

Stakeholder Feedback

Session date, time & location:	Wednesday, June 14 th - 5 pm - 6:30 pm Legal Aid Ontario - Provincial Office (Toronto)
Number of participants:	8 in total: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 Refugee Lawyers Association representatives• 1 lobbyist• Alliance for Sustainable Legal Aid (ASLA) representatives
LAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David McKillop, Vice President, Policy, Research and External Relations)• Jawad Kassab, Executive Lead, Refugee and Immigration Services-GTA• Andrew Brouwer, Senior Counsel, Refugee• Catherine Bruce, Refugee and Immigration Legal Services Director

“What LAO Heard”

General Feedback

- We fully support Legal Aid Ontario getting more funding and are dedicating efforts to do this.
- We do not accept the paradigm that Legal Aid must cut refugee and immigration services. Already, you don't cover most immigration services; you currently cover now only the things that most impact peoples' lives.
- RLA will not be drawn into arguments against Legal Aid Ontario as an institution. We want it to be viable.
- We're doing everything to lobby for you, but don't accept cuts. Period.
- Politically, issuing ultimatum to federal government creates perception of them submitting to threats. Removing this may facilitate a solution.
- Greatly concerned with proposed cuts to refugee/immigration law services. ASLA opposed to disproportionate cuts and in favour of funding for Legal Aid Ontario.

- Focused on how best to manage money we don't have and not how to get the money we need
- Refugees caught in the middle
- We want to move in a more positive direction.
- Seeing business case would be helpful in our conversations with the Feds to explain why they should give millions to LAO
- July 1st deadline an impediment to federal government lobbying efforts and should be lifted.

Refugee & Immigration Trends

- LAO presentation on situation gives impression of crisis situation driven by increased demand, which isn't accurate. Rather over the longer term, demand numbers have returned to normal levels.

LAO Response: Although this is accurate, the cost per case has increased and consequently LAO's expenditures due to an increase in the hourly tariff for lawyers as well as the greater complexity of proceedings.

Service Suspension Prioritization

- All services are priorities from our perspective. Legal Aid Ontario already screens for eligibility, financial and legal merit.
- All suggestions are off the grid; not willing to have discussions related to cost effectiveness until July 1 deadline removed
- Remove July 1 deadline looming over refugees. It makes it difficult for us to lobby for funding. Remove it so we have more time to obtain funding.
- Make an emergency request to take the deadline off the table so there is no explosion.
- Showing efficiency doesn't have to be cutting service.
- Not willing to engage in any service suspension conversations. All services are essential.

Alternative Service Suspension Routes

- It is difficult to have those discussions on alternatives in face of the axe falling.
- We have been talking about things like centralized translation which we support.
- In response to possibility of replacing acknowledgement fee with block fees: There is a lot of administration that goes into certificate processing. There may be creative solutions in general for Legal Aid Ontario to save money. You're

talking about a small portion of your budget. Shouldn't that discussion be with ASLA instead of a minority of refugee lawyers?

- In past discussions, LAO floated the idea of repayment plans. We've heard that this may be of limited value due to administration costs. What are their efficiencies/inefficiencies?
- If you expand contribution plans, you're asking poorer people to pay.
- Is more centralization of LAO viable?
- Don't think you need to identify \$2 million in savings in the next year. It's more of a willingness to commit to a process.
- No consultation on program changes without removing deadlines.
- Any efficiencies IRB finds will drive change at LAO.
- Legal Aid overhaul will put you in good stead.
- You can manage waste with high-volume lawyers on an individual basis.

Impact on Private Bar

- As lawyer newly working with Legal Aid, I'm already considering stopping. "I'm sick and tired of fallback being: let's find our money by taking it from lawyers."

Community Partner Relations

- Other organizations are lobbying quietly. Legal Aide Ontario's deadline is a problem for this and could lead to LAO becoming a vulnerable target
- There is a groundswell. CCR, OCASI have sent letters. CaRL, ASLA, medical practitioners, HALCO, Muslim Women's Association. There have been 8-10 letters from coalition organizations which is significant.
- Communication to community about impending crisis is not helpful.