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August 20, 2020

The Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington St.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8
David.Lametti@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Lametti,

I am writing to you as both the Federation of Ontario Law Associations' (FOLA) Legal Aid Chair and as a member of the Alliance for Sustainable Legal Aid (ASLA) to underscore Legal Aid Ontario's (LAO) urgent need for funding due to a COVID-19 related economic downturn.

As you know, Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) receives funding not only from the federal and provincial governments, but also from the Law Foundation of Ontario. The Law Foundation's revenue comes from the interest earned on the balances in mixed trust accounts managed by Ontario lawyers and paralegals. The Law Foundation directs 75 per cent of this interest revenue to LAO. In the past fiscal year, the Law Foundation provided LAO with \$91 million—approximately 20 per cent of LAOs total funding.

The Law Foundation's revenue levels are highly dependent on interest rates and real estate activity in Ontario, both of which have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In these circumstances, the Law Foundation's revenue has dropped and will continue to do so, as will the Foundation's financial contribution to LAO. The interest rate cut alone will likely result in a decrease in the Law Foundation's contribution of at least \$60 million.

We are asking that you work with the province to address this shortfall. The federal government can pre-empt dire consequences for LAO and the low-income Ontarians who depend on LAO for legal advice and representation at critical points in their lives. It is our understanding that the Ontario government, is prepared to match your government's contribution to LAO up to \$30 million.

Accessible legal aid services are crucial to a fair justice system and can have life-altering impacts on the individuals and families who rely on them.

I am available at your convenience should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Terry Brandon,
Legal Aid Chair, FOLA



About FOLA

FOLA is a non-profit organization that represents all 46 local law associations across Ontario. Together with our associate member, the Toronto Lawyers Association, FOLA represents approximately 12,000 lawyers, most of whom are in private practice in firms across the province.

About ASLA

ASLA is a group of nine provincial law associations an alliance of that work together to ensure residents of Ontario have critical access to justice through a sustainably funded legal aid program.

cc: Nicholas.Daube@justice.gc.ca
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Sheena Weir, Law Society of Ontario sweir@lso.ca