way to apply for legal aid and get a lawyer. We were swift to act, implementing an on-the-spot process for the staff lawyer to fast-track the individual's information to an intake officer, minimizing delays in the application process.

In February and March, LAA front-line teams collaborated to help 897 people in custody apply for legal aid assistance. Hundreds of applications were started without delay and most were processed with lawyers appointed within 48 hours. The added benefit: our phone lines were freed up for others who needed to get through to us.

These new innovations are now permanent fixtures at LAA and are being combined into a single Access to Justice initiative.



You're saving lives and saving families, and giving people hope.

*- LAA Staff Immigration Lawyer
Ruth Williams*

| ARGUING FOR CLIENTS AT THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

LAA was granted intervener status in an important Supreme Court of Canada sentencing case dealing with sentencing "starting points." In Alberta, judges use set starting points as minimum sentences for serious crimes.

LAA argued that the problem with this one-size-fits-all approach is that one size doesn't fit everyone, and that starting points put unproven faith in the deterrent power of longer sentences.

LAA has in previous presentations to the SCC argued that judges should consider the convicted person's personal history and circumstances—that judges sentence people, not their actions.

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE

| DEFINING OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND ENSURING QUALITY REPRESENTATION

In a typical year, LAA's team of private-practice roster lawyers bill about \$70 million for representing clients on certificates. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability, we identified the need for a formal agreement with roster lawyers as a strategic priority. Following consultations with legal profession stakeholders, we created a Roster Agreement that spells out key rules and helps to eliminate uncertainties about a roster lawyer's legal relationship with LAA. More than 90 per cent of existing roster signed the agreement and with the addition of new signatories LAA has a team of nearly 1,200 quality roster lawyers.

| COMMUNICATING AND CLARIFYING POLICIES

Roster lawyers are our most important partners in protecting disadvantaged Albertans. Our relationship deserves clear, fair and accessible policies. This year LAA embarked on a project to clarify and update some long-standing policies. These updates were made in consultation with roster lawyers and touched on client eligibility, case management and roster and panel management. These policies are one important way we translate the high-level expectations found in our Governance Agreement, Rules and Tariffs into specific practices. These updates are making our policies more transparent and understandable.

| CLICKING FOR ANSWERS HELPS REDUCE CALL VOLUME

A new online Help Centre has been added to the LAA website, improving services to clients, supporting agencies and roster lawyers. The Help Centre speeds service by providing answers at the click of a mouse. The centre covers everything from financial eligibility guidelines to selecting a lawyer and services for lawyers.

| RESPONDING TO CLIENT CONCERNS

Beginning this year, LAA formalized a process to evaluate and respond to client concerns and ensure that lessons learned from those concerns result in business improvements.

We established pathways, timelines and deadlines to ensure complaints are responded to and resolved in a timely manner. These concerns generally fall into three areas: complaints about legal services received; complaints about a roster lawyer's billing; and third-party complaints about LAA clients who may not be financially eligible to receive services.

The impact has been impressive. From Jan. 1 to Nov. 30, 2021, we received 449 client concerns—228 were resolved the day they were received. The average processing time of a client concern from receipt to resolution in 2021 was 5.3 days.

| IMPROVING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

A new Human Capital Management system has been implemented. Dayforce is a comprehensive, modern HCM cloud-based platform for managing the entire employee life cycle. LAA transitioned to the new platform in early November, rolling out the payroll, benefits and self-service modules. These modules provide better service when it comes to managing personal information, payroll, time off and time entry.

| PLANNING PROVINCEWIDE COURT APPEARANCES

Schedules for duty counsel lawyers working across Alberta became available in one easy-to-access location. LAA's new centralized duty counsel scheduling system is called Shiftboard and is accessible online. Shiftboard replaces a manual process involving a lot of back-and-forth between a lot of people. Frequent emails and phone calls between staff and roster lawyers and scheduling staff were time-consuming.

With central scheduling, LAA scheduling staff can enter duty counsel shifts for all courtrooms in Alberta directly into the Shiftboard scheduling system. Lawyers can access the system to enter availability or to make changes. No more long email threads or phone calls are needed.



I am especially impressed with the Legal Aid Alberta team's fierce dedication to supporting Albertans.

- LAA Board Chair Ryan Callioux

| STREAMLINING CONTACT CENTRE CALLS

Notable service improvements have resulted from a new Interactive Voice Response system to help prioritize and direct callers and from migrating our telephone systems to a new TELUS platform.

The IVR system interacts with our callers through a recorded message and callers respond by pressing a number for an option connecting them to a team member. Calls are prioritized for people in custody, people under the age of 18 and those making a new application or calling for Early Appearance Assistance. We have included messaging while callers are on hold to provide them with the information needed to decide whether to stay on hold or speak to a team member at all.

| STRENGTHENING OUR LINES OF COMMUNICATION

A new Telus platform at LAA locations across the province is improving the client experience with technology that avoids phone system shutdowns and reduces dropped calls. Telus is a best-in-class service provider that now manages the back end of our technology platform for the LAA Contact Centre.



For me it has always been about helping our clients. No matter what your position is within LAA, everyone has a vital part to play in providing the best service we can to our clients.

- Gavin Crawley, LAA Operations Business Partner

WE ARE LEADERS

| CONFRONTING THE PAST, COMMITTING TO RECONCILIATION

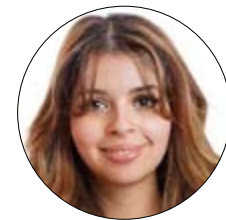
In recognition of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 92, LAA continues to improve Indigenous cultural awareness training for our staff. We're proud to have developed our own in-house training with Jessica Buffalo, a Calgary Indigenous Court staff duty counsel, and Stephen Shirt, an Indigenous Courthouse Navigator and Assessment Officer. Among other topics, the program covers the effects of colonization, residential schools, the '60s Scoop and the continuing effects these are having on Indigenous people. This training helps all LAA team members learn more about our clients and our history and brings us together to better serve Albertans. All LAA teams are taking this training, and it will be included in the introduction of new team members to LAA. More than 200 LAA team members have attended the training.

| BUILDING A PATH TO BETTER REPRESENTATION FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

LAA's Indigenous Action Plan was established early in the pandemic. In pursuing ways to better understand and serve Indigenous clients, we submitted in December 2021 a 26-page brief in response to a request from the Provincial Court of Alberta to help inform its Indigenous strategy. Our submission, which included a copy of our own Indigenous strategy, touched on everything from judicial education and greater scrutiny of child welfare apprehensions of Indigenous children in compliance with Bill C-92, to a commitment to lifelong continuous learning in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and to understanding and embracing Indigenous names and symbols.

With the establishment of the LAA Reconciliation and Access Action Circle, we have created a broad-based set of goals that includes:

- Establishing an Indigenous Law Panel of qualified Indigenous and non-Indigenous lawyers who are experienced and focused on the unique circumstances, history and experiences of Indigenous people, and deliver exceptional legal representation.
- Exploring the possibility of a pilot partnership to work with First Nations facing child welfare issues or considering their own child welfare legislation.
- Holding ourselves accountable to a pledge of service to Indigenous clients and stakeholders.



You're serving people who society tends to forget. It's very rewarding.

- Serena Eshaghurshan, articling student

| DUTY COUNSEL DAY: LEADING THE WAY FOR NATIONAL RECOGNITION

LAA led a national initiative recognizing and raising awareness of duty counsel, in partnership with legal aid plans from every province and territory. Duty counsel are the backbone of our legal system. They are the legal aid lawyers who give free, on-the-spot legal advice in family, criminal and immigration cases for people living in Canada.

A live web presentation hosted Oct. 27 by Hon. Adrienne Clarkson, former governor general of Canada, featured appearances by dignitaries and national legal leaders including Supreme Court of Canada Chief Justice Richard Wagner, Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Senator, Alberta; Association of Legal Aid Plans of Canada Chair Karen Wilford and Canadian Bar Association President Stephen Rotstein.

The [Duty Counsel Day](#) project logged more than 13,000 visits to the [knowdutycounsel.ca](#) website, had 380 newsletter subscriptions, earned media coverage with a reach of over three million and saw seven landmarks—including Niagara Falls and the CN Tower—lit up in red and white in recognition of duty counsel lawyers and access to justice.

| MENTORING AND INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Articling students benefit from the experience our team has across a spectrum of legal areas. We believe in supporting our profession by guiding the next generation of lawyers in the earliest stage of their careers. Additionally, LAA helps mentor law students by providing field placement experiences during their university education.

| SHARING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lawyers in private practice are unable to focus their time and energy on specific areas of law to the same extent as LAA staff lawyers. LAA staff lawyers have years of experience and a depth of legal knowledge in their field and are happy to share their knowledge.

Combined attendance was in the thousands as LAA produced several professional development webinars for LAA staff and roster lawyers on youth criminal justice, child welfare, and immigration and refugee law.

LAA also hosted public webinars on Indigenous Courts and Restorative Justice, and the importance of cultural impact assessments on sentencing of African Canadians. The webinars were attended by more than 1,000 participants.



PROTECTING ALBERTANS

Legal Aid Alberta improves the lives of all Albertans by helping the most vulnerable among us. As public health measures to fight COVID-19 shifted, LAA was a constant. By focusing on duty counsel, immigration, child welfare, domestic violence, child representation, high-conflict clients, and adult and youth criminal matters, we are fulfilling a critical function and supporting fairness in the judicial system.

EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDERS

Family violence is an unfortunate reality for many Albertans. Our Emergency Protection Order (EPO) program helps victims of family violence protect themselves against an abuser. Our EPO lawyers responded to increasing demand as the impact of the pandemic grew, appearing in person and in virtual settings to protect vulnerable Albertans. LAA EPO duty counsel lawyers help claimants better understand their legal rights through the process of obtaining and confirming EPOs. Through the program, claimants are provided with information about the court system and their options, referrals to other support organizations, and a lawyer to appear in court to get the order. This service provides immediate protection from family violence and is a critical tool to keep Albertans safe. There is no cost to access this service and there are no financial eligibility requirements—it is available to all Albertans.

QUEEN'S BENCH EPO FILES OPENED



JUSTICE OF THE PEACE BAIL

Many Albertans are at a disadvantage if they are arrested. They can be too frightened, confused or overwhelmed to exercise their rights or make informed decisions. Without immediate information and advice from experienced defence counsel, an arrested person has limited access to justice and may inadvertently forfeit his or her fundamental rights. For clients, the fear of remaining in custody—potentially leading to life-altering circumstances—was compounded by the pressures of the pandemic. One right that might be inadvertently forfeited is the right to a release hearing within 24 hours, which may be essential to the person's staying employed or being home for children. LAA's Justice of the Peace (JP) bail duty counsel lawyers are available from 8 a.m. to midnight, 365 days per year, to inform, advise, and even represent arrested people in official court bail hearings, all by telephone. Launched in mid-2018, LAA's JP bail duty counsel section works collaboratively with the courts and Alberta Justice to make prompt and effective access to justice a reality for all Albertans, from their first point of contact with the justice system.

JP BAIL HEARINGS



DUTY COUNSEL

Our duty counsel lawyers are continuing to serve clients and the courts in an uncertain pandemic landscape of changing public health measures, including court closures. Duty counsel is an integral part of our justice system and helps the court system proceed as efficiently as possible. Duty counsel lawyers provide immediate legal information, advice and assistance in courtrooms across the province to people who attend court without a lawyer. Often, they speak on an individual's behalf in court. Their work focuses on helping unrepresented individuals navigate the court process and ensures that all Albertans understand their rights and can exercise them meaningfully. This service is free and available to all Albertans appearing in court regardless of their income. LAA assigns duty counsel in docket courts in all Alberta criminal courts (adult and youth), and at institutional hearings, applications for confirmation of Emergency Protection Orders, mental health review panels, and therapeutic courts. Additionally, LAA provides duty counsel services for family matters being heard in provincial court and Court of Queen's Bench.

ISSUED CERTIFICATES

| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| DUTY COUNSEL (Scheduled Dates) | 10,772 | 10,240 | 15,218 |

AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST

| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| DUTY COUNSEL | \$754 | \$636 | \$697 |

CRIMINAL ADULT

Access to justice is crucial to a fair and free democracy. In the face of the pandemic, with rising health risks and changing regulations, our lawyers are continuing to provide the best legal support on the front lines of the justice system. In Alberta's justice system, meaningful access to justice usually requires a lawyer who understands and has experience in the area of law at hand. An unfortunate reality is that many people charged with criminal offences cannot privately retain counsel to defend themselves. A significant part of the work LAA does is related to adult criminal matters. Our lawyers, both staff and roster, work to provide access to justice to Albertans facing the very serious consequences of imprisonment, loss of livelihood, or removal from Canada. A big part of that work is to ensure that clients' rights are respected, and that the justice system is running fairly and in accordance with its own rules and defining principles. When Albertans are in the frightening and vulnerable situation of facing criminal allegations, LAA's role is to give them the information, advice and representation they need.

ISSUED CERTIFICATES

| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| LEVEL 1 | 20,626 | 13,444 | 16,019 |
| LEVEL 2/2.5 | 7,167 | 6,741 | 7,783 |
| LEVEL 3 | 211 | 216 | 238 |
| OTHER | 537 | 422 | 474 |

AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST

| LEVEL OF CERTIFICATE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| LEVEL 1 | \$1,152 | \$1,074 | \$1,050 |
| LEVEL 2/2.5 | \$2,586 | \$2,354 | \$2,340 |
| LEVEL 3 | \$21,685 | \$17,834 | \$18,846 |
| OTHER | \$521 | \$723 | \$667 |

CRIMINAL YOUTH

The Youth Criminal Justice Act sets out Canada's policy for youth criminal justice. This includes recognition that young people have diminished moral blameworthiness and the right to enhanced procedural protection in a system separate from the adult criminal system. The act also enshrines the right of all persons aged between 12 and 17 years charged with a criminal offence to have representation by a legal aid lawyer. LAA's dedicated team of lawyers specializing in youth matters continued providing in-person legal representation to youth across Alberta whenever safe to do so during the pandemic, to ensure prompt resolution of cases. Recognizing that non-legal life issues are often part of what leads young people to be charged with offences, LAA also helps guide youth clients to supports that can help them identify and deal with such issues, which can often help improve outcomes in court.

| ISSUED CERTIFICATES | | | | AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST | | | |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | LEVEL OF CERTIFICATE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
| LEVEL 1 | 1,910 | 1,028 | 1,011 | LEVEL 1 | \$853 | \$817 | \$800 |
| LEVEL 2/2.5 | 801 | 600 | 716 | LEVEL 2/2.5 | \$1,738 | \$1,772 | \$1,943 |
| LEVEL 3 | 6 | 4 | 6 | LEVEL 3 | \$6,231 | \$24,092 | \$23,538 |
| OTHER | 2 | 6 | 4 | OTHER | \$1,247 | \$693 | \$422 |

FAMILY AND CIVIL, AND CHILD WELFARE

LAA helps Albertans dealing with family law and child welfare matters by advising and guiding them through the legal system and representing them in court actions. LAA helps eligible Albertans with client protection, child welfare, representation of children, parental custody, access and parenting orders, and child and spousal support. When a vulnerable Albertan is involved with legal issues due to family breakdown, LAA can often help protect and exercise that person's rights. Public health orders limiting occupancy in courtrooms provide relief to LAA family law clients, particularly victims of family violence, whose lawyer appears on their behalf. LAA's role is to help disadvantaged and vulnerable Albertans with legal issues, which includes limited matters related to civil law. In Alberta, a disabled or incapacitated adult can have another adult appointed as his or her guardian or trustee, to help the person with essential life decisions and functions. If a person is subject to an order like this and disagrees with the terms, LAA can help them through the court process, to ensure it proceeds fairly and equitably.

| ISSUED CERTIFICATES | | | | AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST | | | |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2018-19 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
| CHILD WELFARE | 1,928 | 1,487 | 1,355 | CHILD WELFARE | \$3,451 | \$3,346 | \$3,343 |
| FAMILY & CIVIL | 5,741 | 3,006 | 4,065 | FAMILY & CIVIL | \$3,391 | \$3,902 | \$3,378 |

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE

Support for immigrants and refugees is an important part of the work LAA does to support the most vulnerable. Many of Alberta's residents came here from other countries, often to improve their lives, better provide for their families, or seek refuge from violence and persecution. Immigrants who are physically resident in Alberta sometimes require assistance with immigration issues or refugee claims. To help ensure that these legal processes unfold fairly and according to law, LAA helps newcomers and non-citizens with legal actions such as refugee claims, judicial reviews of refugee claims, detention reviews, and appeals, among others. Public health restrictions on personal appearances led to the introduction of virtual hearings. LAA immigration lawyers embraced this shift to help lead clients to move their cases forward.

| ISSUED CERTIFICATES | | | | AVERAGE ROSTER CERTIFICATE COST | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | CERTIFICATE TYPE | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
| IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE | 1,137 | 328 | 321 | IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE | \$1,348 | \$1,675 | \$1,508 |



ON THE FRONT LINES

Legal Aid Alberta lawyers are a constant, stable presence in Alberta's specialized courts and trusted guides who lead victims of domestic violence to safety through legal action.

DRUG TREATMENT COURT: IT'S HARDER THAN GOING TO JAIL

Legal Aid Alberta has helped open new Drug Treatment Courts in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie, bringing a new collaborative approach to courts in smaller cities to help break the cycle of crime and addiction.

"The moral to the story of Drug Treatment Court is that it's never too late for redemption. It's never too late to make transformative changes in your life," said Brett Carlson, a Legal Aid Alberta staff duty counsel lawyer who represents participants at the Lethbridge Drug Treatment Court. "All it takes is an opportunity."

Drug Treatment Courts have been operating in Edmonton and Calgary since 2005 and 2007 respectively. Legal Aid Alberta staff lawyers play a key role, representing clients accepted into the programs across the province.

In Medicine Hat, LAA staff duty counsel lawyer Bradley Bellmore says that in less than a year since the Drug Treatment Court began operating, he has seen remarkable changes in clients.

"You see families starting to come together again. People are seeing their kids—they're starting to parent again," said Bellmore, who describes addiction in the close-knit southern Alberta community as an epidemic.

"I look at the obituaries and see the names of former clients who have all had addictions," he said.

"It's harder than going to jail ... they end up doing the very hard work of looking inside themselves and making monumental changes in their lives."

The Drug Treatment Court programs are rigorous. Before being accepted, applicants are required to sit in on drug court sessions so they can make an informed choice about applying to the program. The programs accept

people whose non-violent criminal acts are intertwined with addiction, and who are facing at least one year in jail. Participants plead guilty to charges and work through the program for up to two years.

Alberta's Drug Treatment Court programs have a high record of success. As of 2018, more than 70 per cent of graduates from the Edmonton and Calgary programs alone have made radical changes to their lives and have had no new criminal convictions since completing their programs.

"We take people who have been committing crime daily for years and we get them to a point where they are contributing members of society."

Participants are bound to an exhaustive list of rules, from frequent drug testing and curfew checks to reporting to probation officers, completing community service volunteer work, and attending detoxification and addictions treatment. Failure to follow rules can result in short stays in prison, as a wake-up call. Participants can be removed from the program and sent back to regular courts.

"It's harder than going to jail," says Sonia Haer, a Legal Aid Alberta staff duty counsel lawyer who represents clients in Edmonton's Drug Treatment Court. "People say they applied to Drug Treatment Court because they didn't want to go to jail, but they end up doing the very hard work of looking inside themselves and making monumental changes in their lives."

"Some of our clients are 40 years old and have never had a job," said Stephen Jenuth, an LAA staff duty counsel lawyer working in Calgary's Drug Treatment Court. "We take people who have been committing crime daily for years and we get them to a point where they are contributing members of society. That is the sort of change we've seen in people's lives."

TAKING ON ALBERTA'S MOST COMPLEX CLIENT CASES

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL AND LEGAL COUNSEL NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT THEIR PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE.

A Legal Aid Alberta Criminal Trial Group marking its first year of operations has been in court defending youth and adults who have changed lawyers multiple times and are facing extraordinarily challenging personal issues such as mental health, addiction, and housing.

"It's not always the complexity of the legal matter itself that is challenging. Sometimes it's the client whose personal circumstances are complex, and the legal and personal issues kind of go hand in hand," said Sarah Lanceley, an LAA lawyer and one of two Legal Services Managers leading the CTG.

Everyone has the right to a fair trial and legal counsel no matter how difficult their personal circumstances may be. The CTG is focusing on challenging clients who demand more time and resources from the courts and their lawyers.

"We have clients who will send you a two-page email three or four times a day and that is a lot of information and a lot of work to maintain that client confidence and make sure the case is eventually concluded," Lanceley said.

Not all lawyers are willing or able to meet the needs of these clients so, in addition to facing criminal charges, they have the disadvantage of having a string of failed interactions with lawyers. This is where the CTG comes in.

CTG team members "are putting in more time and making substantial effort" to make sure clients' matters are resolved.

In our democratic society, everyone has the right to a fair trial and legal counsel no matter how difficult their personal circumstances may be. Without the CTG more of these clients' cases would drag on, clogging the courts.

In its first year of operations, the CTG reviewed files for approximately 425 adults and 485 youth and have active cases for about 265 adults and 300 youth.

Holistic approach to solving legal problems
The CTG has resources to help clients struggling with other issues such as addictions, housing, or mental health.

"LAA has a lot of great connections with stakeholders and social service agencies that are there to get our clients the help they need as soon as they can get it," said Inayat Jetha, a lawyer and legal services manager for the Calgary section of the CTG.

"Our clients want their legal issues to be dealt with, and when they can address other challenges they are experiencing, everything starts to come together."

The impact of the CTG is faster resolution of matters for clients, reduced churn in the adult and youth criminal justice systems, and improved career opportunities and satisfaction with LAA—advancing our ability to hire and promote lawyers interested in handling full-spectrum adult and youth criminal cases, from start to finish, including appeals.

INDIGENOUS COURT: FACING TRAUMAS, BREAKING PATTERNS

When the discovery of a mass grave of 215 children was made at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School at Kamloops, B.C., Jessica Buffalo was shaken deeply.

A Cree from the Samson Cree Nation and a survivor of the intergenerational harm inflicted by the Indian school system and other colonization injustices, Buffalo is an LAA staff duty counsel lawyer in the Calgary Indigenous Court. Speaking to a news reporter just days after the tragic discovery, she talked about the importance of Indigenous Courts and restorative justice.

“This week the remains of 215 Indigenous children were found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and this is why we act,” she said. “This is why specialized courts like the Calgary Indigenous Court exist: because a lot of those children did come home from those Indian residential schools, and with them they brought trauma that led to generations upon generations (of trauma) and we are finding there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system – these courts help address that.”

A Government of Canada study reports that although Indigenous adults represent only about three per cent of the adult population in Canada, they account for 26 per cent of inmates in provincial and territorial jails. Among Indigenous women, that figure rises to 38 per cent.

Buffalo and her colleagues hosted a free public webinar on Indigenous Courts and restorative justice on June 24, 2021 to counteract myths and shed light on the way this legal innovation delivers equity and fairness to Indigenous people.

“Indigenous Court is not a get-out-of-jail card. People have to be prepared to do the hard work of facing their traumas, and that in itself can be traumatic. Some people just aren’t ready.”

Indigenous Court is a specialized court for Indigenous people that focuses on healing through restorative justice. The courts are enshrined in the Criminal Code of Canada, meeting Truth and Reconciliation

recommendations. People identifying as First Nations, Métis or Inuit who are charged with a crime can choose to attend Indigenous Court.

Early in 2022, the Edmonton Indigenous Court began operations. LAA provides staff duty counsel to serve clients.

Addressing issues that lead clients to be in conflict with the law is challenging.

“Indigenous Court is not a get-out-of-jail card,” Buffalo said. “People have to be prepared to do the hard work of facing their traumas, and that in itself can be traumatic. Some people just aren’t ready. You must want to heal, be ready to change your life. This is not an easy feat and it doesn’t happen overnight.”

Indigenous Courts address an enduring mistrust of the justice system.

“Stop sending my client to jail and start helping her and restoring her to the community, where she can make meaningful contributions.”

One example of that mistrust is a client of Buffalo’s who had been in and out of custody since the age of 12 and wanted to plead guilty to a crime even though she didn’t commit it.

By helping clients like this address the factors that brought them to court in the first place, such as trauma, addiction and poverty, and by considering alternatives to incarceration, Indigenous Courts can reduce recidivism and address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Canadian prisons.

“Stop sending my client to jail and start helping her and restoring her to the community, where she can make meaningful contributions,” Buffalo said.

[Indigenous People and the Law: A Guide to Restorative Justice and Indigenous Courts](#) is available for viewing online.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PROTECTING VICTIMS

Every day, Legal Aid Alberta helps Albertans facing family violence. It does this using Emergency Protection Orders—a legal tool that provides protection from an abusive family member, prevents an abuser from coming near the victim and gives police the authority to remove the abuser from the home.

LAA provides EPO services free to all Albertans, regardless of their financial situation. But it is disconcerting to note that applications for EPOs have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018-19, LAA saw an increase of less than one per cent in EPO applications; between 2019 and 2020, there was a nine per cent increase, bringing the total number of EPO applications to more than 2,100.

“It appears that situations where there is family violence in the home have been exacerbated as people have been working less or working at home or are experiencing economic hardships,” says Christina Riddoch, an LAA staff family lawyer.

“Family violence service workers are talking about a ‘shadow pandemic’ of family violence that is being unreported because victims are now also fearful of contracting COVID-19 and are staying in that dangerous environment.”

Being cooped up with an abusive family member can take its toll. While this is reflected in increasing numbers of EPO applications, Riddoch and her colleagues are also concerned about what isn’t being reported.

“Family violence service workers are talking about a ‘shadow pandemic’ of family violence that is being unreported because victims are now also fearful of contracting COVID-19 and are staying in that dangerous environment—they are afraid of leaving the home,” she said. “And we are certainly aware of those concerns.”

LAA helps combat family violence in other ways. Knowledge sharing is essential for preventing family violence and supporting victims, and LAA staff lawyers

are in the spotlight at public events, helping spread the word of the work LAA is doing and how EPOs protect victims.

In their role as EPO staff duty counsel lawyers, Gwen May and Julia McGraw help victims by advising them of their legal options and representing them in court during the EPO application process.



I spend most of my days in the courtroom helping vulnerable Albertans during their darkest times.

- Guillaume Fogarty-Greenshaw, student at law

May and McGraw spoke about EPOs at Domestic Violence and the Law: Panel of Resources. This virtual law panel, hosted by the Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta, covered the laws and legal services related to domestic violence in Alberta.

May hosted two virtual training sessions for RCMP front-line staff in November. She has seen an increase in interest from police for further education about EPOs.

LAA also had a strong presence at the Diverse Voices Conference, the largest annual family violence conference in Western Canada. In fact, LAA family lawyer Stephanie Ma was one of the co-chairs who helped organize the event.



IN CASES OF LIFE OR DEATH, LEGAL AID ALBERTA GUIDES REFUGEES TO SAFETY IN CANADA

“YOU’RE SAVING LIVES AND SAVING FAMILIES, AND GIVING PEOPLE HOPE.”

Political debate and commentary on social media is often highly charged. In our democracy we value our right to speak critically of governments, without recrimination. That’s not the case everywhere.

For Muhanad Shaukat, speaking out against the military regime in Sudan ended with death threats from the government he’d criticized on social media.

“Most of my friends who were active on social media there were arrested by General Hemeti and his military,” he said, adding that some of them haven’t been seen since their arrest.

“I was advised that if I returned to Sudan—I would be arrested and executed. My friends have told me to stay away.”

When he was a child, Muhanad’s parents, hoping for a better life for their family, travelled to Oman. Muhanad grew up there and attended university in India.

Through the years, the family’s connections to Sudan remained strong. They visited regularly.

But after the government was overthrown by the military in 2018, returning to Sudan did not seem wise. Like many of his friends, Muhanad took to social media and shared photos of protests and strong criticism of the military leaders, who ignored calls for civilian rule.

The subsequent arrest of his friends in Sudan and threats against Muhanad led him to look for a new home. With a brother living in Edmonton, he chose Canada. And when it came to navigating the legal details of his refugee claim, he connected with Legal Aid Alberta.

Legal Aid Alberta immigration law specialist Ruth Williams helped Muhanad apply for refugee status—which has been granted.

Williams says there are intrinsic rewards to practicing immigration law and helping people wanting to build new lives in Canada.

“From a selfish point of view, it makes you feel great to be helping people in such dramatic ways—you’re saving lives and saving families, and giving people hope,” she said.



I was advised that if I returned to Sudan—I would be arrested and executed. My friends have told me to stay away.

“People don’t think of immigration law as being glamorous—but this country was built on immigration. Every person who comes here changes the dynamic and fabric of this country, and it reverberates outward because you’re contributing to how the world sees us.”

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Financial statements
March 31, 2022



Independent auditor's report

To the Board of Directors of
The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of **The Legal Aid Society of Alberta** [the "Society"], which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2022, and statement of changes in net assets (liabilities), statement of revenue and expenses and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Society as at March 31, 2022, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Society in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other information

Management is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information, and in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

We obtained the Annual Report prior to the date of this auditor's report. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact in this auditor's report. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Society's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Society or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.



Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Society's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Society's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Society's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Society to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Edmonton, Canada
June 29, 2022

Ernst & Young LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants



The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of financial position

[expressed in thousands of dollars]

As at March 31

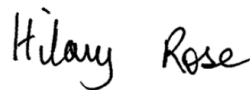
| | 2022 | 2021 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Assets | | |
| Current | | |
| Cash and restricted cash <i>[note 3]</i> | 44,071 | 50,104 |
| Accounts receivable | 152 | 14 |
| Goods and Services Tax receivable | 490 | 740 |
| Prepaid expenses | 247 | 124 |
| Total current assets | 44,960 | 50,982 |
| Capital assets, net <i>[note 4]</i> | 2,213 | 3,068 |
| | 47,173 | 54,050 |
| Liabilities | | |
| Current | | |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities <i>[note 8]</i> | 3,333 | 4,369 |
| Accrued vacation pay | 1,931 | 1,717 |
| Current portion of deferred lease liability | 273 | 273 |
| Deferred revenue <i>[note 5]</i> | 17,151 | 24,325 |
| Provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates <i>[note 6]</i> | 12,154 | 11,096 |
| Total current liabilities | 34,842 | 41,780 |
| Deferred contributions <i>[note 7]</i> | 8,500 | 8,500 |
| Deferred lease liability | 1,943 | 1,882 |
| Total liabilities | 45,285 | 52,162 |
| Commitments and contingencies <i>[notes 6 and 8]</i> | | |
| Net assets (liabilities) | | |
| Internally funded capital assets | 2,213 | 3,068 |
| Unrestricted | (325) | (1,180) |
| Total net assets | 1,888 | 1,888 |
| | 47,173 | 54,050 |

See accompanying notes

On behalf of the Board of Directors:



Ryan Callioux
Chair, Board of Directors
Legal Aid Alberta



Hilary Rose
Director, Board of Directors
Legal Aid Alberta

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of changes in net assets (liabilities)

[expressed in thousands of dollars]

Year ended March 31

| | 2022 | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|--------------|
| | Internally funded capital assets | Unrestricted | Total |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Balance, beginning of year | 3,068 | (1,180) | 1,888 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | — | — | — |
| Purchases of capital assets | 199 | (199) | — |
| Amortization of capital assets | (1,054) | 1,054 | — |
| Balance, end of year | 2,213 | (325) | 1,888 |

| | 2021 | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|--------------|
| | Internally funded capital assets | Unrestricted | Total |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Balance, beginning of year | 3,495 | (8,426) | (4,931) |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | — | 6,819 | 6,819 |
| Purchases of capital assets | 1,469 | (1,469) | — |
| Amortization of capital assets | (1,896) | 1,896 | — |
| Balance, end of year | 3,068 | (1,180) | 1,888 |

See accompanying notes

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of revenue and expenses

[expressed in thousands of dollars]

Year ended March 31

| | 2022 | 2021 |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Revenue | | |
| Province of Alberta | 82,320 | 69,967 |
| Alberta Law Foundation grant – statutory | 1,732 | 8,022 |
| Alberta Law Foundation grant – special | 3,700 | 11,100 |
| Recoveries from clients | 5,018 | 4,276 |
| Interest and other | 876 | 1,025 |
| Total revenue | 93,646 | 94,390 |
| Expenses | | |
| Roster | | |
| Legal aid fees and disbursements | | |
| Criminal adult | 34,564 | 30,729 |
| Family and civil | 8,861 | 9,317 |
| Duty counsel | 3,662 | 2,919 |
| Child welfare | 2,625 | 2,984 |
| Criminal youth | 1,454 | 1,190 |
| Immigration and refugee | 137 | 320 |
| | 51,303 | 47,459 |
| Increase (decrease) in provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates <i>[note 6]</i> | 1,058 | (2,054) |
| | 52,361 | 45,405 |
| Other program expenses <i>[note 9]</i> | | |
| Legal representation – staff lawyers | 25,007 | 26,758 |
| Client services – intake and assessment | 5,754 | 5,957 |
| Management, general, and administration | 10,524 | 9,451 |
| | 41,285 | 42,166 |
| Total expenses | 93,646 | 87,571 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | — | 6,819 |

See accompanying notes

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of cash flows

[expressed in thousands of dollars]

Year ended March 31

| | 2022 | 2021 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Operating activities | | |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | — | 6,819 |
| Add (deduct) items not involving cash | | |
| Amortization of capital assets | 1,054 | 1,896 |
| Amortization of deferred lease liability | 61 | (442) |
| Provision for unbilled services | 1,058 | (2,054) |
| Changes in non-cash operating working capital related to operations | | |
| Accounts receivable | (138) | (14) |
| Goods and Services Tax receivable | 250 | (104) |
| Prepaid expenses | (123) | (35) |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | (1,036) | (490) |
| Accrued vacation pay | 214 | 451 |
| Deferred revenue | (7,174) | 24,325 |
| Cash provided by (used in) operating activities | (5,834) | 30,352 |
| Investing activities | | |
| Purchases of capital assets | (199) | (1,469) |
| Cash used in investing activities | (199) | (1,469) |
| Financing activities | | |
| Contribution received for deferred lease inducements | — | 1,164 |
| Cash provided by financing activities | — | 1,164 |
| Net increase (decrease) in cash during the year | (6,033) | 30,047 |
| Cash and restricted cash, beginning of year | 50,104 | 20,057 |
| Cash and restricted cash, end of year | 44,071 | 50,104 |

See accompanying notes

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

1. The organization

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta [the "Society"], registered as a society under the laws of the Province of Alberta, operates by agreement between the Society, the Law Society of Alberta and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of the Province of Alberta to assist individuals of modest means in obtaining legal services in criminal and civil matters. The current governance agreement became effective April 1, 2019 and expires on March 31, 2024. Under the provisions of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada), the Society is exempt from income tax.

2. Summary of significant accounting policies

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Part III of the *CPA Canada Handbook – Accounting*, which constitutes generally accepted accounting principles for not-for-profit organizations in Canada and includes the significant accounting policies described hereafter.

Revenue recognition

The Society's primary sources of funding are contributions from the Province of Alberta, a statutory contribution from the Alberta Law Foundation, per the *Legal Profession Act*, of 25% of the interest it receives on lawyers' pooled trust accounts, and special contributions as agreed from time to time, recoveries from clients, and interest and other income.

The Society follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Contributions are recognized in the accounts when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when initially recorded in the accounts. Externally restricted contributions are deferred when initially recorded in the accounts and recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are recognized.

Externally restricted contributions for the acquisition of capital assets are recorded as deferred capital contributions and recognized as revenue as the related assets are amortized over their useful lives. Restricted contributions for the purchase of capital assets that will not be amortized are recognized as a direct increase in net assets.

Recoveries from client recipients of legal aid services cannot be reasonably estimated in advance due to the uncertainty of collection. Accordingly, these recoveries and contributions are recorded as revenue when received.

Interest and other income are recognized as revenue when earned.

Expense recognition

Legal aid fees and disbursements are eligible for payment in respect of services authorized on issued legal aid certificates. The Society records the estimated value of services provided, but not submitted for payment, on outstanding certificates in the period in which the services are provided. Legal expenses include amounts billed to the Society by lawyers and an estimate of amounts for work performed but not yet billed.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

Allocation of other program expenses

The expenses of each function include personnel and other expenses that are directly related to the function. General support and other expenses are not allocated, except for rent, which is allocated to functions by head count.

Financial instruments

Financial instruments, including accounts receivable, Goods and Services Tax receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, and accrued vacation pay, are initially recorded at their fair value and are subsequently measured at amortized cost, net of any provisions for impairment.

Cash and restricted cash

Cash and restricted cash include cash and restricted cash related to deferred revenue and contributions.

Capital assets

Purchased tangible and intangible assets are recorded at acquisition cost. Contributed tangible and intangible capital costs are recorded at fair value at the date of the contribution. Amortization is determined using the straight-line method at the following annual rates over the estimated useful lives of the assets as follows:

Tangible assets

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Furniture and equipment | Over 7 years |
| Computer hardware | Over 4 years |
| Leasehold improvements | Over the lesser of the lease term and 10 years |

Intangible assets

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Computer software | Over 4 years |
|-------------------|--------------|

Deferred lease liability

Deferred lease liability represents leasehold improvement allowances paid or payable by landlords and periods of free rent or graduated rent increases as inducements to enter into a long-term lease. This liability is amortized on a straight-line basis over the remaining term of the lease and recorded as a reduction of rent expense.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

3. Cash and restricted cash

Restricted cash relates to deferred revenue [note 5] and deferred contributions [note 7].

| | 2022 | 2021 |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Cash | 18,420 | 17,279 |
| Restricted cash – deferred revenue, pandemic [note 5] | 17,151 | 24,325 |
| Restricted cash – deferred contributions [note 7] | 8,500 | 8,500 |
| | 44,071 | 50,104 |

4. Capital assets

Capital assets consist of the following:

| | 2022 | | 2021 | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| | Cost | Accumulated amortization | Cost | Accumulated amortization |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Tangible assets | | | | |
| Furniture and equipment | 457 | 192 | 380 | 113 |
| Computer hardware | 794 | 717 | 908 | 633 |
| Leasehold improvements | 3,278 | 1,685 | 3,278 | 1,175 |
| | 4,529 | 2,594 | 4,566 | 1,921 |
| Intangible assets | | | | |
| Computer software | 5,895 | 5,617 | 5,813 | 5,390 |
| | 10,424 | 8,211 | 10,379 | 7,311 |
| Net book value | 2,213 | | 3,068 | |

During the year, the Society removed the cost and accumulated amortization of fully amortized assets as follows: furniture and equipment \$nil [2021 – \$43], computer hardware \$114 [2021 – \$879], computer software \$40 [2021 – \$961] and leasehold improvements \$nil [2021 – \$1,060].

5. Deferred revenue

As a result of the coronavirus disease ["COVID-19"] pandemic, anticipated services to be delivered by roster lawyers have been delayed. \$17,151 [2021 – \$24,325] of the funding from the Province of Alberta has been deferred and a corresponding amount of cash has been classified as restricted cash – pandemic for this purpose. This will be recognized as the roster expenses are incurred.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

6. Provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates

The provision for services provided by roster that have not been billed on outstanding certificates is estimated at year-end using a method that incorporates historical average costs and time frames to complete similar cases. The increase for the year ended March 31, 2022, related to the change in provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates, was \$1,058 [2021 – decrease of \$2,054]. As at March 31, 2022, the Society had approximately 21,680 [2021 – 20,071] outstanding certificates issued to roster with an estimated liability of \$12,154 [2021 – \$11,096].

The estimated liability is subject to measurement uncertainty. Measurement uncertainty exists when there is a variance between the recognized amount and another reasonably possible amount. Due to the uncertainty involved in the estimation process, there will likely be a difference between the estimated and actual liability and the difference may be material.

In addition to the liability for unbilled services provided to March 31, 2022, on outstanding roster certificates, the Society estimates the future costs to complete roster and Society lawyer certificate files. As at March 31, 2022, there is an estimated \$23,076 [2021 – \$23,087] that will be incurred on approximately 23,225 [2021 – 21,536] outstanding certificates issued to roster and the Society's lawyers over and above both the billings paid to date and work performed but not yet billed. Due to the uncertainty in the estimation process, there will likely be a difference between the estimated and actual costs to complete outstanding certificates and the difference may be material.

7. Deferred contributions

The current governance agreement ending March 31, 2024 requires that the Society defer and hold certain grant amounts received from the Alberta Law Foundation and the Province of Alberta, to a maximum amount agreed with the Province of Alberta [currently \$8.5 million], for non-forecasted or unbudgeted costs.

| | 2022 | | 2021 | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| | Province of Alberta | Alberta Law Foundation | Total | Total |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Balance, beginning of year | 1,000 | 7,500 | 8,500 | 8,500 |
| Amounts received during the year | — | — | — | — |
| Balance, end of year | 1,000 | 7,500 | 8,500 | 8,500 |

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

8. Commitments and contingencies

[a] Commitments

The Society is committed under operating leases for office premises to make annual payments in the following amounts for the next five years and thereafter:

| | \$ |
|------------|--------------|
| 2023 | 2,254 |
| 2024 | 2,052 |
| 2025 | 539 |
| 2026 | 507 |
| 2027 | 515 |
| Thereafter | 3,002 |
| | <u>8,869</u> |

Included in the amounts are \$310 for 2023 related to lease payments for the previous Calgary Dominion office location. This location is no longer in use as the office relocated effective September 2020. Amounts related to the previous Calgary Dominion location have been recorded in accounts payable and accrued liabilities in the amount of \$354 [2021 – \$963].

[b] Contingencies

During the ordinary course of business activities, the Society may be contingently liable for litigation and claims from clients, suppliers and former employees. Management believes that adequate provisions have been made in the accounts where required. Although it is not possible to estimate the extent of potential costs and losses, if any, management believes that the ultimate resolution of such contingencies will not have a material adverse effect on the financial position or results of operations of the Society.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

9. Other program expenses

Other program expenses reflected in the statement of revenue and expenses, classified by object, are as follows:

| | 2022 | 2021 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Salaries and benefits | 34,019 | 33,345 |
| Amortization of capital assets | 1,054 | 1,896 |
| Occupancy | 1,732 | 2,803 |
| Outside services | 2,080 | 1,400 |
| Computer | 944 | 871 |
| Office operating and supplies | 794 | 1,163 |
| Travel | 31 | 55 |
| Legal disbursements | 139 | 107 |
| Communication | 320 | 320 |
| Goods and Services Tax not refundable | 172 | 206 |
| | 41,285 | 42,166 |

Occupancy expense has been allocated to other program expenses as follows:

| | 2022 | 2021 |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Legal representation – staff lawyers | 1,051 | 1,938 |
| Client services – intake and assessment | 376 | 543 |
| Management, general and administration | 305 | 322 |
| | 1,732 | 2,803 |

10. Related parties

Certain members of the Board of Directors provide certificate services to the Society. These legal services are provided in the regular course of business under the same tariff of fees as other lawyers. During the year, directors provided certificate services of \$44 [2021 – \$375] to the Society and their respective firms provided additional certificate services of \$365 [2021 – \$830].

11. Trust accounts

As part of its normal professional practice, the Society administers trust money on behalf of its clients, that is maintained in separate trust accounts and deposits. The Society has no beneficial interest in these trust accounts and deposits, except to the extent that fees for services rendered and disbursements on behalf of the client may be paid therefrom. These amounts are not recorded in the financial statements of the Society. The balances of trust accounts and deposits as at March 31, 2022 amounted to \$203 [2021 – \$42].

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

[dollar amounts in thousands]

March 31, 2022

12. Financial instruments and risk management

Credit risk

The Society's exposure to credit risk, represented by the carrying amount of accounts receivable, results from the risk that one party to the financial instrument may cause a financial loss for the other party by failing to discharge an obligation. The Society monitors outstanding balances regularly and allows for uncollectible amounts when determined.

Liquidity risk

The Society is exposed to the risk that it will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with its financial liabilities. The Society is exposed to this risk mainly in respect of its accounts payable and accrued liabilities, accrued vacation pay, and provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates.

13. COVID-19

Beginning in March 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has resulted in governments worldwide enacting emergency measures to combat the spread of the virus. These measures, which include the implementation of travel bans, self-imposed quarantine periods and social distancing, have caused material disruption to businesses globally, resulting in an economic slowdown. The duration and impact of the COVID-19 outbreak are unknown at this time, as is the efficacy of the government and central bank monetary and fiscal interventions designed to stabilize economic conditions. As a result, it is not possible to reliably estimate the length and severity of these developments, nor the impact on the financial position and financial results of the Society in future periods.