

PRO BONO LAW ALBERTA An Enduring Legacy

Pro Bono Law Alberta, a newly formed not-for-profit organization, was officially launched to the legal profession as the *Legacy Project* of the Law Society of Alberta at two events in Calgary and Edmonton on May 23 and 24, 2007.



Launch in Calgary on May 23. From left: Susan V.R. Billington, Executive Director PBLA; The Honourable Ron Stevens, QC, Minister of Justice and Attorney General; Rod Jerke, QC, President of PBLA; and Jim Peacock, QC, President Law Society of Alberta.

The delivery of pro bono legal services has been high on the Law Society of Alberta's policy agenda in recent years. The Law Society understands that there are many gaps and barriers in the provision of legal services to low-income Albertans.

Many are unable to pay for legal help, ineligible for legal aid, and cannot advocate for themselves. Those living in rural and remote areas; persons with mental and physical disabilities, mental health issues, literacy and numeracy challenges; and certain demographic groups—children and youth, seniors, immigrants and Aboriginal peoples—are particularly affected. Demographic, social, and economic projections indicate that increasing numbers of Albertans will require appropriate, low-cost or no-cost legal help in the coming years.

The Pro Bono Committee of the Law Society of Alberta has been working on the policy foundations for pro bono service delivery in Alberta for many years. With the 100th anniversary of the Law Society of Alberta taking place in 2007, there was a strong sentiment that the celebration should include

a "legacy project," something that would demonstrate the commitment of the Law Society of Alberta to its mission of serving the public interest.

At the September 2006 Convocation, Benchers unanimously adopted the Pro Bono Committee's proposal for the development of a provincial pro bono organization as the 100th Anniversary Legacy Project of the Law Society of Alberta.

Funding for Pro Bono Law Alberta has been provided by the Alberta Law Foundation and the Law Society of Alberta. The Law Society of Alberta has further actively supported the establishment of Pro Bono Law Alberta by providing in-kind services of office space, office support, administration and staff.

LAUNCHING PBLA.CA Pro bono network online

One of the foremost tasks for Pro Bono Law Alberta was establishing an online presence. In a short period of time, a site was launched in May of 2007. The site provides information about PBLA, lists pro bono programs available in Alberta, and highlights PBLA's ongoing efforts to promote opportunities for pro bono legal services in Alberta.

The site will serve as a destination point for the Alberta pro bono network to communicate its offerings to both lawyer volunteers and to the general public and community groups who can benefit from pro bono services.



FIRST NATIONAL PRO BONO AWARDS

Canadian Lawyers honoured for work with the poor and disadvantaged

The First National Pro Bono awards were presented by the Honourable Roy McMurtry, Chief Justice of Ontario at the First National Pro Bono Conference; Building Bridges to Justice held in Toronto on November 16, 2006. The awards are a national celebration of the dedication and commitment of the many lawyers who give their time freely to represent those who need but cannot afford legal assistance. Awards are given in three categories: Pro Bono Program Award; Distinguished Service award (individual); and Law Firm Award.

PRO BONO PROGRAM AWARD: CALGARY LEGAL GUIDANCE

Alberta's own Calgary Legal Guidance was presented with the Pro Bono Program Award. Known by many in Alberta's legal community as the model for pro bono service delivery, Calgary Legal Guidance was nationally recognized as one of Canada's oldest pro bono programs, operating continuously for over 35 years.

Calgary Legal Guidance has a solid reputation for collaboration with community groups and lawyers alike, and has a proven ability to sustain ongoing successful alliances with these groups. Its core program is an evening clinic that runs every week from Monday through Thursday throughout the year. Appointments with clients are pre-booked and volunteer lawyers devote one evening per month to the provision of free legal service to low-income clients. Calgary Legal Guidance provides free legal advice to over 5,000 low-income Albertans each year.



2006 National Pro Bono Award recipients with the Chief Justice of Ontario, R. Roy McMurtry (middle). From left: Iain Scott (McCarthy's), John-Paul Boyd, Mary Lynn Dorsey (Calgary Legal Guidance), and James Peacock (Gowlings).

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD (INDIVIDUAL): JEAN PAUL BOYD

The Distinguished Service Award for an individual went to Vancouver lawyer, John-Paul Boyd. Boyd is a family law litigator and mediator with an impressive list of volunteer and public education efforts. In addition, Boyd provides pro bono services as a resource lawyer for the University of British Columbia's Students' Legal Advice Program, as a clinic lawyer for the Salvation Army's pro bono program, and as a referral lawyer for the Battered Women's Services Society.

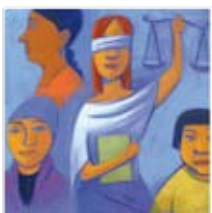
LAW FIRM AWARD: MCCARTHY TÉTRAULT LLP

The Law Firm award was presented to McCarthy Tétrault LLP, a national law firm that prides itself on growing staff involvement in pro bono. McCarthys has participated in at least seven separate projects organized through Pro Bono Law Ontario. In addition, the firm supports staff-driven pro bono activities and has drafted and adopted a national pro bono policy for staff that includes counting pro bono time

as part of a lawyer's billable time. So far this year, McCarthys has donated over \$1.2 million in free legal services.

Over 30 nominations were received from across Canada for the inaugural year of the awards. The National Pro Bono Awards provide tangible recognition of the commitment of the legal profession to access to justice for low-income Canadians who otherwise cannot afford legal services.

Look for the Call for Nominations for the 2nd National Pro Bono Awards that will be presented at the 2nd National Pro Bono Conference held on September 18-19, 2008 in Vancouver, BC.



The 2nd National Pro Bono Conference

SEPT. 18-19, 2008 • VANCOUVER, BC

Sponsored by: Pro Bono Law Alberta, Pro Bono Law of BC and Pro Bono Law Ontario



LAUNCHING THE MISSION

PBLA Strategic Plan 2007

Pro Bono Law Alberta was created as a new not-for-profit organization in March 2007 to build on the culture of pro bono service in Alberta and to make it easier for lawyers to engage in pro bono legal service delivery. It is the mission of PBLA to provide opportunities for lawyers and law firms to deliver pro bono service to individuals of limited means and the communities that serve them. Pro Bono Law Alberta is the legacy project of the Law Society in celebration of its 100th Anniversary in 2007.

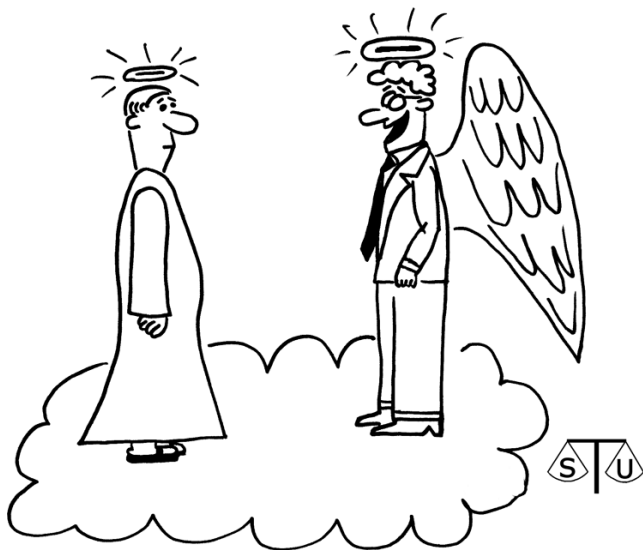
A strategic plan was developed by the Board of Directors of PBLA and articulates a mission that is driven by a vision of access to justice for all regardless of ability to pay for legal services. Legal Aid Alberta plays a major role in this vision. Pro bono legal services are meant to complement and do not replace a properly funded legal aid system.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to provide a framework for the operations and activities of Pro Bono Law Alberta over the next two to three years. Two main priorities are outlined in the strategic plan:

1. Project development; and
2. Sustainable funding for the continuing operations of PBLA.

A full copy of the Pro Bono Law Alberta Strategic Plan – September 2007 can be found on the website at www.pbla.ca

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"I'm kinda surprised I got in here.
I guess taking that pro bono
case really paid off."

FROM VISION TO FOUNDATIONS

Second Annual Stakeholder Roundtable: November 1-2, 2007

The Second Annual Pro Bono Stakeholder Roundtable on the delivery of pro bono legal service in Alberta will be held at the Calgary offices of the Law Society of Alberta on November 1 and 2, 2007. The conference will bring together, for the second year, various organizations that promote and support the delivery of pro bono legal services in Alberta. Entitled Laying the Foundation, the goal of the roundtable agenda is to promote awareness of pro bono initiatives throughout Alberta and to facilitate discussion on issues involved in the delivery of pro bono legal services. The Pro Bono Law Alberta Strategic Plan will be presented for input and discussion.

The first roundtable of pro bono stakeholders—Building the Vision—was held in October 2006. Stakeholders came together to discuss the Law Society of Alberta's proposal to develop a new service to "support, maximize, and coordinate the delivery of pro bono legal services in Alberta" and to ascertain whether a provincial pro bono organization would be feasible.

The results were remarkable. At the end of the two day consultation, the participants: 1) agreed to create and agreed on the objectives of a new provincial organization; 2) agreed on a model and action plan for implementation of the new provincial pro bono organization; and 3) identified the founding directors of Pro Bono Law Alberta who came forward to lead the establishment of a new provincial pro bono organization.

Pro Bono Law Alberta became a not-for-profit organization in March 2007 and was launched to the profession as the legacy project of the Law Society's 100th anniversary on May 23 and 24, 2007.

The second annual stakeholders' roundtable will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to come together to see the tangible results of their work from last year and to lay the foundations for Pro Bono Law Alberta to increase the delivery of pro bono legal services for low-income Albertans.



News from the Network:

Pro Bono Law Alberta - Volunteers in Pro Bono (ViP)

- Mark Woltersdorf, a tax lawyer with the Edmonton law firm Fraser Milner Casgrain, is a Pro Bono Law Alberta ViP. Mark merits special mention because he is the first to provide free legal service to PBLA in its Societies Act application and its application to the Charities Directorate, Canadian Revenue Agency for charitable status. Thank you Mark – our first volunteer (other than our Board and Advisory Board) is a solicitor and a tax lawyer at that!

Edmonton Community Legal Clinic (ECLC) – At its Annual General Meeting in June, the Edmonton Centre for Equal Justice got a new name. The members unanimously voted to rename the pro bono clinic servicing the Edmonton community—the Edmonton Community Legal Clinic (ECLC).

Lethbridge pro bono clinic opens its doors – Lethbridge Legal Guidance (LLG) started operations in February 2007 with its first clinic held on February 21. LLG operates on the pro bono clinic model established by Calgary Legal Guidance and now has 52 volunteer lawyers serving in their evening clinics—approximately half of the private bar in the Lethbridge community. Now that is a clear demonstration of a culture of pro bono service!

Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic –The Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic, operating from Red Deer to service the central Alberta community, has hired its first staff lawyer, Nadine Gerig. The staff lawyer position is a critical component of the operations of a pro bono clinic that leverages and enables the pro bono contributions of lawyers in private, corporate and government practice.

Children's Legal Education Resource Centre (CLERC) - is hosting the Artful Bench and Bar on October 30 at 6:00 p.m. at the Hotel Arts in Calgary. This fundraiser features a silent and live auction of original art created and donated by local lawyers, judges and friends of the legal community to support CLERC and the Kids Help Phone. Tickets are \$45 and available from CLERC at 403-207-9029 or email clerc@telusplanet.net by October 23.

Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award - In 2006, the Distinguished Services Awards, jointly awarded by the Canadian Bar Association (Alberta Branch) and the Law Society of Alberta at the Alberta Law Conference, added a new category—Distinguished Service for Pro Bono Legal Service. Professor Ron Hopp was awarded this distinction in 2007 for his years of service to the Student Legal Services at the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta. John Henderson QC received the award in 2006 for his dedication in establishing the pro bono clinic—Edmonton Community Legal Clinic.

Pro Bono Network News is published by the Pro Bono Law Alberta Society.

Pro Bono Law Alberta is a not-for-profit organization with the mission: *to improve access to justice by increasing the scope and availability of pro bono legal services for Albertans of limited means. Pro bono legal services are intended to complement, not to replace a properly funded legal aid system.*

Pro Bono Law Alberta is funded by The Alberta Law Foundation and the Law Society of Alberta.



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