

**Meeting of Legal Aid Ontario  
French Language Services  
advisory committee on  
October 18, 2017**



LEGAL AID ONTARIO  

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# 1 Committee members

John McCamus (Chair); Patrice Cormier; Marie-Claude Gaudreault; Josée Guindon; Madeleine Hébert; Ayana Carla Hutchinson; Marie-Josée Lafleur; Andrée-Anne Martel; Aissa Nauthoo; Vicky Ringuette; Christian St-Onge; Leonie Tchatat; Michel Robillard (Legal Aid Ontario Board Liaison)

## 1.1 Interpreter

Pauline Dion-Rowlatt

# 2 Welcome and introductions

Chair John McCamus opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

# 3 Minutes, April 25, 2017

The minutes of the April 25, 2017 meeting were approved.

# 4 Legal Aid Ontario business planning slide deck and discussion

The Chair presented an overview of [the Legal Aid Ontario updates and business planning discussion slide deck](#), highlighting recent developments and matters for the committee's consideration.

Committee members provided input and advice. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of every member.

- It was noted that asset limits are being increased significantly for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients. This gives people the ability to retain assets such as a small inheritance, without affecting their eligibility for benefits. A single individual can now qualify for the Ontario Disability Support Program with up to \$40,000 in assets, and for Ontario Works with up to \$10,000. Legal Aid Ontario should try to align with this shift in policy. Legal Aid Ontario will be reviewing its asset limits in light of changes to the asset limits for eligibility for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits.

- Legal Aid Ontario should study the impact of the increase to the minimum wage on eligibility for legal aid. Expanded financial eligibility was intended to enable Legal Aid Ontario to serve people who have employment income, but this increase makes it less likely that people can qualify. It was pointed out that Legal Aid Ontario also needs to consider the impact of this increase on the Low Income Measure. Legal Aid Ontario's business case for increasing financial eligibility was based on the Low Income Measure in 2011, but it is not a fixed measure of poverty. Ideally, eligibility would be tied to the Low Income Measure as it changes over time.
- Legal Aid Ontario should continue discussions with the government on the intersection between the province's basic income pilot and eligibility for legal aid.

## 5 French Language Services update and discussion

Legal Aid Ontario's Program Manager, French Language Services, presented the French Language Services update to the committee, focusing on 2017 highlights.

As part of Legal Aid Ontario's focus on increasing French Language Services capacity and training, Legal Aid Ontario continues to support clinics in building enhanced capacity. For example, Legal Aid Ontario provides assistance to clinics in the recruitment of bilingual staff.

Legal Aid Ontario works with Human Resources to integrate French Language Services training into current programs and to develop training, including lunch and learn continuing professional development sessions, in French. The lunch and learn programs are presented with the assistance of experts from across the province. The lunch and learn that was featured in September was on the topic of lawyer obligations to advise Francophone clients of their rights to French Language Services and how to assist them. Lunch and learn sessions are taped and made available to staff and panel lawyers through the LAO LAW and intranet websites.

September was French Language Services month at Legal Aid Ontario, with mandatory training for all staff and many activities on offer to increase awareness and promote Active Offer of services in French.

There will be twelve Legal Aid Ontario staff lawyers participating in the Legal Aid Ontario workshop at the Ministry of the Attorney General's French Language Institute for Professional Development training in October this year. The training this year will also feature a facilitated discussion panel with French Language Services stakeholders. Participation in this training has expanded due to the changing roles in courthouses. In addition to lawyers, this year the

training is being attended by paralegals and by a legal aid worker who provides assistance with bail matters.

Legal Aid Ontario is a participant on the project team led by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes to develop online training on prevention of domestic violence for justice sector personnel. It is anticipated that 20 online training modules will be produced.

Legal Aid Ontario continues, through meetings, consultations and presentations, to inform stakeholders and the community in accordance with its mandate.

Collaboration is ongoing between Legal Aid Ontario, clinics and stakeholders to enhance French language services with the help of funding from the Canada-Ontario project, *Enhancement of French Language Legal Services for Ontario Youth*. This initiative is now in its fifth year, and it has a number of different aspects. One example involves a number of partners including Legal Aid Ontario working with the Canadian Civil Liberties Education Trust to produce a new and more comprehensive and relevant guide for LGBTQ youth. A small team worked together to update documents and resources in French to support this initiative and to ensure that it was not simply a translation of English language materials. This guide will be used in three workshops for LGBTQ youth that will be run for the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne in October in Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto.

Legal Aid Ontario continues to work with regional teams and clinics to support French language services in plans and programs. French language services is also integrated into Legal Aid Ontario's planning and consultation processes.

Consultations to support the development of Legal Aid Ontario's Racialized Communities Strategy are getting underway in October 2017. A number of these consultations will be conducted in French, and others will be bilingual. Committee members are invited to attend these consultations and are asked to advise Legal Aid Ontario of those in their community who may wish to participate in a consultation. They can contact the strategy team directly at [rcs@lao.on.ca](mailto:rcs@lao.on.ca).

Looking ahead, Legal Aid Ontario continues to focus on bilingual recruitment and training to enhance French language skills. A new quarterly information bulletin is being used to promote the tools that are available from Legal Aid Ontario. Legal Aid Ontario has used a survey at the end of the September 2017 mandatory training to enable staff to identify priorities that will assist in the development of tools and training.

Legal Aid Ontario is working to develop an approach to creating gender neutral materials in French, and would appreciate suggestions from the committee. Legal Aid Ontario also continues to work on guidelines for the service model in Markham, the newest designated area under the French Language Services Act.

Committee members provided input and advice. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of every member.

- It would be helpful if Legal Aid Ontario’s French language lunch and learn programs could be made accessible to partner organizations, such as the Association of French Speaking Jurists of Ontario, that also provide training. It could also be made more accessible to clinic lawyers if it was posted on the Clinic Resource Office website.
- Legal Aid Ontario may wish to consider making its French language continuing professional development training for lawyers available to paralegals, legal assistants and others, as it could also be useful to them. It was noted that training offered in September and October was available to all Legal Aid Ontario legal professionals.
- Lawyers wishing to represent their clients in French need access to training on “legalese”, that is to say technical legal language and terminology. Legal Aid Ontario may wish to become involved in a French legal language training initiative that is funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It provides formal skills assessment, training and evaluation in accordance with the Ministry’s standards for learning. The Association of French Speaking Jurists of Ontario also offers training on French legal terminology and is available to collaborate with others to develop and promote such training.
- Another opportunity exists around the provision of legal literacy training. Basic information about legal rights and access to justice can be provided as part of basic literacy and life skills training run by the Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes. It can be very valuable for low-income and vulnerable individuals. There are 350 training centres across Ontario that provide basic literacy training. This training option may be of interest to legal clinics as they also provide legal information and rights awareness training in their catchment areas.

## 6 Other business

None raised.