



Media Release

For immediate release

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Support for legal aid in BC remains high

VANCOUVER — Legal aid services are strongly supported by British Columbians according to a recent public opinion survey conducted for the Legal Services Society (LSS) by Sentis. The results show 92% of respondents support the provision of legal aid services in BC. The poll also found that 88% agreed that providing legal aid to low income individuals is important to ensuring fairness in the justice system.

A large number of British Columbians (84%) agree that everyone should have a right to access the justice system even if the provincial government has to spend more money on it.

“The results confirm what we’ve been hearing for many years,” said LSS CEO Mark Benton, “British Columbians understand the importance of helping the disadvantaged with their legal problems.”

Looking at the different areas of law, survey respondents said the services for people going to family court were the most important for ensuring fairness in the justice system (93%), followed equally for criminal court and civil legal proceedings (90% each), and somewhat less important for immigration/refugee hearings (78%). LSS provides limited legal aid services for family law — such as cases involving family violence and repeated denials of access to children — due to low funding for those services.

“We are pleased to see support for family services and would welcome being able to help more people access justice for their family law matters,” said Benton. “In the absence of more funding for direct services, we recently launched our new interactive website, [MyLawBC](#), which creates tailored action plans for resolving family law issues and a dialogue tool for negotiating a separation agreement.”

The survey was conducted in February 2016 with 620 online respondents. The sample results have a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 4\%$. A more detailed summary of the results can be found in the [Sentis report on the LSS website](#).

The public opinion survey has been commissioned by LSS annually since 2005, and asks a sample of British Columbians about their awareness of our services in each area of law (family, criminal and immigration), their sources of information about legal aid, and their opinions about the value and role of legal aid in BC.

The [Legal Services Society](http://www.legalaid.bc.ca) is the provider of legal aid services in BC. Services include legal advice, information, and legal representation for financially eligible people who are facing a family law issue involving violence, child protection and criminal matters, and some immigration, mental health and prison law issues. www.legalaid.bc.ca

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