



**Neighbourhood
Legal Services**
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX

Reduced Front Line Legal Services for Low Income Ontarians

The provincial government has cut funding to Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) by \$133m, a 35% reduction in provincial funding; with the annual reduction reaching 45% by 2021. This funding cut is retroactive to April 1st. Legal Aid Ontario is cutting funding to community legal clinics by 16% this year and more cuts are anticipated.

Oppose cuts to Legal Aid Ontario: <https://stoplegalaidcuts.nationbuilder.com/>

LAO provides many different services. Most of its budget goes to paying lawyers to help in criminal law cases and in family law cases – these are legal aid “certificates”. There were certificates for refugee cases (now severely restricted by the provincial government) and some other matters. As well, LAO provides duty counsel services at the criminal and family law courts, advice lawyers and some other services.

LAO also funds **community legal clinics**. Community legal clinics like Neighbourhood Legal Services London and Middlesex are independent non-profit corporations with community based boards of directors.

Low income Ontarians will lack access to justice

We assist vulnerable people with the basic essentials of life: keeping a roof over their head and some money to put food on the table. This funding is devastating blow to persons with low income at a point in their lives when they most desperately need help; at the time that they are facing eviction, serious repair issues in their rental housing, loss of job, loss of disability benefits or other serious legal problems. Without legal clinics, low income Ontarians will lack access to justice.

Access to legal assistance is what makes justice possible.

Government commitment to not cutting front line services?

The government, and Premier Doug Ford personally, made a commitment that no cuts would be made to front line services. **It is impossible to have cut of this magnitude without affecting front line services.** Will this be “promise made, promise broken?”

No fat to cut

Neighbourhood Legal Services London and Middlesex is a non-profit corporation with a volunteer community based board of directors. Almost all of our budget goes to personnel expenses and rent. All of our staff are front line staff; there is no administrative overhead to cut. No further “efficiencies” or “modernization” can make up for a funding cut this large.

This deep cut to our funding will mean reduction in service.

The people we serve

We serve London and Middlesex County – a low income population of about 80,000. All of them are struggling to survive with very little income in a very expensive environment. When they run into legal problems, there is a lot at stake and they do not have the resources to respond effectively. The demand for help already exceeds our very limited resources. With funding cuts, the help that we can provide will be further reduced.

The numbers

- LAO is 10% of the justice system’s \$5 Billion budget but is shouldering over half of the \$300 Million cuts to the justice system set out in the budget
- The Canadian Bar Association found that for every dollar spent on legal aid, the government saves an average of \$6 elsewhere – cutting legal aid will increase costs for the government rather than saving money.
- From 2013-14 to 2017-18, the number of certificates issued by LAO increased 23% and the number of persons assisted by duty counsel increased 12% 2012-13 to 2016-17 (source: Auditor General’s 2018 Report).
- The number of active community legal clinics files increased 12% 2012-13 to 2016-17 (source: Auditor General’s 2018 Report).

- LAO's revenues from all sources were \$495M in 2018-19 (source: LAO) of which approximately \$371M came from the provincial government (based on the Auditor General's report that 75% of 2017-18 funding came from the province).
- The government is cutting funding this year by \$133m, a 36% reduction; this will rise to 164M by 2021-22 - a 44% reduction.

What can be done?

We are asking individuals to send personal emails to Doug Ford, the Attorney General and your local MPP and request that the cuts to the Legal Aid System and Community Legal Clinics be reversed.

Information on how to do this can be found at:

Stoplegalaidcuts.nationbuilder.com