

Canada Report.

1.

British Columbia Canada	Legal Aid Organization Name : Legal Services Society	Date of Establishment : In the current form in BC - 1997	Poverty Line & Percentage of Population in Poverty Canada - 10% BC – 12.5%	Total No. of Practising Lawyers Canada – 104,000 BC - 10,000 Lawyers doing legal aid work; Canada 10,450 BC 992
Population Canada 33.3 million BC 4.14 million	GDP Canada C\$1.819.967.0 00 BC C\$219.994.000	Total No. of Applications Received in the Past Year Canada 745,000 BC 40,300	Total No. of Applications Approved in the Past Year Canada 490,000 BC 27,350	Total No. of Applications Refused in the Past Year Canada 98,160 BC 12,900

2. *Please describe the main provider(s) of legal aid services in your country:*

Canada has 13 provincial/territorial legal aid jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction has a legal provider. Each jurisdiction is funded separately, sets its own criteria for legal aid eligibility and the range of legal aid services it provides. Details of each plan can be found through the following links:

- [British Columbia](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- Nunavut*
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Yukon](#)

*The Nunavut Legal Services Board may be contacted as follows:

Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik
P.O. Box 29
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0
General Line (toll free) 1-866-202-5593
Poverty Line (toll-free) 1-866-677-4726

(a) What is the nature of the provider's organization (ie, a government department, an independent statutory body or association)?

Most Canadian legal aid plans are established as legal entities independent of government. The smallest plans are often part of government; one plan is a non-statutory corporate entity.

(b) If supervised by another authority, how does the provider maintain independence in decision-making and in carrying out its duties and responsibilities? Most Canadian legal aid entities are governed by an independent board of directors.

(c) Please describe the legal aid organization and the recent business figures:

BC's Legal Services Society:

Mandate

The Legal Services Society (LSS) provides legal aid in British Columbia. Created by the Legal Services Society Act in 1979, LSS is a non-profit organization that remains independent of government. Our priority is to serve the interests of people with low incomes.

Under section 9 of the LSS Act, the society's mandate is: to help people resolve their legal problems and to facilitate access to justice; to establish and administer an effective and efficient system for providing legal aid to people in BC; and to provide advice to the Attorney General about legal aid and access to justice for people in BC.

Vision and mission

Our vision is a British Columbia where all people are able to find timely and lasting solutions to their legal issues that improve their quality of life.

Our mission is to provide innovative and integrated services that enable clients to effectively address their legal issues in a broad social context.

Funding

The society receives approximately 90% of its revenues from the provincial government. It also receives funding from the Law Foundation of BC and the Notary Foundation of BC, which collect interest earned on lawyer and notary trust accounts and pay a portion to

LSS. The federal government reimburses the province for legal aid costs related to immigration and federal prosecutions. In 2012/2013, LSS had revenues of \$83.5 million, including \$78.4 million from the provincial government, \$3.8 million from the Law Foundation, and \$510,000 from the Notary Foundation.

Governance

The society is governed by a nine-member board of directors. Five are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Attorney General, and four are appointed by the Law Society of BC after consultation with the executive of the BC Branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

LSS is committed to strong corporate governance practices that enable public accountability and transparency. Analysis of the matter types aided in the past year.

Information services

Publications: Legal information, self-help manuals, and legal aid awareness materials produced by the Society.	Publications distributed: 256,254
LIOWs: Legal information outreach worker information requests.	Client interactions: 8,216
LSS website: Features publications on various aspects of the law, as well as information about LSS and legal aid services.	Visits/month: 33,160
Family Law in BC website: Helps people to understand and use the law to resolve their family law problems.	Visits/month: 65,648

Advice Services

Criminal duty counsel: Provide accused persons with advice about the charges against them, court procedures, and legal rights.	Client visits: 69,596
Immigration duty counsel: Duty counsel for people in detention at the Canada Border Services Agency's enforcement centre in Vancouver.	Client visits: 1,153
Family duty counsel and advice lawyers: Advice on family law matters and child protection issues.	Client visits: 37,794
Brydges line: Province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons who have been arrested, detained, or are under active investigation by a law enforcement agency.	Calls handled: 18,834
Family LawLINE: Phone service for financially eligible people that provides information on a variety of family law issues (as	Calls handled: 4,996

of November 1, 2010).	
-----------------------	--

Representation by a lawyer

Criminal: Financially eligible clients charged with a criminal offence who, if convicted, face a risk of jail (including house arrest), direct loss of livelihood or immigration complications.	Client referrals: 19,569
Family: Financially eligible clients facing situations where their safety or the safety of their children is at risk, they have been denied access to their children, or there is a risk that a child will be permanently removed from the province.	Client referrals: 3,708
CFCSA: Financially eligible clients whose children have been, or are at risk of being, removed from the client's home by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, or clients who are facing legal proceedings initiated by the director of the MCFD, or if there are custody or access issues relating to a child in the care of the MCFD.	Client referrals: 2,544
Immigration: Clients whose cases have a reasonable chance of success and who need help with a refugee claim, have an immigration problem that could lead to their removal from Canada or are appealing an immigration decision.	Client referrals: 638

(c) *What is the number and percentage of cases conducted by in-house/staff attorneys and legal aid lawyers in private practice?* 98% of cases are handled by private practice lawyers.

4. *Please describe your country's (or organization) legal aid funding arrangements:*

Provinces and territories fund the legal aid programs. The federal government (Canada) provides a contribution to that funding. Some legal aid plans in Canada also receive private foundation funding and/or statutory income streams, typically from the interest revenue from lawyers trust accounts.

(a) *What are the sources and amount of legal aid funding?* In British Columbia more than 90% of funding comes from government. This is typical of most Canadian legal aid plans

Are there caps on annual spending? No, in most cases there is not however spending is typically limited by revenue. An exception is BC where there is a statutory prohibition on deficit spending.

(b) *Has your organization experienced large-scale funding cuts? If so, what were the strategies for responding to such situation?* There have not been any major funding reductions since 2009. In that year LSS faced a \$2.5 million (3%) reduction in non-government revenue (as a result of the global economic downturn. In 2002 LSS faced a 40% reduction in government revenue. In both circumstances services and staffing were reduced; LSS closed all but two offices and in 2002 laid-off 60% of its staff. LSS moved to a contracted service model for applications, eliminated most of its staff lawyer service delivery, introduced an enhanced family duty counsel model in lieu of representation in family matters, and moved to telephone and internet for the delivery of information and advice services.

(c) *What is the percentage of funding spent on paying lawyers' fees and costs, and on administration expenses respectively?* LSS administrative costs are 9.5%.

(d) *Does assistance extend to covering costs such as court costs, government charges, and costs awarded against the legal aid recipient?* In BC legal aid covers Court fees but does not cover costs awarded against the legal aid recipient. If costs are awarded in favour of the legal aid recipient they are deemed to belong to the legal aid plan

5. *How does your organization evaluate performance?*

Staff are subject to [performance planning and assessment, including file reviews. Private lawyers are audited on a complaints basis. Overall service effectiveness is assessed through extensive surveying. These evaluations are published at <http://www.legalaid.bc.ca/about/evaluations.php>,

What are the effective tools or methods of evaluation? If your organization has established branch offices, -Monitoring of volume, workloads and approval rates, staff lawyer and paralegal file reviews, and individual performance planning and evaluation

6. ***Please describe the methods of service delivery in your country (or organization):*** see 2(d) above

(a) *Are the bulk of the approved cases conducted by in-house/staff attorneys or by lawyers in private practice?* More than 95% by lawyers in private practice

(b) *What are the conditions of registering as a legal aid lawyer?* Being a lawyer in good standing. Some cases and services are restricted to lawyers with more experience.

(c) *What are the rules and procedures of assigning approved cases to legal aid lawyers?*

Clients can select the lawyer of their choice (80% of cases) in the community where the legal proceeding will take place. Where the client does not request a lawyer LSS distributes cases equitably to lawyers with the requisite experience

(d) How do the salaries and fees paid to legal aid lawyers compare with the general market rate?

BC legal aid salaries are less than market and as much as 30 less than comparable government lawyer salaries. Private lawyer rates are about 30% of the rates a private client would pay.

More detail on the rates paid to private lawyers follows:

Private lawyers who represent legal aid clients or provide duty counsel services are paid according to a schedule of fees and disbursements known as the tariffs. Details of the tariffs are available on the LSS website at: <http://www.lss.bc.ca/lawyers/tariffGuide.asp>.

The society uses a three-tiered system of tariff rates based on years of experience.

Year of Call	Block Tariff	Hourly Tariff
Less than 4 years	Amount specified in the tariff	\$83.90
4 or more s & less than 10	Amount specified in the tariff plus 5%	\$88.10
10 or more years	Amount specified in the tariff plus 10%	\$92.29

Note: most criminal law services are paid according to a block tariff rather than an hourly rate.

Note also that disbursement rates are not affected by tiered rates.

Enhanced fees

Enhanced fees may be available for senior counsel in cases LSS considers to be complex criminal matters. To qualify for enhanced fees:

- The lawyer must have 12 years experience in criminal law or have demonstrated to the satisfaction of LSS that he or she has proven experience in criminal, and;
- at least 50 per cent of the lawyer’s practice must be criminal law.

LSS’s Enhanced Fees Policy is available at: <http://www.lss.bc.ca/lawyers/enhancedFees.asp>).

Enhanced Fees	Hourly Rate
Senior Counsel	\$125.00

Junior Counsel	\$62.93 - \$83.90
----------------	-------------------

Exceptional responsibility premium

LSS will pay an exceptional responsibility premium of 15 per cent in cases where Crown Counsel is being paid a premium in “Recognition of Exceptional Responsibilities” (as per the British Columbia Crown Counsel Association Agreement with Respect to Crown Counsel). This premium applies to very few cases.

Lawyer fees

In 2012/13, lawyers earned a median amount of \$36,137 for legal aid work.

7. Please describe the types of legal aid services provided in your country (or organization), and the types of matters aided.

Information services

- **Publications:** LSS staff produce legal information and self-help materials in a number of languages to help clients identify, avoid and resolve common legal problems. Topics include: Aboriginal law; children; criminal; consumer and debt; family law; housing; immigration and refugee law; pensions; and welfare rights. A complete list is available at legalaid.bc.ca/publications.
- **Family law website:** Includes self-help guides, informational videos and fact sheets on a variety of family law topics including custody, access, guardianship, child and spousal support and uncontested divorces. The site also includes direct links to court forms, legal information publications and other helpful organizations. See familylaw.lss.bc.ca.
- **LSS website:** Includes information about the Legal Services Society, how to apply for a legal aid lawyer, information and advice services, online publications office locations and more. See lss.bc.ca.
- **Clicklaw:** LSS is a contributor organization for Clicklaw, a website designed to give the general public access to all of the public information resources available through participating legal organizations. See clicklaw.bc.ca.
- **Supreme Court Self-Help Centre:** LSS works in partnership with government agencies and community organizations to provide legal information through the

Supreme Court Self-Help Information Centre in Vancouver. See supremecourtselfhelp.bc.ca.

- **Advocate and education support:** LSS provides community advocates and intermediaries with legal education and advocacy training to help them assist their clients.
- **Legal Information Outreach Workers:** LIOWs help low-income people find legal information and understand court forms. They also provide referrals to other resources and give presentations at Aboriginal, women's, immigration, social service, and other community agencies.
- **Aboriginal Community Legal Workers:** ACLWs provide legal information and summary advice about family and child protection law, and issues such as residential schools, housing, and wills and estates.
- **Community Partners:** Community partners provide free legal information and direct clients to legal aid services. A list of community partner locations throughout BC is available at legalaid.bc.ca/legal_aid/communityPartners.php
-

Advice services

- **Duty counsel:** LSS contracts with private lawyers to provide legal advice (but not representation) at courthouses around BC.

Family duty counsel advise on family law matters and child protection issues. They can also assist clients at family case conferences and judicial case conferences.

Criminal duty counsel provide accused persons with advice about the charges against them, court procedures and legal rights. Duty counsel can also represent people at a guilty plea and sentencing, or on an application for release.

Immigration duty counsel at the Canada Border Services' Vancouver enforcement centre provide legal advice to people who are being held in custody as a result of immigration proceedings. Duty counsel represent clients at initial detention hearings and may represent them at subsequent hearings if there has been a change in circumstances that could result in release.

Family law advice lawyers: Low-income parents experiencing separation or divorce may be eligible for up to three hours of free legal advice from a family advice lawyer. These lawyers can

provide advice about: custody; access; guardianship; child support; property (limited advice); tentative settlement agreements; and court procedures. This service is available at the Vancouver Justice Access Centre, the Nanaimo Justice Access Centre, the Family Justice Centre in Kelowna, the New Westminster Family Justice Centre and at courthouses in Kamloops, Prince George, Surrey and Victoria . You must be referred to a family advice lawyer by a family justice counsellor or a child support officer.

Family LawLINE: Family LawLINE lawyers give brief "next step" advice about family law issues such as custody, access, guardianship, child support, spousal support, property division, family agreements, adoption, and court procedures.

Criminal law telephone advice services:

- LSS maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons who have been arrested, detained or are under active investigation by a law enforcement agency. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- LSS also maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons in custody awaiting a bail hearing outside normal office hours, on weekends or on statutory holidays.

Clients must meet a [financial eligibility test](#) for family advice services. There is no financial eligibility test for criminal or immigration duty counsel advice.

Representation by a lawyer

- **Family:** Representation by a lawyer is available to financially eligible clients who are facing serious family situations where their safety or the safety of their children is at risk; they have been denied access to their children on an ongoing basis; or there is a risk that a child will be permanently removed from the province. For more information, see the [Family law services fact sheet](#).
- **Child protection:** LSS provides legal representation to financially eligible clients who have a legal problem under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the children have been removed or are at risk of being removed from the home by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the client is facing legal proceedings initiated by the Director, or there are custody and access issues relating to a child in the care of the Ministry. For more information, see the [Child protection services fact sheet](#).
- **Criminal:** Legal representation is available to financially eligible adults who are charged with a criminal offence and if convicted, face a risk of jail (including house

arrest), loss of livelihood, or immigration complications that could result in deportation. Legal representation is also provided to financially eligible applicants who have a mental or physical disability that prevents them from representing themselves or are Aboriginal, have a defense based on Aboriginal rights, and their ability to follow a traditional livelihood of hunting and fishing could be affected if convicted. Youth charged with federal offences are also eligible for representation. For more information, see the [Criminal law services fact sheet](#).

- **Immigration:** LSS provides legal representation for financially eligible clients with cases that have a reasonable chance to succeed and who need help with a refugee claim, have an immigration problem that could lead to their removal from Canada to a country where they would be at risk or are appealing an immigration decision. For more information, see the [Immigration law services fact sheet](#).
- **Mental health:** LSS contracts the Community Legal Assistance Society to provide representation services at Mental Health Review Panels hearings for people who have been involuntarily detained in a mental health facility under the *Mental Health Act*. CLAS and private lawyers also provide representation at BC Review Board hearings under the *Criminal Code* for people found to be not criminally responsible for a crime or unfit to stand trial by reason of a mental disorder. For more information, see the [Mental health law services fact sheet](#).
- **Appeals:** Applicants who are financially eligible *may* receive legal representation if they are responding to appeals initiated by another party (such as a Crown appeal from an acquittal) and the case is one the society normally would cover. Otherwise, LSS funds only those appeals that fall under the society's regular coverage criteria and have a reasonable chance of success.
- **Prison law:** Legal representation may be provided for prisoners facing internal disciplinary hearings, involuntary transfers to higher security, detention hearings at the point of statutory release, segregation, and parole suspension or revocation.

8. Please describe application procedures and the criteria of granting legal aid.

Individuals apply in person or by telephone. LSS provides in person application services at major courthouses and through local offices and agents .

Eligibility guidelines are as follows:

Financial eligibility for legal representation

To be eligible for legal representation, the case must fall within LSS’s coverage rules and the applicant must meet LSS’s financial eligibility rules. Verification of income, personal property, assets, and expenses is required. The onus is on the applicant to satisfy LSS eligibility requirements.

LSS’s financial eligibility guidelines are based on Human Resources Development Canada’s “Market Basket Measure” of goods and services adjusted by LSS for inflation.

Household Size	Net Household Monthly Income	Personal Property Exemption
1	\$1,480	\$2,000
2	\$2,070	\$4,000
3	\$2,670	\$4,500
4	\$3,260	\$5,000
5	\$3,850	\$5,500
6	\$4,450	\$6,000
7 or more	\$5,040	\$6,000

Household income: Usually includes all money or benefits earned or received by adult family members who are living together. A limited number of income sources are not included such as the BC family bonus and child tax benefits. A limited number of deductions are also made including daycare expenses, required medication, and child or spousal maintenance payments.

Personal property: Includes but is not limited to: accounts receivable; antiques; bank accounts; cash; collections (coins, stamps); household furnishings; insurance policies; jewelry; livestock; other personal property; pending settlements; recreational equipment; recreational boat; stocks/bonds/investments; and works of art.

Assets: Applicants whose income is below the guidelines may own some assets and still be eligible for legal representation. However, if their share of equity in assets is above the asset guidelines, they are ineligible for legal representation regardless of their net monthly income.

Generally the family home is *not* exempt if the applicant’s available equity in it exceeds \$100,000. Exceptions include when a lending institution denies the applicant a loan against the property and, in family cases, when the applicant and opposing party lived in the family home.

Applicants are ineligible if their total share of disposable real property (other than the family home) exceeds \$10,000.

Applicants are ineligible if their total share of equity in vehicles exceeds \$15,000. Exceptions include a moderately priced vehicle for employment, or a vehicle needed for personal use in a remote area, or a vehicle modified to accommodate a disability.

Applicants are ineligible if they have any available equity in business assets unless the assets are required to generate the person's income, the applicant cannot borrow against them, or the assets cannot be sold within a reasonable time for fair market value.

Applicants are ineligible if their total equity in personal property or savings exceeds the limits based on household size. RESPs and children's savings are exempt.

Residential school settlement payments (except for monies paid as an income replacement) are exempt from LSS's asset test for legal representation services.

Reassessments: Clients may be reassessed to determine if they are still financially eligible for legal representation. Reassessments may occur if a client's financial circumstances change, the client changes lawyers, or the client receives money or assets as a result of the case. If the client is no longer financially eligible, his or her referral is terminated and the client must make private arrangements with his or her lawyer.

Financial eligibility for legal advice

LSS uses a separate financial eligibility test for LawLINE advice services and most family duty counsel and family advice lawyer services.

Financial Eligibility Guidelines for Legal Advice	
Household size	Net monthly income
1 - 4	\$3,265
5	\$3,860
6	\$4,470
7 or more	\$5,055

There is no asset test for advice services.

Services with no financial eligibility requirements

There are no financial eligibility requirements for:

Legal information

Criminal duty counsel

Immigration duty counsel

Criminal telephone advice services.

9. *In order to satisfy demand:*

(a) Are there services or standards specifically designed to help disadvantaged groups, such as women, children, indigenous people, labor and residents living in remote areas?

Yes for Aboriginals facing hunting and for fishing charges where an aboriginal rights defence is available.

(b) Are there special standards or rules for deciding whether (and how much) legal aid resources should be allocated to assist complex cases (eg, environmental lawsuits or other class action lawsuits)? Yes but only for large and complex criminal prosecutions.

10. *How does your organization monitor the quality of legal aid lawyers' services?*

Investigations are launched based on LSS staff concerns or on receipt of complaints from clients, lawyers, judges, or others.

11. *How does your country (or organization) inform potential applicants (particularly residents living in remote locations) of the availability of legal aid services?* In BC LSS advertises in telephone directories, in criminal cases police advise of the right to legal advice and make contact available, and LSS works closely with intermediaries who facilitate clients accessing legal aid.

12. *How does your organization help to reduce the amount of disputes which resort to the courts? Does your organization participate in law reform or offer legal education to the public? If so, please describe these activities or services.*

In BC LSS focusses on assisting people to resolve their legal problems, this is part of the statutory mandate. LSS ensures that a full array of relevant and useful advice and legal information is available throughout the province. These services include:

- **Publications:** LSS staff produce legal information and self-help materials in a number of languages to help clients identify, avoid and resolve common legal problems. Topics include: Aboriginal law; children; criminal; consumer and debt; family law;

housing; immigration and refugee law; pensions; and welfare rights. A complete list is available at legalaid.bc.ca/publications.

- **Family law website:** Includes self-help guides, informational videos and fact sheets on a variety of family law topics including custody, access, guardianship, child and spousal support and uncontested divorces. The site also includes direct links to court forms, legal information publications and other helpful organizations. See familylaw.lss.bc.ca.
- **LSS website:** Includes information about the Legal Services Society, how to apply for a legal aid lawyer, information and advice services, online publications office locations and more. See lss.bc.ca.
- **Clicklaw:** LSS is a contributor organization for Clicklaw, a website designed to give the general public access to all of the public information resources available through participating legal organizations. See clicklaw.bc.ca.
- **Supreme Court Self-Help Centre:** LSS works in partnership with government agencies and community organizations to provide legal information through the Supreme Court Self-Help Information Centre in Vancouver. See supremecourtselfhelp.bc.ca.
- **Advocate and education support:** LSS provides community advocates and intermediaries with legal education and advocacy training to help them assist their clients.
- **Legal Information Outreach Workers:** LIOWs help low-income people find legal information and understand court forms. They also provide referrals to other resources and give presentations at Aboriginal, women's, immigration, social service, and other community agencies.
- **Aboriginal Community Legal Workers:** ACLWs provide legal information and summary advice about family and child protection law, and issues such as residential schools, housing, and wills and estates.
- **Community Partners:** Community partners provide free legal information and direct clients to legal aid services. A list of community partner locations throughout BC is available at legalaid.bc.ca/legal_aid/communityPartners.php
-

Advice services

- **Duty counsel:** LSS contracts with private lawyers to provide legal advice (but not representation) at courthouses around BC.

Family duty counsel advise on family law matters and child protection issues. They can also assist clients at family case conferences and judicial case conferences.

Criminal duty counsel provide accused persons with advice about the charges against them, court procedures and legal rights. Duty counsel can also represent people at a guilty plea and sentencing, or on an application for release.

Immigration duty counsel at the Canada Border Services' Vancouver enforcement centre provide legal advice to people who are being held in custody as a result of immigration proceedings. Duty counsel represent clients at initial detention hearings and may represent them at subsequent hearings if there has been a change in circumstances that could result in release.

Family law advice lawyers: Low-income parents experiencing separation or divorce may be eligible for up to three hours of free legal advice from a family advice lawyer. These lawyers can provide advice about: custody; access; guardianship; child support; property (limited advice); tentative settlement agreements; and court procedures. This service is available at the Vancouver Justice Access Centre, the Nanaimo Justice Access Centre, the Family Justice Centre in Kelowna, the New Westminster Family Justice Centre and at courthouses in Kamloops, Prince George, Surrey and Victoria . You must be referred to a family advice lawyer by a family justice counsellor or a child support officer.

Family LawLINE: Family LawLINE lawyers give brief "next step" advice about family law issues such as custody, access, guardianship, child support, spousal support, property division, family agreements, adoption, and court procedures.

Criminal law telephone advice services:

- LSS maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons who have been arrested, detained or are under active investigation by a law enforcement agency. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- LSS also maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons in custody awaiting a bail hearing outside normal office hours, on weekends or on statutory holidays.

Clients must meet a [financial eligibility test](#) for family advice services. There is no financial eligibility test for criminal or immigration duty counsel advice.

13. *Please describe recent initiatives which made services accessible through the use of technology. If self-help services are available, please comment on the effectiveness of these services.* LSS utilizes two websites to deliver legal information; a general service corporate site at <http://www.lss.bc.ca/> and a website dedicated to family law issues at <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/> . LSS evaluates the utility of its self-help services, see for example our most recent family services evaluation at <http://www.legalaid.bc.ca/about/evaluations.php>

14. *Please describe the difficulties encountered by your country (or organization) in promoting legal aid work in the recent years, and the strategies for responding to these difficulties.*

Repeated funding reductions cuts have severely reduced the society's capacity to support justice reform and pursue other opportunities. Demand for legal aid services is affected by decisions made elsewhere in the justice system in most cases it is not obvious that the impact on LSS's budget is considered.

Current funding is inadequate to meet the legal needs of low-income people, to support an efficient and effective justice system, and to support LSS participation in reform initiatives. LSS salaries are below those of similar positions in government and private industry making it difficult to attract and retain staff.

In each of the past six years groups of legal aid lawyers have withdrawn services to protest inadequate service levels and poor remuneration (these rates have increased only once in the past 22 years and are below what government pays for similar work). The number of lawyers accepting legal aid cases dropped 40% from 1995 to 2010.

Non-government, interest-based revenue is dropping.

An absence of "systems thinking" among justice system institutions results in collateral costs to LSS.

Like many other Canadian legal aid plans LSS works with government stakeholders, the judiciary and lawyers to support increased government funding for legal aid. In 2012 LSS published a report, Making Justice Work, that stressed that legal aid should be seen as an investment in justice efficiency and effectiveness

(<http://www.legalaid.bc.ca/assets/aboutUs/reports/submissions/makingJusticeWork.pdf>).

15. *Has your country (or organization) established any mechanisms of co-operation with legal aid organizations abroad?* No

16. *How does your country (or organization) adopt United Nations legal aid principles and guidelines in policies and services?* No formal steps have been taken although all of Canada's plans are considered to be compliant with the standards