

## Stakeholder Feedback

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<b>Session date, time &amp; location:</b>	Thursday, June 15 <sup>th</sup> , 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm  Legal Aid Ontario - Provincial Office (Toronto) 40 Dundas St. W., Suite 200 Toronto M5G 2H1 Tamarack Room
<b>Number of participants:</b>	5 in total: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 agency representatives (Adam House, Quaker House)</li><li>• 3 clients</li></ul>
<b>LAO participants:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jawad Kassab, Executive Lead, Refugee and Immigration Services-GTA</li></ul>

### “What LAO Heard”

#### Client stories:

1. Refugee claimant from El Salvador – came to Canada February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and applied for a Legal Aid certificate the day after he came. For him, the program is very important because he had absolutely nothing when he came to Canada and didn't know anything about how to get started. Through legal aid, lawyer did all the paperwork needed for his refugee claim and it's been very helpful for him. The most important thing for him was the assistance he had to put all the documents together and get them to the IRB on time. If he did not have a lawyer, he has no idea what he would have done – he says it was very complicated, he has a wife and 3 kids also included in the claim. He indicates the program is very important and people's lives are at risk if the program is cut.
2. Refugee claimant from Syria – human rights activist – crossed from the United States in December 2014. Without Legal Aid, she indicates it's impossible to do anything here. When you're a refugee, you come with your own trauma and despite the fact that you may speak fluent English and know some people here, it would've been impossible to understand the refugee claim process. It feels like

an impossible choice to pick a service that should be eliminated from the program as they are all essential. Case involved a lot of detention history. She did not remember every detail and if the lawyer hadn't pushed for details, her claim would likely not have been successful. Narrative itself took 5-6 sessions with a lawyer and was onerous – could not have done it on her own. If she didn't have the legal service, she would've tried to figure out how to get help online but she likely wouldn't have been able to afford any services.

3. Refugee claimant from Uzbekistan, arrived in Canada in January 2014. He had no one here when he came, no friends, no family. He claimed refugee status at the port of entry – he says the officers gave him all the forms and gave him his hearing date. He left the airport with a large amount of documents and was advised by some friends in the UK of Adam House which he then visited; Adam House explained the process to him and let him stay there. They advised that without a lawyer, the process to claim refugee status is very hard. He did not know the next steps and as such, called Legal Aid with Adam House's assistance and received a certificate. Found a lawyer to accept his RPD case and started the process – unfortunately, the judge refused his claim and he was found to not be a Convention refugee. His only chance was to go to Federal Court for which he applied to Legal aid again but was told his matter didn't have enough merit for a certificate. He says he was depressed as he would face persecution if he went back – he was raised in Islam and converted to Christianity and feared for his life. He then borrowed money from friends to pay for his Federal Court matter which took almost a year to get a decision which was also negative. He then received a letter from the CBSA advising him to go back to Uzbekistan, and offering him a PRRA application. He wanted to take the chance but had no idea how to fill out the PRRA forms; he went to Adam House and they advised him that he needs a lawyer because this isn't in their capacity but he had no money to pay a lawyer. He was struggling to find advice from a lawyer and then one visited Adam House and he asked her for help with the PRRA; he went to her office and she told him that he should call and apply to Legal Aid. He was issued a Legal Aid certificate for the PRRA and his lawyer submitted the PRRA. His lawyer also advised to submit an H&C as this would give him better chances, she told him to apply for an H&C matter and he received an H&C certificate. In two months, he received a positive H&C decision in July 2016 and now he's going through the last stage and has been able to remain in Canada. If he had no Legal Aid support, he would've been deported and faced persecution and possibly death as a convert to Christianity.