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October 6, 2023

Stephen Pengelly  
Chair  
Legal Aid Ontario  
Atrium on Bay  
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 730  
Toronto, ON  
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Email: [pengellys@lao.on.ca](mailto:pengellys@lao.on.ca)

Dear Stephen Pengelly:

I am pleased to share our government's 2024-25 priorities for Legal Aid Ontario (LAO).

As Chair, you play a vital role in helping LAO achieve its mandate. It is important that your agency's goals, objectives, and strategic direction continue to align with our government's priorities and direction. As part of the government of Ontario, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario and ensure that they provide value for money to taxpayers. Agencies are also required to adhere to government policies and directives.

Per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, this letter sets out my expectations for LAO for 2024-25. These priorities include:

## **1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management**

- Operating within the agency's financial allocations.
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies, and savings through innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario's bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leverage and meet benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

## **2. Transparency and Accountability**

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable.

- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability, and providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure boards have qualified appointees.
- Reviewing and updating agency KPIs annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

### **3. Risk Management**

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of agency risks, including cyber security, and any future emergency risks.

### **4. Workforce/Labour Management**

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Supporting the implementation of the Community Jobs Initiative (CJI) by identifying opportunities to relocate new or existing agencies to lower cost communities across Ontario (as per MBC Realty Directive, s. 5.4), as applicable.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with OPS directives and policy.
- Adhering to TB/MBC labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

### **5. Diversity and Inclusion**

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

### **6. Data Collection, Sharing and Use**

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

### **7. Digital Delivery and Customer Service**

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

These are the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority.

I am also sharing several priorities specific to LAO:

1. LAO to continue to prioritize supporting the court recovery process, working collaboratively with the Ministry as it plans and executes strategies to reduce the court backlog.
2. LAO is expected to prioritize addressing the 2022-23 mandate review recommendations, including specific recommendations regarding the following:
  - independently proposing or implementing new initiatives in overseeing the provision of legal services,
  - continue working to improve oversight of legal clinics,
  - develop and enhance additional goals/strategies related to its mandate,
  - increasing innovative capacity and exploring innovative service delivery models,
  - making improvements to performance tracking,
  - continuing to work with MAG to improve financial sustainability, and
  - further investigate how to better attract and retain talent.
3. LAO is also expected to continue to work together with the Ministry of the Attorney General to address audit review recommendations.

I would be pleased to discuss these priorities during our next meeting, and I look forward to hearing how they will be reflected in the agency's upcoming business plan and in ongoing agency operations.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to LAO. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jane Mallen, Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Policy Division, at [jane.n.mallen@ontario.ca](mailto:jane.n.mallen@ontario.ca).

Sincerely,



Doug Downey  
Attorney General

Attachment: Government Priorities for Agency Sector Chart

c: David Field, President and CEO, Legal Aid Ontario