



# Poverty Roundtable

Hastings Prince Edward

June 17, 2019

Hon. Caroline Mulroney  
Ministry of the Attorney General  
11th Floor  
720 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Attorney General Mulroney,

I am writing today, on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Poverty Roundtable of Hastings Prince Edward, to urge you to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario's budget. We are extremely concerned that these cuts will have a direct effect on the services that Legal Aid Ontario provides and in particular on services provided by community legal clinics, including our Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (CALC).


The Poverty Roundtable HPE was formed in 2013 and is committed to working in collaboration with all community members, agencies, government and business partners so that our diverse views, perspectives and resources may combine to effect positive change for those for whom poverty is a very real and ever-present reality. CALC is a founding member of the Poverty Roundtable and plays an important role in many community initiatives in Hastings & Prince Edward counties.


Our community is deeply impacted by poverty. Community legal clinics provide access to justice for the most vulnerable people in our community, those who struggle to keep a roof over their head and to put food on the table. CALC's services are highly valued in our community, having developed a results-based practice that is innovative, progressive, based on sound theory and research, collaborative and efficient, with a strong social justice orientation. Cuts to their services will create a significant burden for those who are already struggling.

CALC staff work effectively with community partners to support early identification and resolution of legal needs that will only worsen if not addressed. One example is the Justice & Health Partnership approach undertaken by our legal clinic and so important in a large rural area. Through health-justice partnerships, legal professionals can decrease injustice and social problems by addressing the social determinants of health at multiple levels through various sectors. Health care providers participating in medical-legal partnerships are given training on how to identify legal needs that may otherwise be overlooked. They help ensure these needs do not go unmet by referring patients to legal professionals. It can be difficult to treat patients' health concerns without addressing the underlying social conditions that give rise to poor health, including unresolved legal issues. Where clinic staff work with health care providers to identify and address the legal needs of patients living in poverty, this helps to improve both the health

65 Station Street, Belleville, ON, K8N 2S6

PHONE: 613 779 7477 prt@povertyroundtablehpe.ca

 povertyroundtablehpe

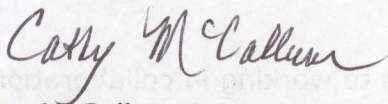
 PovertyRTHPE

and legal well-being of patients. Preventing the escalation of legal problems through early intervention offers the opportunity to decrease costs in both the legal and health care systems. This local model has the potential to be implemented province-wide and to be an effective way to increase access to justice. It is short-sighted to reduce these preventive services; not only will it result in increased suffering, but it is not cost effective. The Canadian Bar Association concluded that for every dollar spent on legal aid, the government saves an average of \$6 elsewhere – investing in legal aid reduces the cost of other government funded services.

Cuts to funding for already overstretched community legal clinics will mean a loss of front line services for people living in poverty. The government had promised not to decrease services for low income Ontarians, but the legal clinic budgets primarily provide for staffing and cuts of this magnitude will undoubtedly result in reductions in staff.

Access to justice is an important component in ensuring that people living in poverty can address barriers to full participation in employment and in the community. We urge you to reconsider the funding cuts to Legal Aid Ontario and particularly to community legal clinics.

Yours sincerely,



Cathy McCallum  
Chair, Steering Committee  
Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward

Copy to:  
Premier Doug Ford  
Hon. Todd Smith, MPP Bay of Quinte

