



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025



Table of Contents

Messages from Leadership	03
Legal Aid Alberta Overview	05
Context and Outlook: Year in Review	11
Results and Achievements	12
Indigenous Justice	15
Legal Education and Training	16
Impact by the Numbers	18
Stories from the Front Lines	27
Financials at a Glance	31
Audited Financials	32

Message from the Chair, Board of Directors

Reflecting on a year of strength, perseverance and productivity

The past year has been marked by perseverance and collaboration. Important issues like sustainability, access to justice and the integrity and operational independence of Legal Aid Alberta have been the subject of great focus.

On June 30, 2024, our Governance Agreement with the Ministry of Justice and the Law Society of Alberta expired. After months of negotiation and collaboration, we signed a new agreement on September 6, 2024. This agreement ensures that Legal Aid Alberta can continue to operate independently and deliver essential services to Albertans – a critical achievement in maintaining a strong, accessible and trusted justice system.

The new Governance Agreement re-affirmed the importance of an independent legal aid plan that serves the public interest, protects the rights of vulnerable Albertans and supports the rule of law without undue influence. Independence remains foundational to the credibility and strength of Legal Aid Alberta and the justice system in Alberta. Our employees, stakeholders and justice system partners can rest assured that we will always stand for this while working together with them to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the legal aid plan.

Following the signing of the agreement, the Government of Alberta launched a consultation on the future of legal aid, as envisioned in the new framework. This consultation continues and we remain deeply engaged with the Government of Alberta and the Law Society of Alberta in a collaborative discussion about this program.

Over the last decade, Legal Aid Alberta has grown into a stronger, more resilient organization. Building on our achievements, we will continue our evolution, strengthening partnerships and enhancing our organization and services to meet the ever-changing needs of all the communities we serve.

I am so grateful for the passion and dedication of the employees of Legal Aid Alberta, roster lawyers, the executive team and our Board. To all of you who work so tirelessly to protect the rule of law and ensure access to justice for all Albertans – thank you. Above all, our work is driven by the thousands of Albertans who rely on us to protect their rights and dignity every day.

As we look ahead, we will continue to be trusted partners in ensuring accessibility and support within the justice system. Resilient, responsive and independent for many years to come.



Ryan Callioux, KC
*Chair, Board of Directors,
Legal Aid Alberta*

Shaping the future of access to justice in a year of change

In 2024-25, Legal Aid Alberta navigated a year of change. Alberta saw a rising population along with a challenging economic environment, two factors that increase the demand for legal aid services. We've faced new challenges, but we've also made great strides and set the stage for new innovations for the future of Legal Aid Alberta and access to justice for all Albertans.

We are well equipped to meet the growing legal needs of a rapidly increasing population. We continue to advance our strategic plan and make significant progress on our strategic priorities in the areas of quality of counsel, access to legal aid services and accountability to taxpayers.

Right now, Legal Aid Alberta has more than 39,000 distinct representation clients. Over the past year, we've taken on 45,000 representation certificates. Our Justice of the Peace Bail lawyers took 25,000 Brydges calls and conducted 33,500 bail hearings for Albertans in custody. Our Contact Centre handled 76,000 calls from Albertans applying for legal aid. We assisted in more than 2,900 Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs) to keep Albertans safe from abusers. Duty counsel lawyers assisted people 136,600 times.

These numbers tell us an important fact: we are the keystone for access to justice in Alberta. As Alberta continues to grow, our mission to champion justice and protect the Rule of Law for Albertans will remain steadfast.

Providing quality representation for clients is one of our main strategic focuses, which is why we moved our Brydges service in-house. Brydges is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year phone line for detained or arrested Albertans. It is a foundational service in our democracy where we are all innocent until proven guilty.

We also implemented an enhanced compliance program, forming a new, integrated Certificate Standards and Compliance unit to review and take appropriate action on any concerns received about the conduct of a lawyer. This group reviews both billing and legal practice concerns of legal aid lawyers no matter how those concerns are identified. This highlights our commitment to staying accountable to Albertans and ensuring quality counsel for clients.

For our roster lawyers, we continued to host opportunities for training and growth through webinars and in-person workshops, providing advanced legal training on child welfare, immigration, child representation and more – all delivered by our highly qualified in-house lawyers.

In the last fiscal year, we received a Canadian Law Award: the Lincoln Alexander School of Law Award for Shaping the Future – recognition of our dedication to accessible and equitable justice and tireless work supporting Albertans.

We saw over 600 registrations for our free public webinar on child representation.

Close to 1,500 students in 43 classrooms across Canada participated in our annual Duty Counsel Day – a national day to celebrate and learn more about duty counsel lawyers who provide free legal advice within our practice areas to all Albertans regardless of income.

As we look to the future of access to justice in Alberta, it is clear that Legal Aid Alberta plays a leading role. As the economic, social and political climate changes around us, our mission will always stay the same: We resolve legal problems for disadvantaged Albertans and, in doing so, protect the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone.



Gianpaolo (John) Panusa, KC
*President and Chief Executive Officer,
Legal Aid Alberta*



Legal Aid Alberta Overview

Since 1973, Legal Aid Alberta has been providing legal representation and support for Albertans facing legal issues. We play a critical role in safeguarding the legal rights of Albertans, especially disadvantaged populations, while ensuring the efficient functioning of the justice system.



Services at a Glance

Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) provides affordable legal services to low-income Albertans in support of fairness in the justice system. These services help ensure Albertans in all circumstances understand and can defend their legal rights.

Within its mandate, LAA is uniquely positioned to provide services that positively impact the justice system and Albertans' lives. These include bail hearings, services in support of Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs), services for Indigenous peoples, support for youth and families in crisis and more.

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

LAA operates on a hybrid service delivery model. Staff lawyers provide legal services directly to Albertans, while the remaining services are provided by a roster of approximately 1,200 private-practice lawyers.

Members of the roster are independent Alberta lawyers who have registered with LAA to provide services on behalf of the organization.

LAA services include:

- Adult criminal law
- Youth criminal law
- Family law
- Immigration and refugee law
- Civil law

LAA also administers free legal services accessible to all Albertans regardless of income:

- Duty counsel services in provincial docket courts and specialty courts
- Justice of the Peace Bail hearings
- Brief legal advice over the phone for Albertans in police custody
- Emergency Protection Orders for those facing family violence



Who we serve

- People unrepresented in court
- People under arrest and held in custody
- People experiencing family violence
- Youth and adults charged with a crime
- People going through family breakdown
- Parents involved in child welfare cases
- Refugees and newcomers to Canada
- Court-ordered representation of children involved in high-conflict family cases
- Individuals with challenging personal circumstances
- AISH recipients

In addition to their limited financial resources, many LAA clients face challenging circumstances and situations, such as:

- Incarceration
- Chronic homelessness
- Family breakdown
- Mental health issues
- No family support
- Intergenerational trauma
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Previous history in child welfare
- Adverse childhood experience scores
- Addiction
- Newly disadvantaged by sudden life incidences
- Domestic violence

Impact at a Glance

2024 - 25

136,600

duty counsel assists¹

76,000

intake calls²

45,000

representation certificates

39,000

distinct representation clients

33,500

Justice of the
Peace Bail hearings

25,000

Brydges calls from
police stations

2,900

LAA-assisted Emergency
Protection Order matters

1 - the number of people duty counsel lawyers see during the year. 2 - for new applications.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors supports Legal Aid Alberta’s goals of providing legal services and expertise, and delivering access to justice and fairness for all Albertans. The Board works with LAA to serve the public good and remain accountable to Albertans. The direction and decisions of the Board of Directors, and the strategic plan, are implemented by the Executive Committee.

RYAN CALLIOUX, KC, Board Chair Edmonton, Alberta Director since 2016	CATHERINE BRAEUER, CPA, CA Edmonton, Alberta Director since 2021	DAVID LINDER, KC Calgary, Alberta Director since 2022	HILARY ROSE, FCPA, FCA Edmonton, Alberta Director since 2016
BRAD PICKERING, Vice Chair Sherwood Park, Alberta Director since 2021	JIM CAMPBELL, MBA Calgary, Alberta Director since 2022	RANDY MITCHELL, LLB Calgary, Alberta Director since 2022	SONYA VON HEYKING, CPA, CA Lethbridge, Alberta Director since 2022
AMBER-DAWN BOUDREAU Calgary, Alberta Director since 2023	OWEN EDMONDSON, FCPA, FCGA Edmonton, Alberta Director since 2017	DANIELLA O’CALLAGHAN, LLB, BA Edmonton, Alberta Director since 2023	

Executive Team

Our executive team is responsible for strategic and business planning and ensuring that LAA delivers crucial legal services to Albertans while operating within the Governance Agreement. They – along with all of LAA’s dedicated team members – strive to achieve our vision of an Alberta where everyone is able to understand and protect their legal rights.

Gianpaolo (John) Panusa, KC
President and Chief Executive Officer

Lori Haughian
Vice President, Justice Services

Laurie Wang
Vice President, People, Culture
and Communications

Dale Burgess
Executive Director, Finance

Johnathan McFarlane
Executive Director, IT

Gregory Lazin
General 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 resolve legal problems for disadvantaged Albertans and, in doing so, protect the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone.

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.

Context and Outlook: Year in Review

The 2024-25 fiscal year brought its share of economic and societal challenges. Not just for Alberta, but for Legal Aid Alberta too. Rising interest rates, inflation and an increased cost of living saw some Albertans pushed into poverty, struggling to make ends meet.

An increase in poverty and lack of resources, such as affordable housing, can fuel crime rates, leading to more cases in the justice system – and this is felt by LAA. Increased crime leads to increased certificates and an increased workload.

Since 2021, LAA has seen a 65 per cent increase in the number of certificates issued, which can be partially attributed to the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, LAA took on approximately 45,000 representation certificates, up 4.5 per cent from fiscal year 2023-24, which saw just over 41,500 certificates. Of those 45,000 certificates, approximately 70 per cent are criminal-related, year over year.

Crime rates can also be indicative of a rise in mental health and addictions issues. With an increase in poverty and job loss, and decreased housing and food security comes an increase in mental health conditions and substance use. These effects are seen first-hand by our duty counsel lawyers in Alberta's Mental Health and Drug Treatment Courts, which were expanded by the province in 2021.

However, despite the high cost of living and increased crime rates, Alberta also experienced population growth as newcomers from all over the world made Alberta their home. According to the [Government of Alberta](#), the province led the country in growth rate for the sixth straight quarter by December 2024. Alberta also registered not only an increase in international immigration, but interprovincial migration as well. By the end of 2024, Alberta saw a net population growth of close to 170,000 people for the year.

With more people comes more legal system needs. Immigration and refugee claims are frequently handled by LAA for low-income individuals and those fleeing persecution in their home countries. This past year, LAA recorded 1,760 immigration and refugee cases, up 26 per cent compared to fiscal 2023-24, which recorded 1,397. The estimated population growth over the next year – annually, until 2051 – according to the [Government of Alberta](#), is 3.5 per cent.

An increase in clients and certificates has required us to find new ways for Albertans to access justice. Adding more points of contact for application processing has taken some pressure off the phone lines, which handles approximately 76,000 calls per year. The Client Gateway app allows duty counsel lawyers in courthouses to submit applications on behalf of individuals showing up to court. Some public social agencies across Alberta now have access to the app to better assist their own clients with applying for legal aid at the click of a button.

Alberta is also dealing with an over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system. In the most recent two-year study conducted by [Statistics Canada](#) between 2019-2021, it was found that three per cent of the adult Indigenous population had been incarcerated in any given provincial institution. This amounts to 42.6 Indigenous people in provincial custody on an average day for every 10,000 people, as opposed to four non-Indigenous people compared to the same population.

The Over-Representation Index – a way to calculate the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous incarceration rates – was found to be 10.8 in Alberta, the second highest in Canada.

The Edmonton and Calgary Indigenous Courts, which our duty counsel lawyers continue to play a major role in, aim to tackle this over-representation through healing and restorative justice. At the end of 2024, the [Alberta Courts](#) noted continued work on the establishment of a Lethbridge Indigenous Court, showing that over-representation is still very much a growing concern.

As the Alberta economic and social landscape continues to change going into the next fiscal year, LAA remains committed to meeting the growing legal needs of Albertans and clients, ensuring quality access to justice for all. We will continue to be responsive and anticipatory of all future changes and challenges, innovating the ways we deliver our services in the best interests of Albertans.

Results and Achievements

The fiscal year 2024-25 was marked by significant advancements by Legal Aid Alberta in enhancing the quality of legal aid services to Albertans, improving access to these services and ensuring accountability to all stakeholders.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: QUALITY

The focus on quality ensures strong legal representation for clients by providing specialized development and support to our lawyers. This includes promoting lawyer accountability and measuring outcomes to demonstrate effectiveness.

What we set out to do	What we achieved
Enhance the quality of legal counsel available to Albertans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthened emergency legal support: By bringing the Brydges duty counsel service in-house, we responded to a 46 per cent increase in call volume, ensuring 24/7 support.• Invoice review and oversight: Our new Certificate Standards and Compliance unit reviewed 28 per cent of invoices, eight per cent above target, leading to suspensions and overbilling recoveries when needed.• Improved roster lawyer onboarding: New onboarding procedures incorporating quality assurance checks were implemented for duty counsel and full-representation roster lawyers.• Renewed Child Representation Panel: We began re-empaneling child representation lawyers, with 40 existing members re-applying and 13 new members added following a competitive process.
Ensure the right lawyers are in the right roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Triage for specialty courts: Introduced a triage system so duty counsel can better support clients in Mental Health, Drug Treatment and Indigenous Courts.• Rural lawyer recruitment strategy: Developed a plan to attract lawyers to remote rural areas through targeted outreach and improved online presence.• Connected with future talent: Participated in university law career days and specialized outreach events for Indigenous law students, reinforcing our role as a values-based, forward-looking employer.

Provide specialized legal training and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Action Plan: Developed a new engagement framework that shaped the 2025–28 plan, focusing on culturally competent services and transparent partnerships. • Built legal capacity: Delivered 26 sessions to more than 1,100 participants on legal topics ranging from child representation to refugee claims and criminal matters. • Amplified legal literacy: LAA lawyers made 12 appearances on Global Edmonton Morning News, demystifying everyday legal issues and reaching millions of Albertans with practical legal knowledge. Our LAA team also reached 1,500+ students in 43 schools nationally during Duty Counsel Day, bringing legal education to classrooms across Canada.
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ACCESS

The focus on access strives to make Legal Aid Alberta services more accessible and easier to navigate by providing effective, innovative and flexible intake, assessment and offer processes. This includes expanding contact methods, enhancing access to rural justice and improving LAA services.

What we set out to do	What we achieved
Expand application options and increase flexibility for clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Gateway expansion: Rolled out our digital intake app to six more organizations across the province, including Indigenous and community legal groups, expanding access to underserved communities. • Roster lawyer access: The Gateway app was extended to roster duty counsel, improving service availability in rural and remote areas.
Improve access in rural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty counsel needs assessment: Identified growing needs in rural areas and began planning a new pilot project to strengthen triage capacity and reduce certificate volume. • Preferred counsel travel guidelines: Introduced new travel guidelines enabling lawyers to reach remote clients who specifically request their services.
Strengthen and modernize LAA services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened legal and operational independence: Worked with the Ministry of Justice and the Law Society of Alberta to sign a new five-year Governance Agreement, reinforcing our position as a trusted, independent voice for disadvantaged Albertans. • Expanded access to justice: Per the Ministry's updated Financial Eligibility Guidelines, we enabled an 8.5 per cent increase in the number of clients eligible for legal aid, making life-changing services more accessible. • Online Lawyer Directory: Launched a user-friendly directory to help clients find and request specific lawyers by name, location, language and legal area, streamlining the application process.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: ACCOUNTABILITY

The focus on accountability involves operating with integrity and efficiency by enabling informed decision-making and reporting, enhancing workplace culture and ensuring cost-effective administration of the legal aid plan.

What we set out to do	What we achieved
Improve data systems and support informed decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cloud-based CRM system: Migrated to a new system that improves security, data handling and future capacity as part of a continuous improvement plan.• System enhancements: Delivered improvements to internal portals and client-facing tools, improving service delivery and accountability.
Strengthen internal culture and stability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modernized labour relations: To prepare for collective bargaining, we implemented new manager training and support systems, laying the foundation for more informed, collaborative negotiations and stronger leadership.• Leadership succession planning: Developed plans to ensure organizational stability by identifying future leaders and mapping their development paths.• Workplace health and safety: Expanded our occupational health and safety (OHS) program, formed a cross-functional safety program development group and began courthouse evaluations to better protect frontline staff.• Award-winning impact: Honoured with the Lincoln Alexander School of Law Award for Shaping the Future at the 2024 Canadian Law Awards — recognizing our innovation, legal mentorship and commitment to underserved communities.• Celebrating long-term commitment: Honoured 28 employees with long-service awards, representing a combined 290 years of experience across legal, client and corporate teams.

Indigenous Justice

Legal Aid Alberta is committed to working toward positive change in the legal system for Alberta's Indigenous, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Since 2022, our indigenous liaison has been focusing on relationship building and collaboration through community outreach to Indigenous clients and communities across Alberta, as well as justice system partners.

Through the Edmonton and Calgary Indigenous Courts, our LAA lawyers play a critical role in representing accused people and ensuring their rights are protected. Indigenous Courts help address the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system.

In the past year, LAA's involvement in Indigenous activities included internal and external opportunities for learning and connection.

Internal Projects and Initiatives

Over the last year, LAA enhanced and expanded duty counsel services for the communities of Alexander First Nations, Eden Valley and Mini Thni by holding community office days and helping to support and facilitate remote court appearances.

We also continuously provide internal training for newly hired contact centre intake officers and duty counsel lawyers working in and near Indigenous communities. This training gives staff the information they need to better assist Indigenous clients.

With the goal of providing opportunities for our staff to learn and reflect, we hosted an internal event on Truth and Reconciliation. Retired Justice Eugene Creighton, KC, and Blaine Raine, restorative justice advisor with Ermineskin Cree Nation joined us to speak about stories of resilience.

The LAA Indigenous Action Plan is currently being updated and will include expanded Indigenous client training for staff and roster, enhancements to the LAA website for Indigenous clients and lawyers working with Indigenous clients, and improved feedback and data reporting to help LAA stay on top of trends and issues.

Community and Stakeholder Outreach

Speaking to communities, sitting on committees and enhancing our services to meet the growing needs of our Indigenous clients are just some of the ways LAA stays accountable to its commitment to quality Indigenous access to justice.

Community Events

- Alberta Court of Justice – Access to Justice Through an Indigenous Lens Symposium
- Blackfoot Confederacy Justice Symposium
- Sunchild and O'Chiese First Nations Youth Justice Events

Community Initiatives

- Alexander First Nation Court Meeting
- Alexis First Nation Court Meeting
- Calgary Legal Guidance – Sahwoo mohkaak tsi ma taas Advisory Council
- Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary – Restorative Justice Engagement Session
- Tsuut'ina Court Advisory Council
- Yellowhead Tribal Community Corrections Society (YTCCS) Gladue System Change Project

Provincial Initiatives

- Alberta Court of Justice – Gladue Report Committee
- Alberta Court of Justice – Indigenous Access to Justice Committee
- Alberta Law Foundation – Bridging the Gaps Community Meeting
- Alberta Restorative Justice Association – Restorative Justice Project

Other Activities

- Law Society of Alberta – Reconciliation Advisory Roster



Legal Education and Training

Public, staff and lawyer education is an important part of ensuring access to justice and quality representation at Legal Aid Alberta. Over the 2024-25 fiscal year, LAA hosted and participated in nearly 40 unique learning, training and community events for staff and lawyers, roster lawyers and Albertans.

LAA Roster and Staff Lawyer Training

800+

combined staff, roster and students
attended these events.

- Immigration workshop, *April 5, 2024*
- Contact centre intake officer training on criminal law, *April 9, June 19 and Sept. 10, 2024 and March 3, 2025*
- Trust accounting training for articling students, *April 26 and Oct. 15, 2024*
- Privacy training for staff (four presentations), *April – September 2024*
- LAA services training for summer students, *May 6, 2024*
- Advocacy Before the Immigration and Refugee Board: Year in Review, *May 16, 2024*
- Client Access and Service Enhancements training (four sessions), *May 2024*
- Child representation presentation at Legal Representation for Children and Youth Conference, *June 6, 2024*
- 'An Act Respecting' panel facilitation, *June 7, 2024*
- LAA services training for articling students, *July 2, 2024*
- Immigration law training for students, *Aug. 2, 2024*
- Child representation training, *Aug. 3 and Nov. 1, 2024*
- Virtual Forum on LAA Family Services, *Aug. 28 and Dec. 5, 2024 and March 20, 2025*
- Low-income and the Law training, *Sept. 7, 2024*
- Presentation to LAA staff lawyers, justice navigators and legal assistants by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, *Oct. 6, 2024*
- New LAA Board member training for Appeals Committee hearings, *Dec. 13, 2024 and Jan. 29, 2025*
- Privacy and collective bargaining training, *Jan. 10, 2025*
- Edmonton immigration roster networking, *Feb. 11, 2025*
- LAA IT training on criminal law, *March 5, 2025*
- Child welfare training, *March 27, 2025*

National Duty Counsel Day

October 27 is recognized by the Senate of Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada as National Duty Counsel Day. In October 2024, educators across Canada registered for a downloadable teaching kit complete with curriculum-based information and activities to help students get a better understanding of duty counsel and the free services they provide.

Students and educators at five schools in Edmonton, Calgary, St. Albert and Whitecourt chatted one-on-one with LAA duty counsel lawyers to hear more about first-hand experiences, why duty counsel lawyers matter and how to enter the profession.

The Edmonton High-Level Bridge and the Calgary Tower lit up red on Oct. 27 in recognition of this important day.

In Canada:

1,500+ students in 43 classrooms

across the country participated through various lawyer talks, presentations and activities.

8 national landmarks

across Canada lit up red on Oct. 27 — from the Edmonton High Level Bridge to the Montreal Olympic Stadium to the Toronto CN Tower.

In Alberta:

600+ students in 20 classrooms

all around Alberta signed up to learn about their legal rights and how to exercise them.

10 Alberta communities

Airdrie, Breton, Calgary, Edmonton, High Prairie, Lethbridge, Rocky Mountain House, St. Albert, St. Paul and Whitecourt held Duty Counsel Day activities in their classrooms.

600+ Albertans

registered for our webinar *Children and the law: Representing kids in high-conflict family cases* on Feb. 7, 2025. LAA lawyers discussed the ins and outs of children's rights when it comes to family legal matters – including why children's voices matter – and how LAA represents children in high-conflict parenting situations.

Edmonton and Calgary Community Events

LAA hosted information booths for approximately

**850 students and
community members**

- U of A Law Career Day, Sept. 20, 2024
- Indigenous Student Legal Career Day, Oct. 3, 2024
- Edmonton Resource Connect, Oct. 16, 2024
- U of C Law Career Day, Oct. 18, 2024
- U of A Public Law Day, Oct. 24, 2024
- Duty Counsel Day at the Courthouse, Oct. 25, 2024
- GearUp YYC, Nov. 7, 2024
- Black Student Lawyers' Association Career Day, Feb. 14, 2025
- Blackfoot Confederacy Justice Symposium, March 6-7, 2025

A photograph of a woman with short, curly brown hair wearing a maroon hoodie, hugging a young girl with blonde hair in a ponytail wearing a grey sweater. The girl is holding a large brown teddy bear. They are sitting on a couch with blue and grey cushions. The background is a brick wall.

Impact by the Numbers

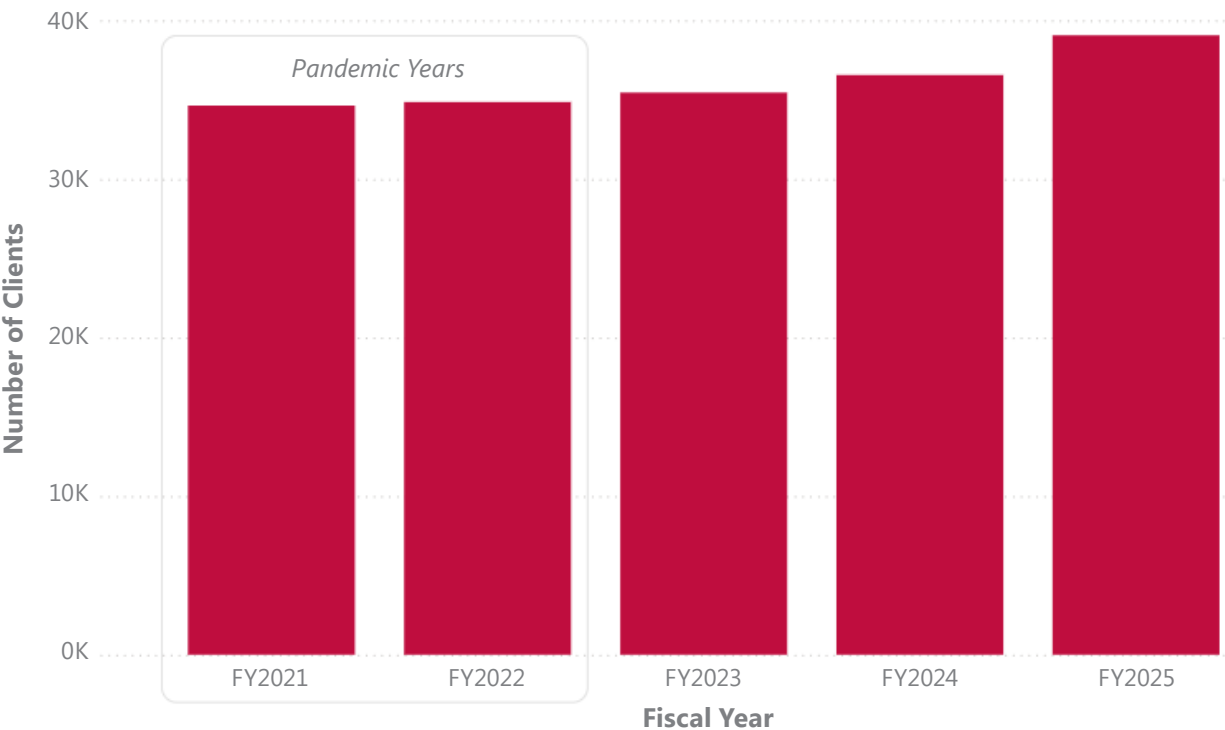
The Legal Aid Alberta vision is an Alberta where everyone is able to understand and protect their legal rights. With significant changes in economic security, crime rates, mental health and immigration, the demand for legal aid never stops. The numbers of LAA certificates over the last five years showcases the growing legal needs of Albertans and LAA's ability to meet them.

Definitions

- **CERTIFICATE** A document issued by Legal Aid Alberta authorizing a legal aid staff or roster lawyer to act on a client's behalf.
- **ROSTER LAWYER** A lawyer in private practice who takes on the legal matters of LAA clients. In addition to LAA staff lawyers, LAA works with approximately 1,200 roster lawyers across Alberta.
- **FISCAL YEAR** The 12-month period running from April 1 through to March 31. (For example, FY2025 indicates the fiscal year running April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.)
- **TARIFF OF FEES** The Tariff of Fees sets out how much lawyers are paid based on the work they do for Legal Aid Alberta clients. The Tariff of Fees is set by the Ministry of Justice.
- **CLIENT GATEWAY** An alternative path to Legal Aid Alberta services allows clients to access legal aid through a qualified roster or staff lawyer at court, telling their story only once and not having to call.
- **FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES** Set by the Ministry of Justice, the Financial Eligibility Guidelines establish income levels applicants must meet to qualify financially for LAA services.

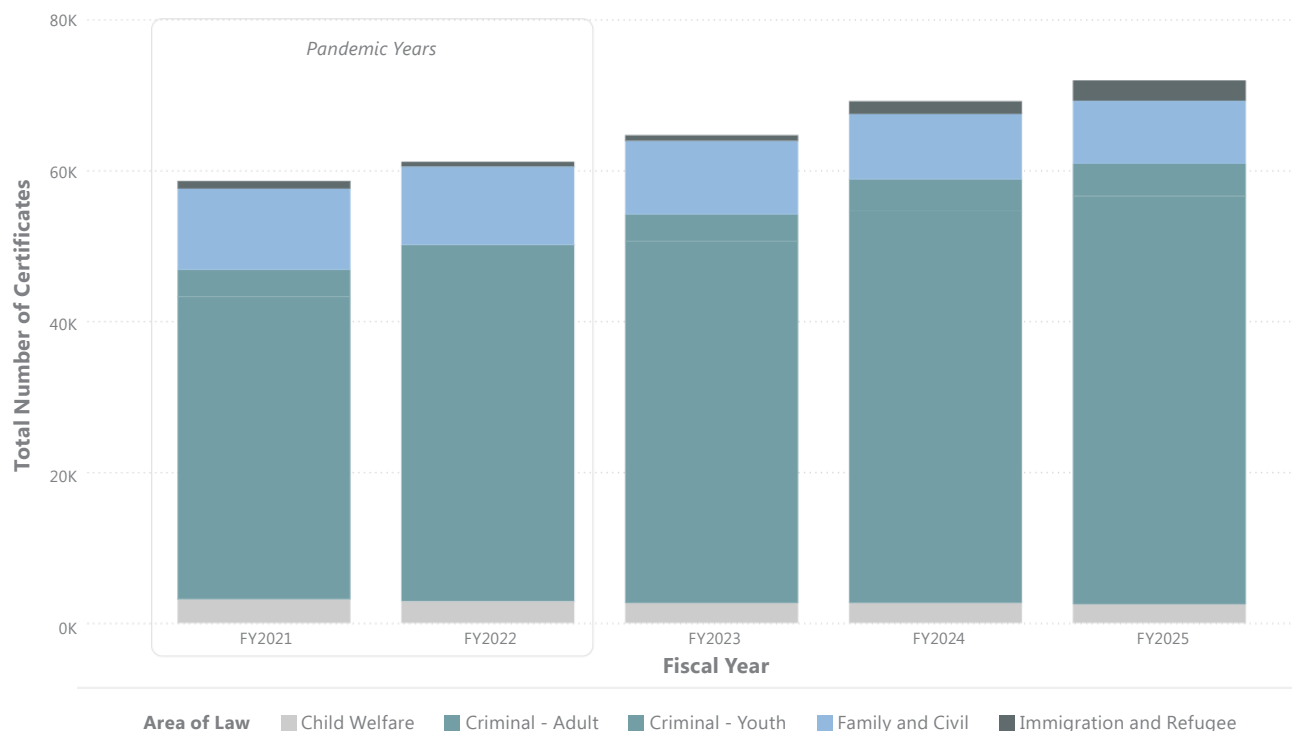
DISTINCT REPRESENTATION CLIENTS

This chart shows the number of clients served in each fiscal year since 2021. During the pandemic years, LAA saw an overall decrease in certificates due to the restrictions in the justice system. Some clients have multiple matters. Legal matters often extend beyond the year the certificate was issued.



TOTAL NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES WORKED ON DURING FISCAL YEAR BY AREA OF LAW

This chart shows certificate volume trends since FY2021 for all certificates issued. The trend shows a normalization of certificates toward pre-pandemic levels. Increases in certificate volumes are driven by individual circumstances, which can vary based on socio-economic and other factors. LAA is mandated to serve all Albertans who qualify for service.



CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY LAA SERVICE LOCATION

Cases in Ottawa are Supreme Court of Canada matters.

From 2021-2025, LAA has seen a 65 per cent increase in certificates issued.

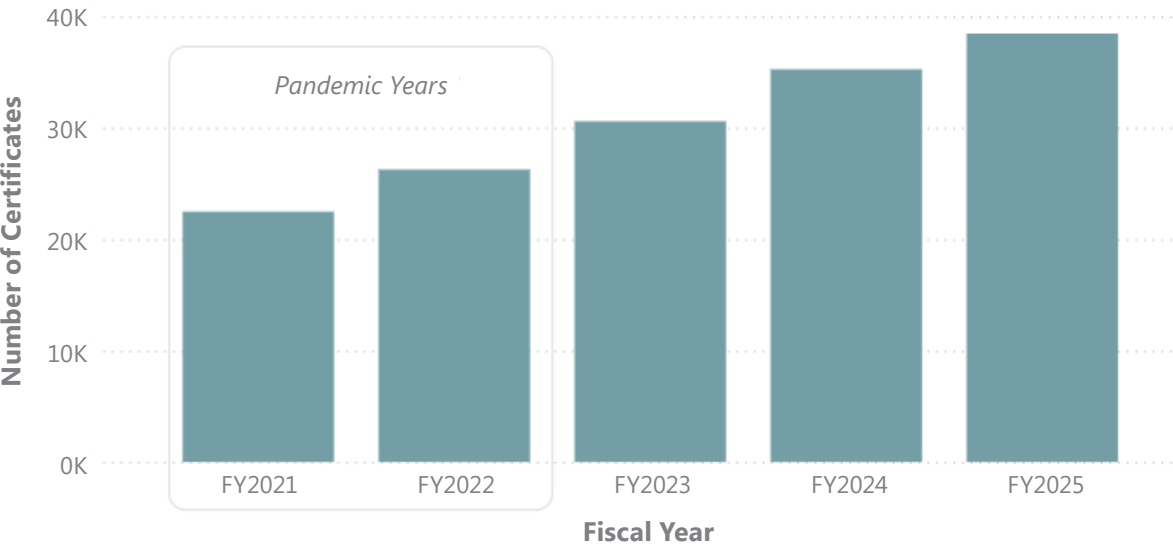
CERTIFICATE SERVICE LOCATION	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Calgary	7,826	9,207	10,435	12,652	14,142
Edmonton	9,378	10,642	12,249	13,998	14,945
Fort McMurray	410	530	572	638	1,016
Grande Prairie	859	1,104	1,168	1,516	1,541
Lethbridge	1,541	1,884	2,105	2,508	2,582
Medicine Hat	749	848	1,017	1,075	1,170
Ottawa	33	30	22	24	24
Peace River	1,157	1,346	1,524	1,756	1,866
Red Deer	1,939	2,339	2,367	2,343	2,533
St. Paul	1,555	1,921	2,311	2,385	2,559
Wetaskiwin	1,291	1,435	1,653	1,846	1,807
Whitecourt	553	705	794	888	904
TOTAL	27,291	31,991	36,217	41,629	45,089

ADULT AND YOUTH CRIMINAL LAW

Access to justice is crucial to a fair and free democracy. A significant part of the work LAA does is related to adult and youth criminal matters. Our staff and roster lawyers provide access to justice to Albertans who are facing the very serious consequences of imprisonment, loss of livelihood or removal from Canada. Our lawyers are leaders in adult and youth criminal justice matters.

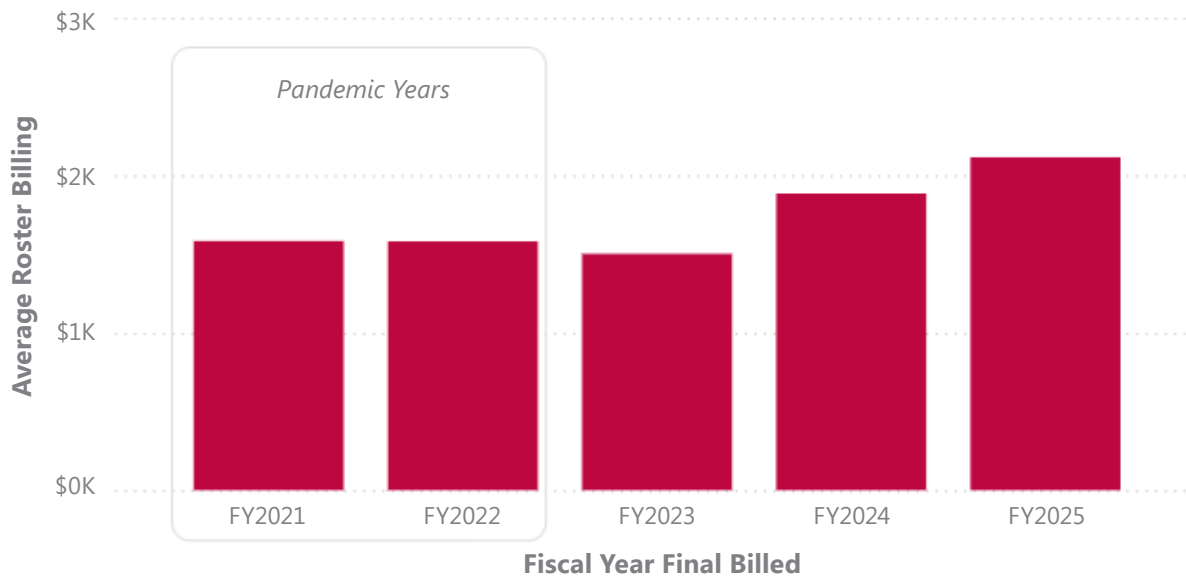
The Youth Criminal Justice Act enshrines the right of all persons aged between 12 and 17 charged with a criminal offence to have representation by a legal aid lawyer. Recognizing that non-legal life issues are often part of what leads young people to be charged with offences, LAA also helps guide youth clients to supports that aid them in identifying and dealing with such issues, which can often improve outcomes in court.

Number of Criminal Certificates Issued



AVERAGE ROSTER LAWYER BILLING PER CLIENT CRIMINAL CERTIFICATE

This chart shows trends since 2021 for client certificates billed to LAA by roster lawyers. Pandemic years are highlighted for reference.



- **October 2022:** The Ministry of Justice approves temporary increases to the tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines.
- **January 2023:** The Ministry of Justice approves an increase to the tariff and consults with LAA and stakeholders about the tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines.
- **April 2023:** Tariff modernization implemented by LAA.

FAMILY AND CIVIL, CHILD WELFARE AND LAA-ASSISTED EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDERS

LAA helps Albertans deal 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 Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs), child welfare, representation of children, 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. LAA's role is to help disadvantaged and vulnerable Albertans with legal issues, including limited civil law matters.

In Alberta, a disabled or incapacitated adult can have another adult appointed as their guardian or trustee to

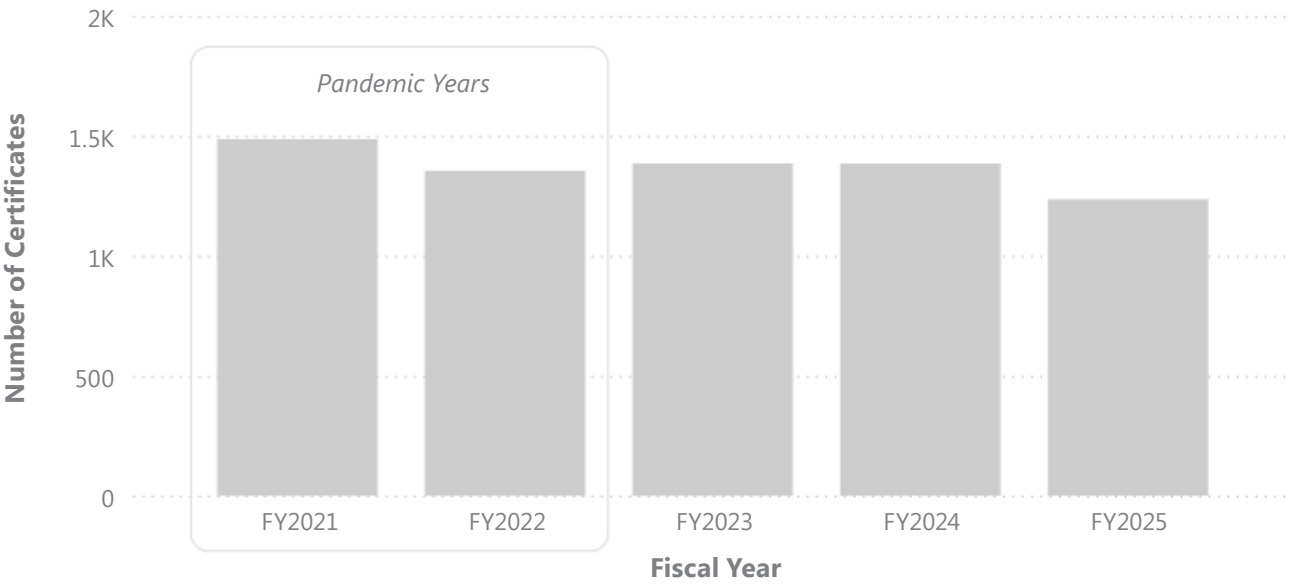
help with essential life decisions and functions. If a person is subject to an order like this and disagrees with the terms, LAA can help them through the court process to ensure it proceeds fairly and equitably.

Our Emergency Protection Order program helps victims of family violence protect themselves against abusers. In recent years, our EPO lawyers have seen an increasing demand. LAA EPO duty counsel help claimants understand their legal rights through the process of obtaining and confirming EPOs.

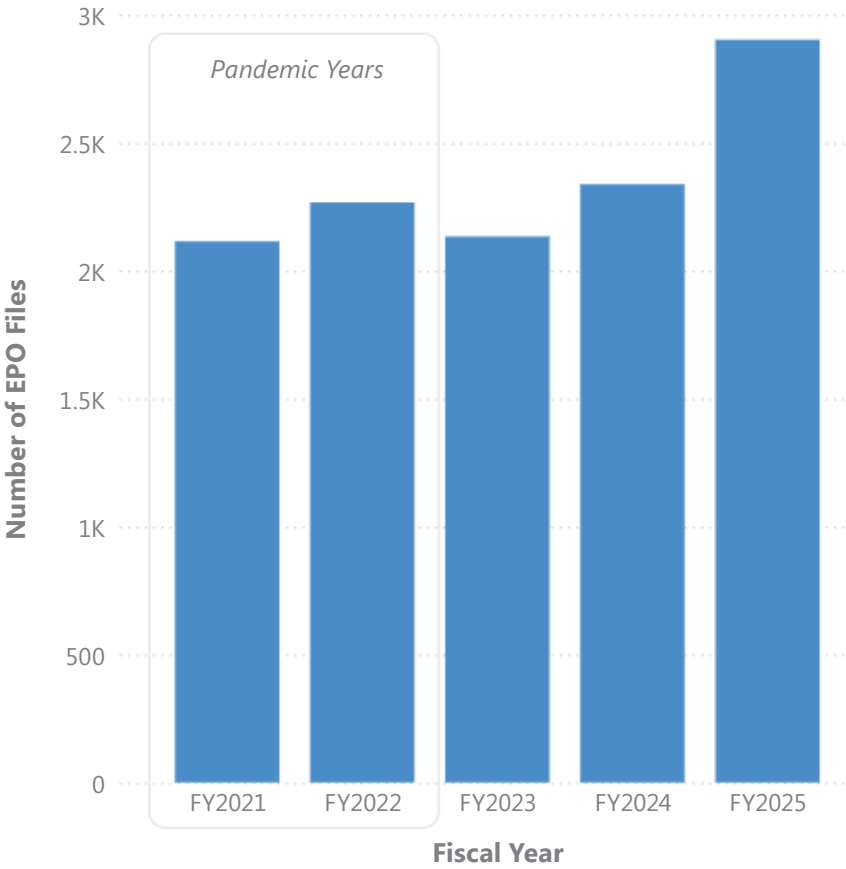
Number of Family Certificates Issued



Number of Child Welfare Certificates Issued



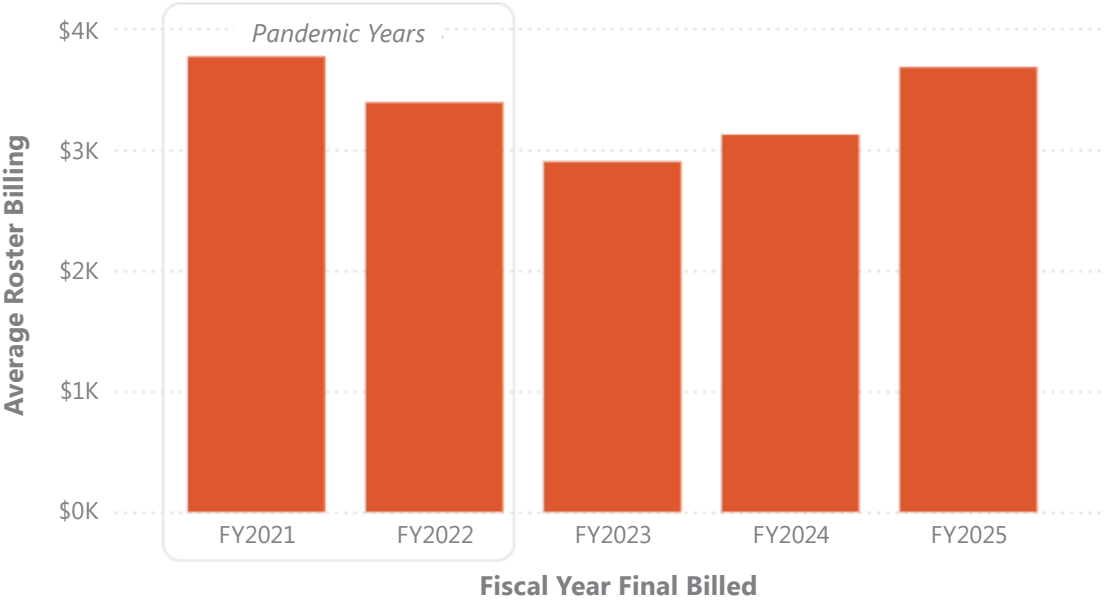
EPO Files



Note: FY2025 includes LAA staff-issued EPO certificates, unlike previous years.

AVERAGE ROSTER LAWYER BILLING PER CLIENT FAMILY AND CHILD WELFARE CERTIFICATE

This chart shows the roster lawyer billing trend since 2021 for client certificates billed to LAA.



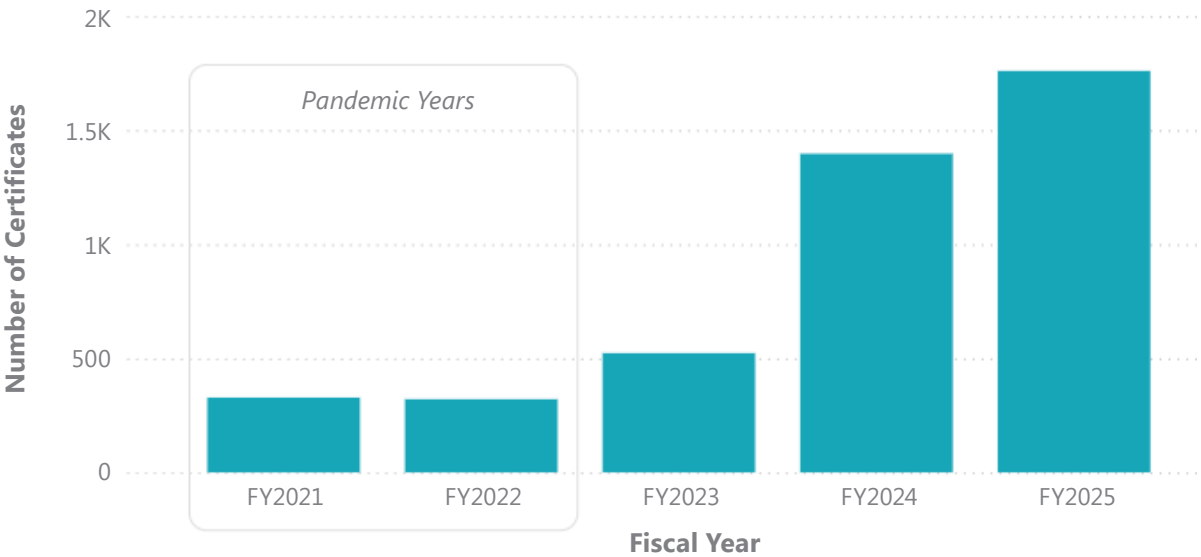
- October 2022:** The Ministry of Justice approves temporary increases to the tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines.
- January 2023:** The Ministry of Justice approves an increase to the tariff and consults with LAA and stakeholders about the tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines.
- April 2023:** Tariff modernization implemented by LAA.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE LAW

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, 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 ensure these legal processes unfold fairly and according to law, LAA helps newcomers and non-citizens with legal actions including refugee claims, judicial reviews of refugee claims, detention reviews and appeals.

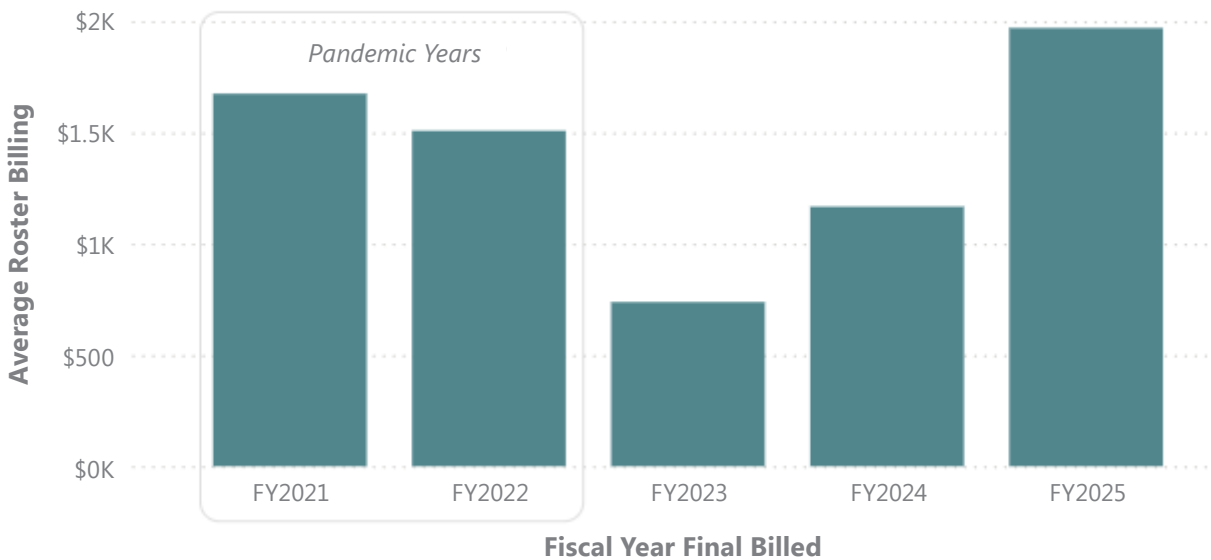
Note: Immigration levels are determined by Government of Canada policy.

Number of Immigration Certificates Issued



AVERAGE ROSTER LAWYER BILLING PER CLIENT IMMIGRATION CERTIFICATE

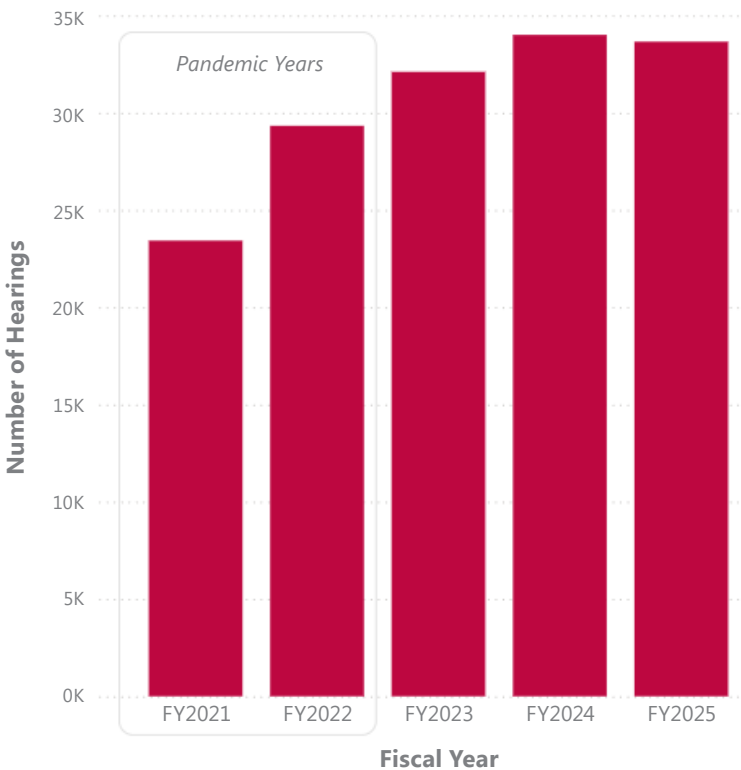
This chart shows the roster lawyer billing trend since 2021 for client certificates billed to LAA.



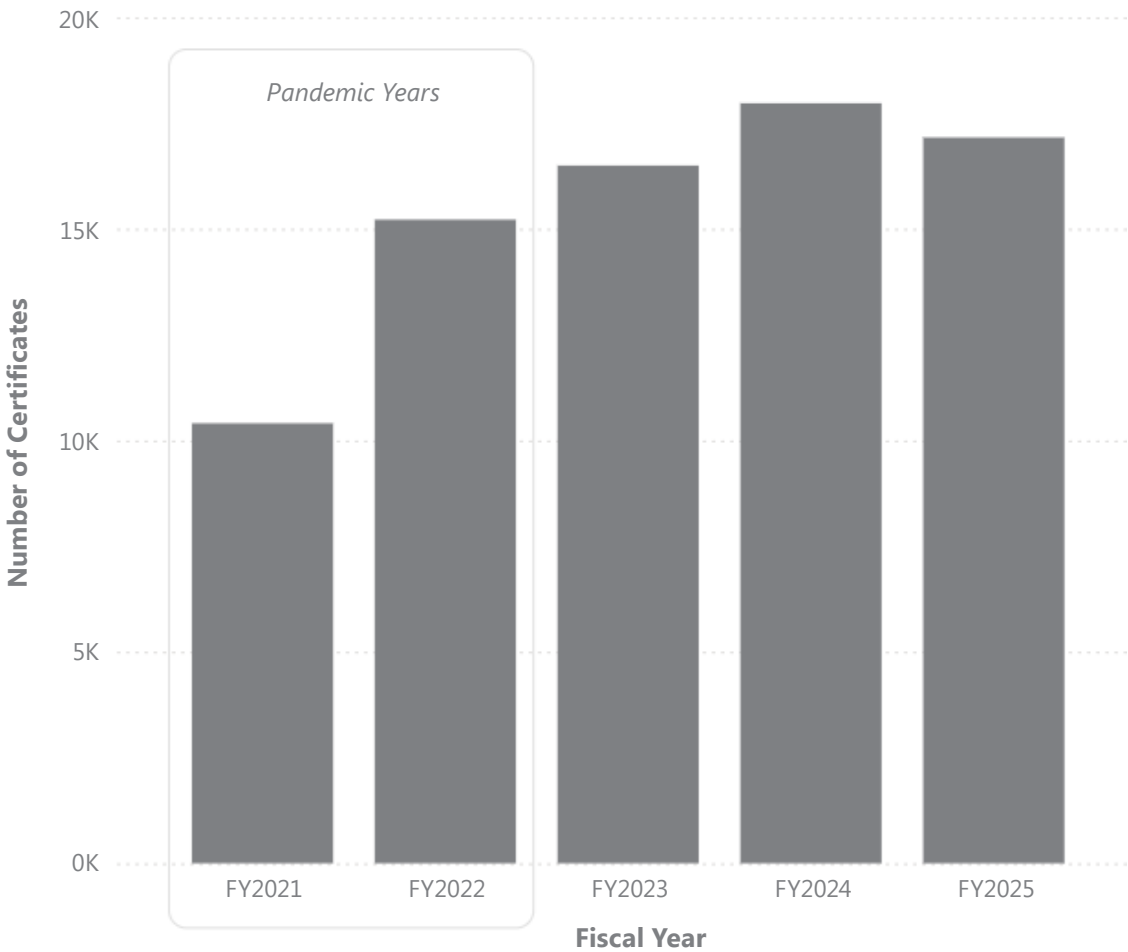
- **October 2022:** The Ministry of Justice approves temporary increases to the tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines.
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- **April 2023:** Tariff modernization implemented by LAA.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE BAIL HEARINGS

All Canadians are innocent until proven guilty. But upon arrest, and prior to having their day in court, people who are accused of a crime and being held in custody are at a distinct disadvantage. LAA's Justice of the Peace (JP) Bail duty counsel are available from 8 a.m. to midnight, 365 days a year, to inform, advise and represent arrested people in bail hearings. The work is done at no cost, by telephone and online platforms. LAA's JP Bail duty counsel section works collaboratively with the courts and Ministry of 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 lawyers also assist individuals detained by police through our 24/7, 365-day Brydges phone line, which moved in-house in April 2024. The number of JP Bail hearings are determined by the number of arrests made by police.



NUMBER OF DUTY COUNSEL CERTIFICATES ISSUED



Thousands of Albertans are required to attend court every year. Without a lawyer on their side to protect their rights and freedoms, their rights could be jeopardized. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees us the right to retain and instruct counsel – and that is where lawyers called duty counsel come in.

Taking on responsibilities that are essential to our democracy, duty counsel provide brief legal advice, at no charge, and prepare you for what is ahead on your journey through the courts. They ensure you're treated fairly. LAA assigns duty counsel in docket courts in all Alberta criminal courts (adult and youth).

In addition to criminal courts, duty counsel can be found at:

- Institutional hearings
- Applications for confirmation of Emergency Protection Orders
- Mental health review panels
- Specialized courts (Mental Health Court, Drug Treatment Court, Indigenous Court)
- Family court (Alberta Court of Justice and Court of King's Bench)

A background image showing two women in professional attire, likely lawyers, looking down at a desk. In the foreground, a bronze statue of Lady Justice, blindfolded and holding scales, stands prominently. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm glow from a desk lamp.

Stories from the Front Lines

Every day, Legal Aid Alberta lawyers are on the front lines helping Albertans navigate the legal system, ensuring access to justice and protecting clients' legal rights.

Changing economic security, increasing crime and mental health issues and an influx of newcomers to Canada all have an effect on the justice system.

No matter the circumstance, LAA steps up to meet the growing legal needs of Albertans – through crucial duty counsel services, 24/7 access for those in police custody and representation for those hoping to call Alberta their new home.

These stories showcase some of the ways LAA is staying accountable to its mission: resolving legal problems for disadvantaged Albertans and, in doing so, protecting the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone.



Protecting Albertans' legal rights while in police custody, 24/7

Legal Aid Alberta Justice of the Peace Bail lawyers are on the job 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to take calls from Albertans detained by police through a special phone line – Brydges – and to represent Albertans at their initial bail hearing.

Brydges is an essential service that is free in Canada. Every person has the right to call a lawyer for legal advice whenever they are arrested and held by police. LAA staff lawyers answer calls from freshly detained individuals, ensuring Albertans can exercise their Charter-protected right to counsel.

"If someone calls us at two, three or even four in the morning, we answer that call for help and provide them with advice," says Megan Ferguson, LAA Justice of the Peace Bail lawyer.

In April 2024, the Brydges line was brought in-house to be run by LAA staff lawyers and has received 25,000 calls from Albertans in custody in the past year.

LAA has been running Brydges for decades, since the landmark *R v Brydges* Supreme Court of Canada decision on the right to retain and instruct counsel under section 10(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1990. Before the move in April 2024, it was always provided by external legal partners.

Today, that service is fully integrated in-house. This shift strengthens how we co-ordinate support, track outcomes and ensure a consistent experience for the people we serve.

Access to quality legal advice at the point of being detained is imperative to any person's understanding of their legal rights and helps accused better protect themselves throughout their interactions with police.

Individuals in custody have a right to a bail hearing within 24 hours of detention. LAA JP Bail lawyers assist these individuals during their bail hearings and guide them through applying for legal aid if further assistance is needed.

Co-ordinated legal support

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 their fundamental rights. Remaining in custody could lead to potentially life-altering circumstances, such as losing their job or not being home for their children.

JP Bail lawyers conducted 33,500 bail hearings for detained Albertans this past year.

"You only get one bail hearing. If bail is denied, you could spend another 30 days in custody before you can appeal that decision," says Dave Lloyd, LAA JP Bail lawyer.

"There's a lot riding on that one hearing, and that's why LAA lawyers are available to represent you. People who represent themselves, who aren't lawyers, can make some very costly errors."



Providing quality, equitable duty counsel services

Duty counsel are legal aid lawyers who give free, on-the-spot legal advice in family, criminal and immigration cases for people living in Canada.

They're in cities, rural communities and remote regions, providing 24/7 service to all Albertans, whether in-person or over the phone, in almost every courtroom across the province – including specialty and docket courts.

Ensuring fair treatment for Albertans in Mental Health Court

Specialty courts, like the Edmonton Mental Health Court, are making a difference in the lives of Albertans who may have more of a story to tell than just how they got their criminal charges. They may also have a reason why.

The Edmonton Mental Health Court has been running since 2018 and has been integral in helping legal aid clients who are also exhibiting mental health conditions.

For Justin Hjelsvold, a Legal Aid Alberta staff duty counsel lawyer, taking on clients whose mental health may directly correlate with their need for legal aid is a common occurrence.

"Almost every day, I run into people who have some type of mental health condition," he says. "Someone with [mental health issues] has a particular profile, and being able to access that information allows the court to tailor the sentence better for that individual," he says.

"The requirements of the court are that there's a reasonable basis to believe that the client has a mental health condition and a reasonable basis to believe that the condition had what's called a nexus – a connection to the offence in question."

Breaking the cycle of addiction and crime

Connecting life circumstances to criminal charges is also a major part of Alberta's Drug Treatment Courts, which have

been running in Edmonton and Calgary since 2005 and 2007, and in 2021, expanded into Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie.

Participants undergo rigorous programs involving frequent drug testing, curfew checks, community service and addiction treatment rather than being incarcerated.

Sonia Haer, a staff duty counsel lawyer with LAA explains that "a lot of the graduates say that going through Drug Treatment Court is harder than going to jail."

She highlights the dedication of the Drug Treatment Court teams, describing the participants' journeys as "a hard, beautiful process."

"People start being present in their own lives – it's amazing to witness."

Bringing knowledge and passion to assisting Indigenous clients

Jay Gill, LAA staff duty counsel lawyer, says lawyers representing clients in Alberta's Indigenous Courts need to bring patience and knowledge into the courtroom to give clients the best representation.

Indigenous Courts, which began operation in Alberta in 2019, are specialized courts that take a restorative approach to criminal justice, including for the victims and the communities that have been harmed by the offender's actions.

"It holds people accountable for their actions, but it also closely examines their circumstances, like the intergenerational trauma that has brought them in to conflict with the law," she says.

"My goal as a Legal Aid Alberta lawyer is not to just close a file or dispose of someone's legal matters, but to assist the court in helping connect them with their culture, guidance and resources they need to succeed and never come back to court again."



Helping newcomers call Alberta their home

Moving to a new country is an enormous undertaking, and one that thousands of people choose when coming to Canada each year. Some have been planning their move carefully; others are fleeing repressive regimes where the Rule of Law is not in effect. All are seeking a better life and a new beginning in Canada. Many are looking to call Alberta home.

According to the Government of Alberta, the province led the country in growth rate for the sixth straight quarter by December 2024. By the end of 2024, Alberta saw a net population growth of close to 170,000 people for the year.

Legal Aid Alberta is on-hand to guide newcomers through what can be a challenging process.

Building trust in the justice system

For Ruth Williams, LAA staff lawyer, making sure clients feel supported and comfortable enough to share their stories is an important first step.

"Creating a safe space for our clients is paramount. For lawyers, the solicitor-client relationship is one that is built on developing trust," says Williams, whose main area of focus is immigration and refugee law.

"This means [lawyers] make working with clients the focus of their practice and foster a collaborative working relationship with those individuals."

Understanding clients through trauma-informed practices

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, LAA saw 1,760 immigration and refugee cases, a 26 per cent increase from 1,397 the previous fiscal year.

These individuals can often be adversely impacted by trauma, and the refugee claim process can be daunting for most.

Trauma-informed lawyers who approach each case with compassion and empathy give clients the tools they need to be able to clearly translate their experiences and stories.

"LAA lawyer training often focuses on providing lawyers with guidance for having trauma-informed practices," adds Williams.

Guiding clients through the courts

The immigration process can be lengthy and confusing for individuals, especially those who may not have English as their first language.

LAA lawyers come in once matters reach the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada – a crucial step in acquiring permanent status and residency – to help in the following areas:

- Refugee claims before the Refugee Protection Division
- Refugee appeals before the Refugee Appeal Division
- Admissibility hearings and detention reviews before the Immigration Division
- Removal appeals before the Immigration Appeal Division

Lawyers also provide coverage for judicial review applications, which are reviews of negative refugee decisions before the Federal Court of Canada.

Financials at a Glance

Sources of cash funding

Residual of Pandemic Years

Fiscal year ended March 31 (000's)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Government of Alberta	\$94,292	\$75,146	\$110,105	\$143,089	\$110,000
2. Alberta Law Foundation	\$19,122	\$5,432	\$2,729	\$22,665	\$38,996
3. Client recoveries	\$4,276	\$5,018	\$4,923	\$4,731	\$5,112
4. Interest and other	\$1,025	\$876	\$2,891	\$4,971	\$4,680
Total cash funding received	\$118,715	\$86,472	\$120,648	\$175,456	\$158,788

Notes

1. Note that these are actual cash amounts received and may differ from amounts shown in the financial statements, which follow LAA's accounting policies and Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Annual grant cash funding from the Government of Alberta (GOA) to fund legal aid services in accordance with the Tripartite Governance Agreement between the GOA, the Legal Aid Society of Alberta (LAA) and the Law Society of Alberta.

Significant variances from year to year mainly reflect changes in cash needs due to changes in service volumes as a result of court availability during the COVID-19 pandemic, variations in amounts received from the Alberta Law Foundation (ALF), and increases in tariff rates approved by the GOA. This may include adjustments to grant amounts and payments from GOA or ALF within specific years. Note that there is a significant risk that the amount received from ALF will fluctuate significantly from year to year depending on interest rates. Any variation is offset by changes in funding from GOA.

2. Cash funding received from the Alberta Law Foundation includes the 25 per cent portion of interest on pooled lawyer trust accounts in Alberta, per section 123 of the Legal Profession Act, and additional contributions made to LAA. These amounts are highly volatile, as they are subject to changes in interest rates and economic activity in Alberta. Note the figures shown include amounts allocated to the Contingent Reserve and therefore may differ from those presented in the financial statements.

3. LAA sets up a repayment plan for each client receiving services by way of an individual legal representation certificate. This consistent practice yields a significant recovery of funds which are used to provide services for other vulnerable Albertans.

4. LAA has negotiated rates for all cash on hand that ensures competitive returns with significantly reduced risk. This includes the Contingent Reserve. The variation in amounts received from year to year reflects changes in rates and funds on hand in the year.



Financial statements of

**The Legal Aid Society
of Alberta**

**Year ended March 31, 2025, with
comparative information for 2024**

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, 2025, and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and 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, 2025, and the results of its 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 Matter

The financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2024 were audited by another auditor who expressed an unmodified opinion on those statements on June 25, 2024.

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 on this other information, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. 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, Alberta

June 24, 2025

MNP LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of Financial Position

(dollar amounts in thousands)

March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

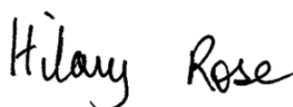
	2025	2024
Assets		
Current:		
Cash-operating and unrestricted	\$ 28,465	\$ 21,232
Cash-restricted-deferred revenue [Note 3, 5]	36,895	74,427
Cash-restricted-quarterly pre-grant funding operations reserve [Note 3, 8]	32,671	-
Cash-restricted-contingent reserve [Note 3, 7]	22,000	8,500
Accounts receivable	119	10
Goods and services input tax credits receivable	913	868
Prepaid expenses	264	125
	121,327	105,162
Capital assets, net [Note 4]	4,505	5,075
	\$ 125,832	\$ 110,237

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 6,034	\$ 4,793
Accrued vacation pay	1,969	2,124
Deferred lease liability - current portion	340	273
Deferred revenue [Note 5]	36,895	74,427
Provision for unbilled services [Note 6]	17,702	13,957
	62,940	95,574
Deferred contributions [Note 7]	22,000	8,500
Deferred lease liability - long term	3,716	4,275
	88,656	108,349
Net Assets:		
Unrestricted net assets	-	(3,187)
Internally funded capital assets	4,505	5,075
Internally restricted:		
Quarterly pre-grant funding operations reserve [Note 8]	32,671	-
	37,176	1,888
	\$ 125,832	\$ 110,237

Commitments and contingencies [Note 11]

See accompanying notes to financial statements



Hilary Rose



Ryan Callioux

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of Changes in Net Assets

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

	Unrestricted net assets	Internally funded capital assets	Internally restricted - quarterly pre- grant funding operations reserve	2025 Total	2024 Total
Balance, beginning of year	\$ (3,187)	\$ 5,075	\$ -	\$ 1,888	\$ 1,888
Excess of revenue over expenses	35,288	-	-	35,288	-
Purchase of capital assets	(69)	69	-	-	-
Amortization of capital assets	639	(639)	-	-	-
Transfer [Note 8]	(32,671)	-	32,671	-	-
Balance, end of year	\$ -	\$ 4,505	\$ 32,671	\$ 37,176	\$ 1,888

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of Operations

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

	2025	2024
Revenue:		
Grant-Province of Alberta <i>[Note 5, 9]</i>	\$ 147,532	\$ 106,373
Grant-Alberta Law Foundation <i>[Note 10]</i>	25,496	22,665
Client recoveries	5,112	4,731
Interest and other	4,679	4,971
Total revenue	182,819	138,740
Expenses:		
Roster (outsourced legal representation):		
Criminal - adult	67,770	59,185
Criminal - youth	3,553	2,839
Child welfare	3,801	3,326
Immigration and refugee	2,589	866
Family and civil	10,968	9,136
Duty counsel	7,368	6,788
	96,049	82,140
Provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates <i>[Note 6]</i>	3,745	3,984
	99,794	86,124
Internal operating expenses by area <i>[Note 13]</i> :		
Legal representation	31,986	35,202
Client services	9,231	9,781
Management, general, and administration	6,520	7,633
	47,737	52,616
Total expenses	147,531	138,740
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 35,288	\$ -

See accompanying notes to financial statements

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Statement of Cash Flows

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

	2025	2024
Cash flows provided by (used in):		
Operating:		
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 35,288	\$ -
Items not involving cash:		
Amortization of capital assets	639	510
Amortization of deferred lease liability	(492)	160
Provision for unbilled services	3,745	3,984
Changes in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(109)	(10)
Goods and services input tax credits receivable	(45)	(185)
Prepaid expenses	(139)	147
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,241	(384)
Accrued vacation pay	(155)	(16)
Deferred revenue	(37,532)	36,716
	2,441	40,922
Financing:		
Contributions received for lease inducements	-	2,336
Contingent reserve [Note 7, 10]	13,500	-
	13,500	2,336
Investing:		
Purchase of capital assets	(69)	(3,542)
	(69)	(3,542)
Increase in cash and restricted cash	15,872	39,716
Cash and restricted cash, beginning of year	104,159	64,443
Cash and restricted cash, end of year	\$ 120,031	\$ 104,159
Represented by:		
Cash-operating and unrestricted	\$ 28,465	\$ 21,232
Cash-restricted-deferred revenue	36,895	74,427
Cash-restricted-quarterly pre-grant funding operations reserve	32,671	-
Cash-restricted-contingent reserve	22,000	8,500
	\$ 120,031	\$ 104,159

See accompanying notes to financial statements

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

1. The organization

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta [the "Society"], registered as a society under the laws of the Province of Alberta, provides legal aid services by agreement between the Society, the Law Society of Alberta, and the Alberta Ministry of Justice to assist individuals of modest means in obtaining legal services for qualifying matters. LAA operates under a governance agreement effective September 6, 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.

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 occupancy, and information technology and business intelligence, which are allocated to functions by head count.

Financial instruments

Financial instruments, including accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, accrued vacation pay, and the provision for unbilled services are initially recorded at their fair value and are subsequently measured at amortized cost, net of any provisions for impairment. Transaction costs related to financial instruments measured at fair value are expensed as incurred.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

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
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Long-lived assets

Long-lived assets consist of capital assets. Long-lived assets held for use are measured and amortized as described in the applicable accounting policies.

The Society writes down long-lived assets held for use when conditions indicate that the asset no longer contributes to the Society's ability to provide goods and services or future economic benefits of the asset are less than its net carrying amount. When the Society determines that a long-lived asset is impaired, its carrying amount is written down to the asset's fair value.

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.

Cloud computing arrangements

The Society has adopted the simplification method for recording expenditures related to cloud computing arrangements. Under this method, expenditures are treated as a supply of services and recognized as an expense when the services are received.

3. Cash - restricted

The use of certain cash balances are restricted based on their intended use. See notes 5, 7, and 8.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

4. Capital assets

Capital assets consist of the following:

	2025		2024	
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Cost	Accumulated amortization
Tangible assets				
Furniture and equipment	\$ 405	\$ 294	\$ 426	\$ 246
Computer hardware	190	160	210	160
Leasehold improvements	5,893	1,530	5,824	979
	6,488	1,984	6,460	1,385
Intangible assets				
Computer software	—	—	5,325	5,325
	\$ 6,488	\$ 1,984	\$ 11,785	\$ 6,710
Net book value	\$ 4,505		\$ 5,075	

During the year, the Society removed the cost and accumulated amortization of fully amortized assets as follows: furniture and equipment \$21 [2024 – \$93], computer hardware \$20 [2024 – \$7], leasehold improvements \$nil [2024 – \$1,706] and computer software \$5,325 [2024 – \$nil]. Included in leasehold improvements is construction in progress of \$69 [2024 – \$nil].

5. Deferred revenue

The Society has received funding for services to be delivered to clients, in excess of amounts required. As a result, \$36,895 [2024 – \$74,427] of the funding from the Province of Alberta has been deferred and a corresponding amount of cash has been classified as restricted cash – deferred revenue for this purpose. This will be recognized as the expenses are incurred.

	2025	2024
Deferred revenue, beginning of year	74,427	37,711
Grant – Province of Alberta – funding received	110,000	143,089
	184,427	180,800
Grant – Province of Alberta – revenue recognized	(147,532)	(106,373)
Deferred revenue, end of year	36,895	74,427

See also Note 9

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

6. Provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates

The provision for services provided by roster lawyers 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, 2025, related to the change in provision for unbilled services provided on outstanding certificates, was \$3,745 [2024 – \$3,984]. As at March 31, 2025, the Society had approximately 27,930 [2024 – 24,163] outstanding certificates issued to roster lawyers with an estimated liability of \$17,702 [2024 – \$13,957].

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, 2025, on outstanding roster certificates, the Society estimates the future costs to complete roster and Society lawyer certificate files. As at March 31, 2025, there is an estimated \$32,142 [2024 – \$25,178] that will be incurred on approximately 29,154 [2024 – 25,839] 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 requires that the Society defer and hold certain grant amounts received from the Alberta Law Foundation and the Province of Alberta, referred to as a contingent reserve, to a maximum amount agreed with the Province of Alberta (currently \$22.0 million), for non-forecasted or unbudgeted costs.

	Province of Alberta	2025 Alberta Law Foundation	Total	2024 Total
Balance, beginning of year	1,000	7,500	8,500	8,500
Additions during the year [Note 10]	—	13,500	13,500	—
Balance, end of year	1,000	21,000	22,000	8,500

8. Internally restricted reserve

During the year, the Board of Directors approved the creation of a Quarterly Pre-Grant Funding Operations Reserve, for a maximum amount of one quarter of total budgeted annual expenses. A corresponding amount of cash has been restricted to fund operations until government grant funding is received at the end of each quarter.

9. Grant – Province of Alberta

Revenue from the Province of Alberta consists of the following:

	2025	2024
Grant – Province of Alberta – funds received	\$ 110,000	\$ 143,089
Prior years' deferred grant funds recognized (grant funds deferred)	37,532	(36,716)
	\$ 147,532	\$ 106,373

See also Note 5.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

10. Grant – Alberta Law Foundation

Funds received from the Alberta Law Foundation during the year were allocated as follows:

	2025	2024
Grant – Alberta Law Foundation – funds received	\$ 38,996	\$ 22,665
Amount reallocated to deferred contributions (contingent reserve) [Note 7]	(13,500)	—
Grant - Alberta Law Foundation – revenue recognized	\$ 25,496	\$ 22,665

See also Note 7.

11. 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:

2026	\$ 1,916
2027	1,898
2028	1,946
2029	1,966
2030	2,000
Thereafter	6,768
	\$ 16,494

[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.

12. Cloud computing arrangements

During the year, the Society expensed \$3,235 [2024 - \$5,715] related to implementation, licensing, maintenance, and enhancement of software used, and to be used, under cloud computing arrangements. These expenses are included under the classification of Computer in Note 13.

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

13. Internal operating expenses

Internal operating expenses reflected in the statement of operations, grouped by type, are as follows:

	2025	2024
Salaries and benefits	\$ 39,371	\$ 39,617
Legal disbursements	182	158
Office operating and supplies	980	2,591
Communication	210	277
Computer [Note 12]	3,663	6,331
Outside services	503	745
Travel	222	185
Occupancy	1,662	1,798
Goods and services tax - not refundable	305	404
Amortization of capital assets	639	510
	\$ 47,737	\$ 52,616

Occupancy expense has been allocated to service groups as follows:

	2025	2024
Legal representation	\$ 982	\$ 1,141
Client services	394	344
Management, general, and administration	286	313
	\$ 1,662	\$ 1,798

Internal operating expenses for the information technology and business intelligence services have been allocated to service groups as follows:

	2025	2024
Legal representation	\$ 5,066	\$ 6,656
Client services	2,325	2,849
Management, general, and administration	868	1,310
	\$ 8,259	\$ 10,815

14. 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 \$nil [2024 – \$nil] to the Society and their respective firms provided additional certificate services of \$155 [2024 – \$28].

15. Trust accounts

As part of its normal professional practice, the Society administers trust money on behalf of its clients, which 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, 2025 amounted to \$61 [2024 – \$168].

The Legal Aid Society of Alberta

Notes to financial statements

(dollar amounts in thousands)

Year ended March 31, 2025, with comparative information for 2024

16. 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.

17. Comparative figures

Certain comparative figures have been reclassified to conform with current year presentation.