



MEDIA RELEASE

Cuts will have devastating impact says legal clinic

Belleville/Dec. 17, 2012– Cuts to provincial benefits for people on social assistance will have a “devastating” impact on the community say local legal advocates.

“We have heard from many people who are disappointed with the government’s decision to eliminate programs that provide essential support to vulnerable members of our society,” says Deirdre McDade, a staff lawyer at the Community Advocacy & Legal Centre, based in Belleville.

Two programs are being cut. The Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) will be eliminated on Jan. 1, 2013. The second program is the Home Repairs Benefit which stopped accepting applications on June 30, 2012.

The organization for which McDade works provides free legal services to low-income residents of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington counties. CALC has first-hand knowledge of the importance of the two programs being cut.

“If the cuts proceed, they will have a devastating impact on our communities, leading to increased homelessness,” says McDade. “The cuts will make it even more difficult for people living in poverty and on low-incomes to access and maintain safe, stable housing.”

The CSUMB is often used by tenants who fall into arrears after a job loss or other unforeseen circumstances. It is also used by women and families trying to move from transitional shelters into permanent homes after domestic violence. Others reasons to use it include a move from the hospital into the community or a change in family size.

The upcoming cut will also place serious pressure on local municipalities says CALC. The province will direct just 50 per cent of former CSUMB funds into a new consolidated housing fund administered by the municipalities. Starting Jan. 1, 2013, municipalities will be responsible for administering emergency housing funds for a larger pool of individuals, but with substantially less money.

“We hope people will let provincial members of parliament know that they are opposed to these cuts,” says McDade. CALC is working with MPP Todd Smith to change the government’s decision. “Todd Smith created a petition and at CALC we received 300 signatures in support of it, which we returned to him. We have also sent 144 letters of support to provincial cabinet ministers. We urge others to fight against these cuts.”

For more information visit the CALC website at www.communitylegalcentre.ca or call [613-966-8686](tel:613-966-8686). For long distance call [1-877-966-8686](tel:1-877-966-8686). TTY: [613-966-8714](tel:613-966-8714) or [1-877-966-8714](tel:1-877-966-8714). Fax: [613-966-6251](tel:613-966-6251).

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The Community Advocacy and Legal Centre is a community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Clinic staff cannot give legal information or advice in criminal, family or real estate matters. The clinic was founded in 1980 and serves low income residents of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington counties. The clinic’s main office is in Belleville, with satellite locations in Amherstview, Trenton, Picton, Napanee, Bancroft and Madoc.