



LEGAL AID LETTER



The Legal Aid Letter is sent by The Law Society of Upper Canada to its members carrying news of the Ontario Legal Aid Plan

NUMBER 28

DECEMBER, 1982

DEMAND REMAINS HIGH

Demand for legal aid services remained higher for the first seven months of this fiscal year (to October 31, 1982) compared with the same period last year. A total of 137,832 people sought assistance through the Plan's 47 Area Offices, up from 129,069 a year ago, an increase of 8,763 or 6.8%. The number applying for legal aid jumped from 63,928 to 72,071 - a jump of 8,143 or 12.7%. Some areas recorded an increase in applications of up to 37%. The number of certificates issued in criminal and civil matters rose from 46,440 to 51,363 - an increase of 4,923 or 10.6%.

The number of individuals assisted by Duty Counsel across the Province rose from 127,206 to 137,136, a rise of 9,930 or 7.8%.

1982 ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

The Plan's Annual Report for the fiscal year to March 31, 1982, is now available. Quantities will be made available automatically to Area Offices and clinics, but if you wish a copy of this informative guide to the Plan's activities, contact the Information Department at the address/phone number shown below.

FAMILY VIOLENCE STUDY

The Legal Aid Committee has established a Special Sub-Committee on Family Violence and would like your input to its deliberations.

In particular, the Sub-Committee has been asked to consider whether the certificate process is providing suitable representation in cases involving family violence as well as the extent to which students should be involved when family violence is in issue.

If you have experience in these matters or have any proposals to make to the Sub-Committee, please forward them to Victor Paisley, Chairman, Sub-Committee on Family Violence, Ontario Legal Aid Plan, Suite 1000 - 145 King Street West, Toronto, M5H 3L7.

LAWYER REFERRAL - NEW NUMBER

The Society's Lawyer Referral Service has a new telephone number 947-3330 for callers in the Toronto area. The toll-free number remains the same.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

Many readers of the Legal Aid Letter will

shortly be receiving a questionnaire from Public Legal Education & Information in Ontario, an umbrella group of various organizations seeking to improve public access to legal materials. The Law Society and the Plan are members of this group and urge those of you who receive the questionnaire to take a few minutes to complete and return it. The information will enable both the Society and the Plan to make better use of its information resources which will benefit both the public and the profession. Thanks!

— NEWSBRIEFS —

DON'T CUT FUNDS

SAULT STE. MARIE --- "Ontario Attorney-General Roy McMurtry launched a spirited defence of legal aid the other day, saying that he'll block any attempt to cut funds to the province's legal-aid plan....The attorney general is right to stand by Ontario's legal aid plan....Many Ontarians are suffering financially because of the province's, the country's economic difficulties. Further, there are likely to be more matters like child or wife abuse, rent or welfare problems, or other matters related to increased tension and turbulence in homes and communities, that will see more people in court seeking legal advice. With these factors existing, the demands for legal-aid funds are going to be higher than usual, which is hardly a condition that allows for any reduction of the plan's financial support by the government." (Editorial, Sault Ste. Marie Star, December 6, 1982)

MORE CLINICS NEEDED

TORONTO --- "Ontario does not have enough adequately staffed legal aid clinics to protect the rights of the poor during these tough economic times, says Attorney-General Roy McMurtry. 'The province needs more clinics, with more and better paid workers....The vast majority of lawyers are not trained to deal with poor people's problems - welfare claims, unemployment insurance, landlord and tenant matters and the like.'" (Globe & Mail, December 2, 1982)

NEW LAW ADDS STRAINS

TORONTO --- "A new law that guarantees young offenders an independent lawyer will squeeze legal aid programs that are strained already, provincial officials

say....Glenn Carter, general manager for administration for the Ontario Attorney-General said in an interview that every province probably will feel the pinch because the federal law applies across Canada. John Whitehead, a federal official working with the Young Offenders Act, said that the provinces have estimated it will cost a total of \$200 million to implement all of the legislation's provisions." (Globe & Mail, November 30, 1982)

B.C. CUTS FUNDING

VICTORIA --- "Funding cuts for legal aid services have decreased efficiency in the courts and may lead to lawsuits against underfunded agencies which turn people away, the head of the Legal Services Society of B.C. said yesterday....(Bryan) Ralph said the society is bound by law - and perhaps even the Charter of Rights - to provide legal aid to people who cannot afford a lawyer. (Victoria Times-Colonist, November 27, 1982)

ONE ANGRY CITIZEN

VANCOUVER --- "I would like to know why the government should spend one more dime of my tax dollar for women seeking legal aid to get a divorce, maintenance, or custody of their children....The sooner these so-called modern women have to prepare their own documents and evidence the better. Perhaps while they are mulling over the complexities of the documents and forced to use their brains for a change, they will decide to have a go at growing up, developing some backbone, and getting on with the job of staying married and giving their children something they sorely lack, self-respect." (Letter, Vancouver Sun, October 22, 1982)

AND ANOTHER

VANCOUVER -- "We are asked to consider the plight of a wife severely beaten by her husband, who would need the help of legal counsel, which could cost \$100-\$150 an hour. Am I really being naive to suggest that the beaten wife doesn't need a high-priced mouthpiece to tell the simple truth to a judge, who could, one hopes, based his decision on what appeared to be right or wrong?...A pox on our legal system and all who represent it." (Letter, Vancouver Sun, October 22, 1982)