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A year-end thank you from everyone at LSS

As 2012 comes to an end and 2013 begins, the staff at LSS would like to thank each of you for your continued commitment to legal aid.

It's customary at this time of year to look back at our accomplishments and to gauge the future. In 2012, there were two events that suggest a healthier outlook for legal aid in BC. The first was in February when the Attorney General asked for LSS's advice on justice reform. The second was at the beginning of our fiscal year in April when we received the first installment of \$2.1 million in new funding for family law services. The fact that the government is seeking our input on building a better justice system and is increasing our funding makes us optimistic for 2013.

But we're not stopping there. We're aware of the tariff bar's concerns, as expressed through service withdrawal. We want to assure you that our board of directors and senior management continue to meet with elected officials, government staff, and law-related organizations to press the need for funding that will ensure legal services for those in need and adequate tariffs for lawyers.

Legal aid would not be possible without the dedicated work of lawyers who are committed to helping our society's most vulnerable. This past year, 1014 lawyers took referrals and duty counsel assignments. The table below shows how much work you did, but it doesn't show how hard you worked or how important your work was to the people you helped.

Criminal duty counsel client assists	60,387
Immigration duty counsel client assists	1,211
Family duty counsel and advice lawyers client assists	21,473
Brydges Line client assists	21,663
Family law telephone advice service (part-time in 2011/2012)	3,271
Criminal representation	18,505
Family representation	4,047
Child protection representation	2,162
Immigration representation	905

Another important part of legal aid is our information services. Each year, LSS distributes more than 130,000 self-help publications, our Legal Information Outreach Workers respond to about 8,000 queries, and our Family Law website plays host to almost 400,000 visitors.

Just as you're committed to meeting the legal needs of people with low incomes throughout the province, we're committed to providing you with the best service possible. In 2012, we processed 129,068 accounts with an average payment time of just five days. We also processed 1654 disbursement requests with an average turnaround time of 11 days.

We're also committed to improving our services to you. Over the last 12 months, we've:

- awarded more than 240 professional development bursaries to lawyers to support the work they do for our clients,
- recognized two lawyers with the LSS Chair's Award for Distinguished Service,
- increased the business hours for the Family LawLINE,

- evaluated the effectiveness of our continuum of family services — information through to advice and representation,
- introduced the Legal Aid Brief — our new electronic newsletter for the referral bar,
- expanded e-billing, and
- commenced the pilot for online authorizations of disbursements.

Next year will see the expansion of e-services tools for lawyers, including the province-wide launch of “E-Authorizations” and a portal for managing large criminal cases. Early in the new year we'll: report on our evaluation of the new simplified tariffs, offer a centralized helpdesk for lawyers for faster service, and conduct our fourth Tariff Lawyer Satisfaction Survey — giving you an opportunity to tell us what you think of our services.

As 2012 comes to an end, we want to thank each of you for your dedication and commitment to legal aid and we look forward to a successful 2013.

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