
Neighbourhood Information Post

July 29, 2019

The Honourable Bill Morneau
430 Parliament
Toronto, ON M5A 3A2

Dear Honourable Minister Morneau:

We are writing this letter to express our serious concerns over the cuts to legal aid funding being imposed by the Ontario Government. These cuts if fully implemented will have serious and detrimental effects on our community.

As you are aware, Neighbourhood Information Post (NIP) is a not-for-profit social service agency that serves the low-income and vulnerable individuals and families in Toronto Downtown East. Many of our clients often require timely assistance from community legal clinics to deal with housing, immigration and employment issues. Our agency works closely with a number of legal clinics, especially Neighbourhood Legal Services (NLS) and the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC). We are very concerned because the recent decision made by the provincial government slashing legal aid funding by \$133 million, has led to drastic reductions in funding for many Toronto-based clinics. Moreover, the Province has directed Legal Aid Ontario not to spend any provincial funding on immigration and refugee law services. This leads to an increase in demand from the community for services at the under-funded legal clinics.

Our agency is very concerned about the negative impact that these cuts will have on this community. Several neighbourhoods in Toronto Centre rank amongst the neediest in the City of Toronto and likely the province. The massive cuts to legal aid will create even more barriers to the most vulnerable marginalized members of our community. We all know that unresolved legal issues tend to cascade into new personal and social problems. From our perspective, this will affect our ability to refer our clients to the services that will meet their urgent legal needs and impact on our colleagues' ability to address the other personal, health and social problems they routinely work on.

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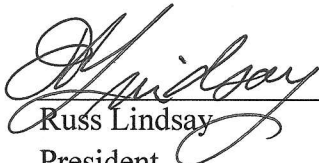
MEMBER OF FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES IN TORONTO AREA

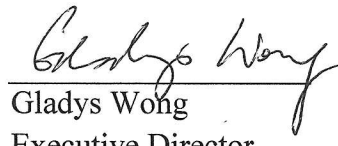


In the face of the funding cuts from the Province, we are asking you as our local Member of Parliament and as the Minister of Finance to ask the Government of Canada to provide more financial support for legal aid. We have worked with your constituency office staff on many cases where community members are facing challenges with Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada. With provincial funding for this work cut off, our ability to continue serving these constituents in collaboration with your office will be much more limited. Federal funding for immigration, refugee and citizenship work is consistent with the Department's mandate, so we urge you to push for the funding needed so that we can all continue our important work in facilitating the integration of the most vulnerable members of our community into our civil society.

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Your truly,


Russ Lindsay
President


Gladys Wong
Executive Director

cc: MPP Suze Morrison
Councilor Kristyn Wong-Tam
Jack de Klerk (Neighbourhood Legal Service)
Avvy Go (Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic)