



Legal Aid BC **Update**

From the office of Mark Benton, QC
Executive Director, Legal Services Society

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This email newsletter is designed to keep you informed about developments at the Legal Services Society. It is distributed to chief executives of justice system stakeholders, Canadian legal aid plans and law-related organizations. Please forward this to anyone in your organization who might be interested. I welcome your feedback. For more information on legal aid in BC, visit the [LSS website](#) or LSS's [family law website](#).

Meeting with Supreme Court of Canada justice

Supreme Court of Canada Justice Thomas Cromwell met with the LSS board of directors and senior staff on November 25 to discuss access to justice. Mr. Justice Cromwell chairs the Action Committee on Access to Justice which is sponsored by the Chief Justice of Canada. I am a member of the Steering Committee (representing Canada's legal aid plans) and I chair the Access to Legal Services Working Group.

Enhanced call centre services

Average wait times for legal aid applicants at our [provincial call centre](#) are now less than four minutes. Callers who cannot wait, or who call during a particularly busy time, now have the option of using our new call back service to schedule an appointment with an Intake Legal Assistant at the caller's convenience. Since the call back service was introduced at the end of September, the number of abandoned calls has been reduced by 28 per cent. Our call centre takes almost 10,000 applications a year.

Community workshops

LSS hosted [community workshops](#) in Nelson and Cranbrook in October. The workshops provide local organizations with information about legal aid and public legal education resources. Our new community partners in Trail and Nelson, along with our Local Agent in Cranbrook, also had an opportunity to discuss their services and resources. A total of sixty-five people attended including outreach and support workers, as well as staff

from the RCMP, victim services, community services, schools, libraries, health organizations and the courthouse registry.

Working together to end domestic violence

LSS is partnering with the [Ending Violence Association of BC](#) on two projects. The first will train aboriginal organizations to assist their members, on and off reserve, to prevent violence against women. The second is a new publication that will be released in spring 2012 that will provide guidance to family lawyers representing clients facing domestic violence.

Electronic billing

LSS is moving to a fully electronic billing system for tariff lawyers in 2012. Ninety-five per cent of lawyers already bill electronically. To assist the remaining five per cent with the transition, LSS has posted an [instructional video](#) on its website. The video will also be used as a recruitment tool for lawyers contemplating legal aid work.

New audit manager

Richard Lee joins us as the new Manager of our Audit and Investigation group. Richard is a Chartered Account, a Certified Internal Auditor and is currently working on a Masters of Public Administration degree at the University of Victoria. He has previously worked at the BC Lottery Corporation, Audit Services Canada and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Richard will be working with staff to develop an audit plan to address key risks facing LSS.

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