



August 11, 2022

Hon. Tyler Shandro (By email to ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca)
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General of Alberta
424 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Shandro:

RE: PROPER FUNDING OF ALBERTA LEGAL AID

I am the President of the Association of Justice Counsel (AJC), the union representing 2,600 federal public sector lawyers employed by the Department of Justice Canada; Public Prosecution Service of Canada; and as in-house counsel by independent federal agencies, courts and tribunals.

Our members, federal prosecutors with the PPSC, appear regularly in Alberta criminal courts and deal with accused persons who rely on the assistance of Alberta legal aid. We are very concerned that the inadequately funded Alberta legal aid system has reached an alarming crisis point where defence counsel feel compelled to withdraw their services, and justice in the province is threatened.

In the AJC's view, if the legal aid budget is short-changed, so is justice in the province:

- The poor, vulnerable and marginalized in our society suffer because they need legal services but don't have the means to pay for them.
- Access to justice, a fundamental tenet of our democracy, falters and is denied to those who need it most.
- The justice system is less efficient and effective as unrepresented litigants attempt to navigate the complexities of that system without the skills or knowledge to protect their own interests.

- The potential for unfair outcomes increases, including the specter of wrongful convictions.
- The jobs of our members and other Crown counsel are made more difficult.
- Experienced and dedicated defence counsel turn away from an unfair legal aid system because they are underpaid, unappreciated and overworked.
- Public confidence in the justice system is undermined.
- Public trust in government is diminished because of an apparent lack of commitment to justice.

In the AJC's view, it is in everyone's best interests for legal aid to be properly funded in order to ensure a healthy justice system. Accordingly, the AJC stands with our colleagues at the Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association as well as our colleagues in the defence bar in their pleas for secure, adequate and stable funding for the aid system in Alberta.

The time for action is now. Justice in the form of proper legal aid funding can't wait for the next budget cycle in 2023.

Yours truly,



David McNair
President / Président