



LEGAL AID CLINICS IS FOR THE PEOPLE – STOP JOB LOSSES

COPE Ontario wholly endorses the Association for Sustainable Legal Aid's demands that Attorney General Caroline Mulroney meet with its member organizations, including the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, before the legislature rises later this week.

Doug Ford and the Ontario Progressive Conservative government have introduced catastrophic cuts to funding for Legal Aid Ontario, reducing the overall budget for LAO by 35%. This loss of LAO funding will likely result in an immediate cut of 16% to Community Legal Clinic budgets.

“We firmly believe that earnest consultation around Legal Aid Ontario’s budget will reveal that legal clinics already operate on lean budgets,” said **Patty Clancy, Director of COPE Ontario, which represents staff at Legal clinics in Hamilton, St. Catharines and Welland. “Most clinic funding pays the salaries of frontline staff who provide vital legal services to some of the most marginalized in our communities.”** They advocate for the rights of workers and tenants. They help Ontarians access such programs as WSIB, Employment Insurance, Ontario Works, ODSP, Canada Pension Plan and CPP Disability. They advocate on our behalf to ensure our Human Rights are protected. Our clinics also provide advocacy and public education to promote equitable access to our justice system.

As a publicly subsidized legal service, our Community Legal Clinics represent those who would otherwise be unable to afford legal representation – those who would otherwise have no hope of accessing our justice system.

A 16% cut to budgets means job losses in our Legal Clinics, and it means the most vulnerable in our society will lose access to many of the vital services our Clinic workers provide. These cuts must be reversed and the Ontario Progressive Conservative government must restore funding to our Legal Aid services.

“Shame on Doug Ford for once again attacking the most vulnerable Ontarians,” Clancy went on to demand that “Caroline Mulroney meet with legal aid providers and do her job to ensure legal clinics will continue to be there for the people of Ontario.”

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