

B3: Better Billing Bulletin

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Transcription services

As outlined in O. Reg. 94/14, ordering parties are charged \$4.30 per page for the first certified copy of the transcript. Copies of court transcripts required for the Court of Appeal for Ontario or the Divisional Court are available through the Queen's Printer at no cost to the ACT or the ordering party.

When placing your order, make sure you specify that the copies are to be arranged through the Queen's Printer for no additional cost. Deposits and/or payment of the regulated fees are arranged between you as the ordering party, and the transcriptionist you choose.

LAO will approve and reimburse the cost of transcripts based on the principles outlined in the Court transcript standards and procedures manual. If there is a dispute regarding the amount charged or the number of copies billed, the ordering party should resolve the matter with the transcriptionist directly.

More information about the changes made last year to transcription services can be found on our website and in volume 46 of the B3.

Refugee Transcript Pilot Project

As of November 1, 2015, the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) will be conducting a transcript pilot project. The six month pilot project will evaluate whether or not efficiencies can be achieved in the processing of appeals by the RAD that would merit the provision of Refugee Protection Division (RPD) hearing transcripts by the IRB to counsel or self-represented appellants on a permanent basis. For more information go to: <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/NewsNouv/NewNou/Pages/tpp.aspx>

Lawyers are asked to take advantage of this service instead of requesting a transcript disbursement from LAO whenever possible.

Submitting account details

When entering hour or block details on *Legal Aid Online*, it's very important that you ensure the solicitor number entered is accurate. An incorrectly entered number could affect solicitor hardcap and may result in a payment delay.

The screenshot shows a web interface for entering account details. At the top, there is a header "Allow activities on this node". Below it is a section titled "Disposition Details" which contains a table with columns: Group, Solicitor Number, Date of Disposition, Court Location, Sentencing Jurisdiction, Mental Health Court, Drug Treatment Court, and Domestic Violence Court. The first row has the value "1" in the Group column and checkboxes in the last three columns. Below this is a section titled "Total Hours Billed" with a text input field and a "Calculate" button. A note states: "The calculate button must be used in order to validate the block fee payable or to determine whether or not the account must be processed through the regular account processing flow." At the bottom, there is a table with columns: *Solicitor Number, Block Fee Amount, Hours Worked, Hours Billed, and Amount. Navigation links for "Personalize", "Find", "First", "1 of 1", and "Last" are also visible.

Expanded services now available

On June 8, 2015, we announced a multi-year expansion of legal aid services for low-income Ontarians. As part of this initiative, we're addressing systemic bail issues by expanding access and making certificates available to financially eligible people in criminal, family, mental health, refugee, domestic violence and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cases. Expanded services for test cases and court challenges have also been made available.

Further information about these services for each legal matter can be found in the PDF documents below:

- Criminal law
- Family law
- Mental health
- Refugee law
- Test cases
- Domestic violence
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

Attending refugee hearings

LAO has recently implemented new refugee panel standards. Lawyers are reminded that all lawyers attending refugee hearings, including agents, must be approved to be on the new Refugee Panel. If you use an agent who is not on the refugee panel, the services may not be paid by Legal Aid Ontario.

Requesting Brydges Hotline lawyer reports

If your client was arrested and would like to access the notes taken by the Brydges duty counsel lawyer your client spoke to while in custody, you must put the request in writing, on firm letterhead, and fax it to 1-888-963-1035.

Be sure to include in your request:

- your return fax number
- the client's name
- confirmation that you represent the client
- a signed authorization from the client, directing release of the notes to you
- the LAO certificate number (there is no charge to receive the report for a Legal Aid Ontario client) OR acknowledgement of a \$40 (+HST) fee for the report (if you are representing a non-LAO client)

More information about requesting Brydges reports can be found on our website.

Country Research

Country research is an important element in quality refugee representation as noted in our new refugee and immigration panel standards best practices guide. Hours billed under the tariff for research however must reflect the actual research hours incurred.

When working on country condition research, be sure to keep detailed dockets of the work done. Country condition research should be docketed separately from other case preparation. You should be readily able to produce country research notes and products (indices, country packages) to us for review if requested.

Lawyers who specialize in claims from the same country with similar facts and/or risk profiles are expected to derive some efficiencies, including a reduced need for country

conditions research and lower average case costs. Lawyers specializing in claims from the same country with similar facts and/or risk profiles whose billing practices do not conform to this expectation will be subject to audit.

Questions?

Please let us know if you have questions or if there are topics you'd like to see us cover by contacting the Lawyer Service Centre at pl-lsc@lao.on.ca



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