



Immigration Tariff Invoicing Guide

September 24, 2025



Disclaimer:

Please be advised that this Tariff Handbook for lawyers does NOT override the Tariff or any associated LAA policy or Rules.

The purpose of this document is to help in understanding how the Tariff operates and to address common confusions regarding invoicing under the Tariff.

This Handbook is also intended to provide up-to-date information on processing and requirements for Additional Hour requests.

*****This Handbook is subject to change.** An updated and current version will always be found on the Roster Resources - Legal Aid Alberta***



Lawyer's Guide to the Immigration Tariff

Please review your certificate to confirm the legal issues and hours allotted. Two (2) extra hours are provided for each additional family member.

Certificate Types

16.01 Immigration Certificate

- Admissibility hearings (3 hours) – one appearance only
- Removal Appeals due to criminality (10 hours)
- Detention Reviews (3 hours)
- Refugee Claims (12 hours)
- Refugee Appeals (25 hours)
- Judicial Reviews of refugee decisions from RPD and RAD (25 hours)

Here are examples of what counsel can and **cannot** bill for:

Counsel can bill for the following:

- Adjournment/postponement of hearing
- Attending IRB hearings or Federal Court judicial reviews
- Correspondence to/from client
- Correspondence to/from IRB, CBSA or IRCC
- Communication to/from client
- Communication to/from IRB, CBSA or IRCC
- Drafting Affidavit
- Drafting and Filing IRB or Federal Court Applications
- Meetings with Client
- Meetings with IRB, CBSA, or IRCC
- Preparation and Filing disclosure materials at IRB
- Preparation for IRB hearings or Federal Court applications
- Research
- Read and review IRB, CBSA or IRCC disclosure
- Telephone calls to/from client
- Telephone calls to/from IRB, CBSA or IRCC

Counsel **cannot** bill for the following:

- Administrative work.
- Communication with Legal Aid Alberta via email, correspondence, or telephone.
- Consultations with other lawyers within a law firm or a mentor.
- Leaving or retrieving voicemail.
- Preparing accounts.
- Preparing memos to place on a file.
- Providing office staff with instructions.
- Sending copies of letters to the client or anyone else.
- Telephone conversations, correspondence or other steps taken to schedule appointments with the client.
- Work done by an assistant and/or student.



Certificate Types, cont'd

16.02 Opinion Certificate

These are 2-hour certificates to determine merit for the following matters:

- Removal Appeals due to criminal inadmissibility
- Refugee Appeals
- Judicial Reviews of refugee claim decisions to the Federal Court

Note: Our merit assessment test asks two questions –

- i. Is the cost of commencing or defending the action reasonable for the relief sought? and
- ii. Does the action have merit, a likelihood of success, or both?



Table 1: Immigration Tariffs

Type	Tariff Item	Description	Amount	Receipt Required	Maximum	Comments
Ordinary	16.01	Immigration Certificate	\$125.00/hour	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Admissibility hearings (3 hours)➤ Detention Reviews (3 hours) – first appearance only➤ Removal Appeals due to criminality (10 hours)➤ Refugee Claims (12 hours)➤ Refugee Appeals (25 hours)➤ Judicial Reviews of refugee decisions from RPD and RAD (25 hours)	Maximum number of hours allowable will be indicated on Certificate as a condition. Two hours (2) is given for each additional family member.
Ordinary	16.02	Opinion Certificate	\$125.00/hour	No	2 hours <i>*NOTE: Immigration opinion certificates are only issued for Removal appeals, Refugee Appeals, and Judicial Reviews</i>	Maximum number of hours allowable will be indicated on Certificate as a condition.



Extra Tariff Items

15.02 Additional Hours

LAA is a publicly funded non-profit organization meaning that we have a responsibility to our funders to ensure that all expenditure of public funds is justified and reasonable. LAA is not a free service, and we have a duty to the Client to both provide oversight and ensure reasonable legal expenses for a person of modest means. Additional Hours are “discretionary funding”.

Additional hours are “the exception not the rule” and are not guaranteed on any file. Requests must justify the need for additional hours. There must be adequate reasoning provided in addition to principled consideration of how the hours included in the Tariff are being expended.

- Any additional hours are “actual time spent” and time tracking, or recording is mandatory.
- Time records must be attached to every Authorization Request for Additional Hours

The LAA Assessment Team’s goal is not to micro-manage a lawyer’s file, however we require specific information to be provided in order to (a) confirm how tariff included hours were or will be expended and (b) confirm that additional hours on top of the tariff are justified and reasonable based on a holistic view of the client and the case.

Your request may be rejected or revised to a lower number of hours because:

- Not enough information or the wrong information was provided to justify the hours requested.
- Enough information was provided but the number of hours sought is not reasonable considering:
 - the legal issues on the certificate
 - the length of time that has passed since the certificate was issued without concluding.
 - the client’s behavior (ex. demanding, excessive emails to the lawyer, unreasonable client expectations, unwilling to compromise)
- The legal issue(s) cited to justify the need for Additional Hours is/are basic or common legal knowledge. For instance, additional hours needed to research or understand the legal issue are not justified (ex. spending time researching basic immigration law concepts such as factors for determining immigration detention)
- Time records are not in compliance with the LAA Guidelines, or the amount of time spent on a task exceeds what would be reasonably expected for the average lawyer with immigration law experience (ex. substantial time preparing for straight-forward admissibility hearing).
- The request cannot be approved for another exceptional reason (i.e., the merit of counsel’s proposed action is questionable)
- Recording time for administrative tasks, such as filing documents with the IRB, photocopying, scanning documents.
- Performing work that is not covered on the certificate (ex. completing initial refugee claim documents).

- If the certificate has been stopped, no further work should be necessary on the file and if you are submitting your request because you want retroactive hours to final bill, see section below on “Retroactive Hours.”

More general guidelines concerning how LAA assesses discretionary funding requests, like additional hours, can be found in LAA’s Administrative Policy 5.

Making a Request

There are three main guidelines for additional hour requests:

1. LAA needs as much substantive information about the file as you can provide.
2. LAA can only approve additional hours above and beyond the tariff if the request includes proper documentation (time records are mandatory) and justification for the hours expended on work done and needed for work still required, keeping in mind the standard of a “reasonable client of modest means”. If, for example, the client has been excessively demanding or unreasonable, requests for additional hours may not be approved.
3. Please submit requests for hours as the file evolves based on a realistic assessment of what will be required for the foreseeable future rather than asking for a large chunk at the outset of the file (as an estimate “just in case” every obstacle arises). **The maximum number of hours that will be approved per request is 30 hours.**

There is a requirement for additional documentation and information to approve additional hours as we are taking a holistic review of the certificate, the client, and overall circumstances in which the request is made in advance of approval.



Summary - Requesting Additional Hours:

- Provide specific information about the file – do not make general statements – give details.
- Provide details regarding adjournments, hearings or resumptions – number of times you attended, dates, nature of the matters and outcomes.
- Identify what the additional hours will be used for and how the hours will assist with resolution of the matter.
- Interim bill before submitting your request. *Interim billing must be done every 12 months.*
- Submit timesheets with every request, from file opening.

Information Required When Submitting the Request:

The following questions (non-exhaustive) were developed to assist in identifying the information to provide when making a request for additional hours:

- Certificate Acceptance Date
- Type of Matter
- Summary of Matter
- Hours Requested
- Hours Spent
- Hours Remaining: If you have exceeded the maximum allowable hours on the certificate and this is a request for retroactive hours, then clearly indicate the time spent before the authorization request.
- Previous Request for more hours and amount approved
- Summary of Action Taken to Date:
 - How many times have you met with the client and why?
 - Have you collected disclosure from the client?
 - What have you submitted to the relevant Division (and Minister, if applicable)?
 - Other actions taken, such as, communication with the IRB, Minister's Counsel, file research, applications made to the IRB, etc.
- List of actions/tasks outstanding to complete work on file
- Future hearing date
- Any adjournments or resumption (and why, if applicable)?
 - Dates of adjournment
 - Reason for adjournment
 - Date of resumption
- Minister's involvement and why?
 - Is the Minister an intervening party?
 - What is their position?
 - Summary of the Minister's case and evidence they are relying on
- Why do you need the extra hours?
 - Is this a complex or simple matter?
 - Explain what makes it complex
 - Explain why more hours are needed for a simple matter



Retroactive Hours

The Retroactive Hours Policy is not a substitute for properly submitting Additional Hour Requests and having hours approved prior to being expended. It is expected that all hours and special disbursements will be requested beforehand. Excerpts below are from Administration Policy 5 (April 2023):

3.18 LAA may approve a retroactive Authorization Request for legal services (or a disbursement) and reimburse a lawyer for some or all of the retroactive services (or disbursement), but only if:

- (a) one of the exceptions set out in this Part applies; or*
- (b) an exception does not apply, but there are other exceptional circumstances where the lawyer made reasonable and good-faith efforts to adhere to the discretionary authorization process and failing to reimburse the lawyer would cause substantial unfairness to the lawyer.*

Exceptions – Retroactive Authorization Requests

3.19 LAA may approve a retroactive Authorization Request if:

- (a) it was reasonably necessary to perform the services (or expend the disbursement) to protect the client's position or the client's interests;*
- (b) the lawyer could not have reasonably anticipated the need to submit an Authorization Request at an earlier stage of proceedings; and*
- (c) the lawyer promptly submitted a retroactive Authorization Request after they performed the services (or expended the disbursement).*

3.20 LAA may approve a retroactive Authorization Request if:

- (a) the lawyer submitted an Authorization Request before performing those services (or expending the disbursement);*
- (b) the services (or disbursement) were reasonably necessary the circumstances; and*
- (c) LAA had not yet responded to the lawyer's Authorization Request when the lawyer performed the services (or expended the disbursement).*

For example, if you request 40 hours and are given 20 – it is your responsibility to request the further 20 hours with additional updated information before going above those first 20 approved hours.



Time Tracking & Hourly Billing

Time tracking is essential to proper record keeping and maintenance of a LAA certificate.

Always keep this in mind: If you were rendering an account to a private retainer client, how much detail would you include to avoid having the Assessment and Review Officer at the courthouse review your time and reduce the total amount charged?

- Timesheets should include client name, matter or file reference and time records submitted should be provided from a time entry program such as PC Law or Esi-Law. At the very least, they must be typed, and identify date, task, and amount of time.
- Timesheets should be detailed and specific (What type of document was reviewed? What type of document was prepared? What hearing did you attend?)
- Timesheets need to be made contemporaneously as the file evolves – not created or re-created after the fact. That means “immediately enter the time spent.”
- Avoid block time entries for multiple tasks. Ex. 3.0 hours to email client, call Minister’s counsel, draft affidavit. Use a separate time entry for each task.
 - BUT: If you receive an email from the client and immediately send a reply, the time should be recorded as one entry for the **actual** time spent. That is, a 0.10-time entry is 1-6 minutes of time. If reading and responding to the email took less than 7 minutes, do not record it as a .20, and do not record it as a .10 to read the email, and another .10 to reply.
- If you want to keep track of all time on the file, even though it is “nonbillable” as per LAA guidelines, ensure that the non-billable time is appropriately identified and excluded
- If you have recorded time for research, be sure the time entry describes what research was done and how it relates to the client’s matter.

FINAL INVOICING – MUST BE DONE WITHIN SIX (6) MONTHS OF COMPLETING THE WORK AND ATTACH A COPY OF THE LAST IRB DECISION/ORDER.



Disbursements

For both ordinary and special disbursements under the Tariff, a lawyer must keep invoice and receipt records and submit to LAA when invoicing the item. Under the modernized Tariff, both the Ordinary and Special Disbursements have been streamlined as per Table 2.

Greyed-out items do not typically arise in the conduct of immigration matters; therefore, they can only be billed in exceptional circumstances. For example, billing for kilometrage and meals for in-person hearings in Edmonton and Calgary will be rejected.

Table 2: Disbursements

Type	Tariff Item	Description	Amount	Receipt Required	Comment
Ordinary	17.01	Administrative File Fee	\$50.00	No	Available on full-representation certificates only to cover miscellaneous file management costs. File opening fee and closing fee are not available for immigration certificates.
Ordinary	17.02	Kilometrage	Actual Cost	No	\$0.83/km and subject to LAA Policy. Only on certificates where travel is required and out of town for appearance.
Ordinary	17.03	Meal: Breakfast	\$9.20	No	Only on certificates where travel is required. Refer to current travel and disbursement guidelines for Roster Lawyers for more information
Ordinary	17.04	Meal: Lunch	\$11.60	No	Only on certificates where travel is required. Refer to current travel and disbursement guidelines for Roster Lawyers for more information
Ordinary	17.05	Meal: Dinner	\$20.75	No	Only on certificates where travel is required. Refer to current travel and disbursement guidelines for Roster Lawyers for more information
Ordinary	17.06	Accommodation	Actual Cost	Yes	Only on certificates where travel is required. Refer to current travel and disbursement guidelines for Roster Lawyers for more information
Ordinary	17.07	Airfare and Other Transportation	Actual Cost	Yes	Only on certificates where travel is required. Refer to current travel and disbursement guidelines for Roster Lawyers for more information
Ordinary	17.08	Process Servers	Actual Cost	Yes	\$500.00 max; can request additional
Ordinary	17.09	Conduct Money for Ordinary Witnesses	Actual Cost	Yes	If these criteria are not met, prior approval must be sought under Tariff item 18.05
Ordinary	17.12	Transcripts – Other (non-bail, non-expedited)	Actual Cost	Yes	Request expedited transcripts under 18.07
Ordinary	17.13A	Photocopies per page	\$0.10 per page	No	

Type	Tariff Item	Description	Amount	Receipt Required	Comment
Ordinary	17.13B	Photocopies done by Outside Agency	Actual Cost	Yes	Including outside agency printing
Ordinary	17.14	Medical Reports	Actual Cost	Yes	Maximum allowed is \$250.00. Prior approval must be sought for expenses more than \$250.00 under Tariff item 18.06
Ordinary	17.15	Court Searches	Actual Cost	Yes	Maximum allowed is \$150.00. Prior approval must be sought for expenses more than \$150.00 under Tariff item 18.06
Ordinary	17.16	Courier and Runner Services	Actual Cost	Yes	
Ordinary	17.17	Translation and Interpretation Expenses	Actual Cost	Yes	\$2000 max per immigration cert. The IRB provides its own interpreters for its hearings.
Extra Tariff Items					
Special	18.01	Experts (see para 3.23 of Admin Policy 5)	Per Hourly Rate	Yes	Request authorization required before engaging services.
Special	18.06	Maps, Models, Records or Statements	Actual Cost	Yes	
Special	18.07	Expedited Transcripts and Transcription Services	Actual Cost	Yes	
Special	18.08	Translation and Interpretation Services (over \$2000)	Actual Cost	Yes	



Contact Information

What do you need help with?

Billing

Invoicing, Tariff questions, payments
taxation@legalaid.ab.ca

Duty Counsel

DC certificates, Shiftboard
dutycounsel@legalaid.ab.ca

Certificates

LAA certificates, certificate, and tariff officer requests
certificatemanagement@legalaid.ab.ca

Lawyer Portal

Technical help, account troubleshooting, reset password, report an issue
lawyerportal@legalaid.ab.ca

Client Gateway

Technical help, account troubleshooting, reset password, report an issue
clientgateway@legalaid.ab.ca

Roster Relations

Questions, comments or concerns about Legal Aid Policies, Rules and/or Agreements
rosterrelations@legalaid.ab.ca

Modernized Tariff Questions

Questions, comments or concerns about the Modernized Tariff
tariff@legalaid.ab.ca

General LAA Feedback

Comments, content suggestions, website feedback
communications@legalaid.ab.ca



Legal Aid Alberta

