

THE ALBERTA LEGAL SERVICES MAPPING PROJECT

Report for the EDMONTON JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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Disclaimer

This report and its appendices have been prepared by the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice and the Alberta Legal Services Mapping Team and represent the independent and objective recording and summarization of input received from stakeholders, service providers and members of the public. Any opinions, interpretations, conclusions or recommendations contained within this document are those of the writers, and may or may not coincide with those of the Alberta Law Foundation or other members of the Research Directors Committee.

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THE ALBERTA LEGAL SERVICES MAPPING PROJECT: Report for the EDMONTON JUDICIAL DISTRICT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Edmonton is the sixth of eleven Alberta Judicial Districts to be mapped as part of the Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project (ALSMP). The ALSMP is a large-scale, multi-year endeavor, designed to gain an understanding of the legal needs of Albertans and of the legal services available in Alberta.

The goals of this project are to:

- Collect and share information about existing legal services in Alberta.
- Gain a better understanding about the characteristics of people and communities across Alberta and their legal needs.
- Identify strengths and gaps in current legal service delivery and resources.
- Strengthen relationships between legal service providers through the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

The report for the Calgary Judicial District, the pilot region for the ALSMP research, includes a detailed introduction to the project and details of the research methodology and can be accessed from the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (the Forum) website at <http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2009/mapping-calgary-en.pdf>. A combined and condensed version of the original Legal Services I and II and the Brief Legal Questionnaires was used in the Edmonton Judicial District (see the Forum website for copies of all instruments), as well as the Judiciary/Tribunal and Bar Members Questionnaires. The condensed instrument was created after we reviewed our experiences in the pilot District and were able to focus the questionnaire on those questions that best elicit the required information.

Team members conducted interviews with service providers in the Edmonton Judicial District between May 5 and June 2, 2010. We held three Community Focus Group meetings in Edmonton and one in Hinton. One of the Edmonton focus groups was held in the Courthouse. The other two were held in partnership with the Wicihitowin Justice Action Circle. We also conducted interviews with legal service providers in Edmonton. We were also contacted by members of the public who were interviewed between May 2009 and May 2010. They were interviewed using the Public Questionnaire.

1.1 Outline of the Report

In this project we strive to address the following major research questions:

1. What programs, services and facilities relating to the administration of justice, public access and public understanding, are available in each Alberta judicial district?
2. What do we know about the users of current legal education, information, advice, representation and support services?
3. How can current legal services be enhanced to better meet client needs and how can service gaps be effectively filled?

In this Report we will first describe the relevant characteristics of this Judicial District, and then discuss the existing legal and related services in Edmonton. We will then discuss the predominant legal needs followed by identified gaps in legal and related services, noting the challenges, good practices and creative approaches of service providers. We will conclude by making recommendations designed to support good practices, remove barriers and fill identified gaps in needed services. These recommendations have been developed based on feedback from Focus Group members (Appendix A) and collaboration from some of our Project Partners. Suggestions for how they might best be achieved are also provided.

1.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

The Project is an ambitious undertaking that involves the collection of valuable quantitative and qualitative data. The result is a combination of facts and figures with qualitative themes to provide context and explanations for the trends that emerge. The strengths of this Project are:

- it produces a large amount of useful data regarding what legal and related services exist,
- it engages people who live and work in the District and gains from their insights and experiences,
- it relies on mixed methodology and can thus provide a more complete picture of the topics that are addressed, and
- it takes a holistic approach to examining legal and related needs.

That said, there are always limitations when conducting research:

- due to time and budgetary constraints, we were not able to involve as many legal and related services as we would have liked,
- we were only able to conduct one-on-one interviews with 17 service providers, and
- we were unable to actively recruit members of the public, which would have resulted in greater public participation and perhaps more varied experiences.

1.3 Database

One of the deliverables of this Project is the creation of a database that provides information about all of the mapped legal and related services in Alberta. In an effort to achieve Goal 1, the database contains basic information about services such as mandates, as well as details about location, eligibility criteria, required documentation and accessibility. The administrative interface for this database can be viewed online by project partners by going to www.albertalegalservices.ca/admin/ then entering *guest* as the user name and *mappingdata* as the password.

Beyond the scope of this project, but very closely related, will be the development of a website that will be user-friendly and available to members of the public as well as service providers. There is a significant amount of interest in this next step, and the Team is currently seeking suggestions about where the data should ultimately be housed and how the public interface should be developed.

2.0 ABOUT THE EDMONTON JUDICIAL DISTRICT

**Figure 1 –
Map of the Edmonton Judicial District**



2.1 Population

The population in the Edmonton Judicial District has risen significantly throughout the economic “boom” of 2006-2007 and the recent recession. We report the most current statistics that we were able to access, frequently having to rely on 2006 Census data. It should be noted that it is probable that these data are no longer completely accurate.

2.1.1 Urban Trends

In 2006, the population in the city of Edmonton was 730,372 (Statistics Canada, 2006) but is currently estimated at 917,200. The city's population actually decreased by 3.4% in 2009, but is expected to grow by 2.5% by the end of 2010 (City of Edmonton, 2010).

In 2006, immigrants accounted for 23% of Edmonton's population (citizens and permanent residents). Non-permanent residents, the majority being temporary foreign workers (TFWs), accounted for a further 1% (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010), the number of TFWs in Edmonton rose from 6,444 in 2006 to 8,506 in 2009.

Visible minorities comprise 23% of Edmonton's population (Statistics Canada, 2006). Chinese people represent the largest group at 27% of the total visible minority population. People from South Asia account for 23%, followed by Black people¹ (12%), Filipino people (11%), and people of Arabic descent (7%). Aboriginal peoples comprise 5% of Edmonton's population (Statistics Canada, 2006).

2.1.2 Rural Trends

The Edmonton Judicial District covers a large area of the province and contains the following municipal districts:

- Athabasca County (population 7,587)²
- County of Barrhead (population 5,845)
- County of Thorhild (population 3,042)
- Jasper National Park³ (population 4,265)
- Parkland County (population 29,265)
- Strathcona County (population 82,511)
- Sturgeon County (population 18,621)
- Westlock County (population 6,910)
- Woodlands County (population 4,158)
- Yellowhead County (population 10,045)

These 10 municipal districts experienced an average population increase of 3% between 2001 and 2006, for a total population of approximately 172,249. The only county that experienced a population decrease was Thorhild (-2.5%).

Much of Alberta's population increase since the mid 2000s has been attributed to an influx of immigrants and non-permanent residents (often temporary foreign workers). Strathcona County experienced a population increase of 14.6% (Statistics Canada, 2006). New Canadians accounted for 8% of the total population increase in this County

¹ This is the term used in Statistics Canada report.

² All population statistics are from the Statistics Canada 2006 Census data.

³ A portion of Jasper National Park falls outside of the Edmonton Judicial District. However, the vast majority of this area's population lives within the town of Jasper, which is within this District.

during that time period. Woodlands County experienced a population increase of 8.9% (Statistics Canada, 2006). There was no increase in new Canadians in this County. Parkland County experienced the third largest population growth (7.5%), however only a small portion of the population increase (1%) in this County was due to the arrival of new Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2006).

There are six Reserves within this District. They are:

- Alexander (population 962)⁴
- Alexis (population 734)
- Stony Plain (population 1,418)
- Wabamun (2) (population 2,008)
- Whitecourt (population unknown)

There are no Métis Settlements in this District. The breakdown of urban to rural population in this District is 81% to 19%. The largest rural municipal district contains 9% of the Judicial District's population and the smallest contains only 0.03%. This breakdown does have repercussions for resource allocation, some of which – as will be addressed in this Report - rural service providers report are having a negative impact on their abilities to serve their communities.

2.2 Education

During a recent conference in Edmonton (*Learning Our Way to a New Alberta*, June 1, 2010) speakers reported that Alberta has the second best education system in the world when measuring based on resources, funding and educator training. Yet these speakers feel that grade school dropout rates are too high and approximately 4 in 10 people who are educated here are not functionally literate (grade 8 level).

Table 1 compares educational attainment for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, as well as provincial averages. As can be seen, almost a quarter of Edmonton residents are dropping out of school before grade 12 and not pursuing any type of formal training. The portion of people who are completing university or college is less than half the provincial average. A significant portion of people in this community are choosing to enter into the trades.

⁴ All population statistics are from the Statistics Canada 2006 Census data.

**Table 1 –
Educational Attainment for the City of Edmonton⁵**

Education	Alberta		Calgary (city)		Edmonton (city)	
	Total %	Aboriginals %	Total %	Aboriginals %	Total %	Aboriginals %
Less Than High School	14	26	11	31	22	41
High School	24	25	22	26	26	39
Trade	12	18	9	11	32	11
University/College	48	27	57	32	20	9

2.3 Employment & Industry

Employment in Edmonton and area – as well as the whole of Alberta – has taken a significant hit in the past two years. In 2006 the unemployment rate in Edmonton was 4.9% (Statistics Canada, 2006). It was at 6.7% by the end of 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010). While 81,800 jobs were created in Canada in the first quarter of 2010, 25,900 jobs were lost in Alberta and 7,000 of those were lost in Edmonton (City of Edmonton, 2010). It should be noted that, because Edmonton is the nearest large metropolitan area, many people who work in the oil sands in Northern Alberta maintain residences in this city and travel back and forth from the camps. Thus, people who are laid off in Fort McMurray, for example, are collecting unemployment benefits and adding to the high rates in Edmonton.

Aboriginal peoples in Edmonton have a higher unemployment rate than the general population (10.3%). Métis residents are experiencing a 7.8% unemployment rate (Statistics Canada, 2006).

As of 2006, the industries in which the largest portions of Edmonton’s workforce were employed were:

- Business services (19%)
- Retail trade (12%)
- Health care and social services (10%)
- Construction (9%)
- Manufacturing (8%)

At that time, agriculture and other resource-based industries, which include oil and gas, provided employment for 4% of Edmonton’s workforce (Statistics Canada, 2006).

⁵ Sources: Andersen (2010); Statistics Canada (2006; 2008)

2.4 Cost of Living

According to the most recent International Housing Affordability Survey (2010), Edmonton was ranked 168 out of 265 cities in six developed countries for affordability. For example, it is more costly to live in Edmonton than Quebec City or various suburbs of Toronto (eg. Barrie). Calgary was ranked 178th.

People in this community spend an annual average of \$16,768 on shelter, \$13,903 on transportation and \$7,861 on food (Statistics Canada, 2009). Minimum wage is \$8.80/hour. The median household income in the city of Edmonton was \$63,082 in 2005 (currently estimated to be around \$70,000). It should be noted also that non-immigrant families earn on average \$11,534 more annually than immigrant families when considering median income levels (Statistics Canada, 2006). A popular real estate blog, www.edmontonhousingbust.com, currently rates Edmonton as four out of five on the scale of unaffordability, five being severely unaffordable.

Table 2 compares Edmonton's current shelter costs to those in Calgary (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2009) in order to provide perspective about the cost of living in this city.

**Table 2 –
Average Housing Costs in Edmonton and Calgary**

Average Cost	Edmonton	Calgary
2 BR Apartment (monthly)	\$1,059	\$1,099
Condominium	\$207,200	\$263,500
Bungalow	\$311,500	\$419,400
Standard Two Storey	\$367,700	\$432,200

3.0 EXISTING LEGAL AND RELATED SERVICES IN EDMONTON

The Team began research in the Edmonton Judicial District by mapping all legal services that could be found on the Internet and in any directories. Legal services were categorized into one or more of the following categories based on the definitions provided below:

- **Advice** – individualized answers about how the law will apply to a person's particular case, what outcome is likely, or what option the person should pursue. Legal advice can only be given by a lawyer or a law student.
- **Enforcement** – the application or regulation of a law, carrying out of an executive or judicial order or ensuring observance of or obedience to laws.
- **Legal Information** – the provision of one-on-one information concerning procedural and substantive law that directly pertain to the individual's personal legal needs. Legal information can only be provided by a lawyer or law student.

- **Representation** – a lawyer, law student or paralegal recognized by the Court, preparing legal documents (pleadings, Affidavit, etc.) or appearing on behalf of a client. Legal representation includes duty counsel and unbundled legal services, a possible example of which includes drafting of pleadings.
- **Support** – services that offer court support programs or any other support/help finding or talking to legal and related services on behalf of clients needing legal assistance.
- **Public Legal Information and Education (PLEI)** – the provision of ‘one-to-many’ general information about the law, about the options that are available and about basic court processes. The information can be in the form of written materials (pamphlets, brochures, websites), educational programs, or telephone/in-person services.
- **Social or health services** that provide any kind of formal or informal legal support (eg. advocacy or referrals) or see large numbers of clients with existing or potential legal needs were also mapped.

The Team conducted four focus groups with representatives from legal and related services in the Edmonton Judicial District. One was held in Hinton with six representatives from legal and related services. Three were held in Edmonton, with two of the three involving Aboriginal serving agencies. The third Edmonton focus group was held in the courthouse with a variety of legal service providers. A selection of 16 legal services were also chosen for in-depth interviews.⁶ All of these were sole-purpose⁷ legal services (including three lawyers in private practice). Due to time and funding constraints no interviews were conducted with cross-over legal and social/health services or sole-purpose social/health services.⁸

3.1 Identification of Legal and Related Services

The Team mapped 112 organizations that offer a total of 504 legal and related services in the Edmonton Judicial District. Table 3 shows how many services are available within each of the four areas of law.

Of the services mapped:

- 122 are sole-purpose legal services,
- 38 are cross-over legal and social/health services and
- 344 are sole-purpose social/health services.

⁶ The Team has developed a prioritization process, which has been described in detail in the methodology discussion of the Calgary Judicial District Report at page 13, footnote 16. <http://cfcj-fcj.org/docs/2009/mapping-calgary-en.pdf>

⁷ “Sole-purpose” is a term used for the purposes of this Project, to differentiate legal services that do not have any social or health service components and social or health services that do not have any legal service components.

⁸ A commitment of the ALSMP is to confidentiality. As we are now only able to include a very small number of participants we are no longer listing service representatives that have been interviewed. Where major services are concerned (for example, LAA, Alberta Justice, Edmonton Community Legal Centre) we are, in association with descriptions of services, able to state when facts are confirmed by organizational representatives.

The inter-relatedness of legal and social service provision is exemplified by the fact that even major organizations that are widely known as legal service providers (eg, LAA and ECLC) emphasized that they also provide social support services.

**Table 3 –
Services Available within the Edmonton Judicial District
by Area of Law & Service Type⁹**

AVAILABLE LEGAL SERVICES ¹⁰	City of Edmonton		Other Communities		Outside Judicial District
	#		#		
	Database	Interviews	Database	Interviews	Database
Administrative Law					
<i>Advice</i>	2	8	-	-	1
<i>Enforcement</i>	9	6	-	-	4
<i>Representation</i>	-	1	1	-	-
<i>Support</i>	5	3	2	-	-
<i>PLEI</i>	34	5	5	-	7
Civil Law					
<i>Advice</i>	14	5	-	1	-
<i>Enforcement</i>	13	3	4	-	-
<i>Representation</i>	7	4	1	1	-
<i>Support</i>	16	7	2	2	-
<i>PLEI</i>	51	9	7	1	6
Criminal Law					
<i>Advice</i>	18	7	3	1	-
<i>Enforcement</i>	29	1	14	-	-
<i>Representation</i>	10	6	1	1	-
<i>Support</i>	38	8	11	2	-
<i>PLEI</i>	66	9	20	1	-
Family Law					
<i>Advice</i>	7	3	-	-	-
<i>Enforcement</i>	6	1	3	-	-
<i>Representation</i>	4	1	1	-	-
<i>Support</i>	24	8	5	2	-
<i>PLEI</i>	53	10	14	-	-

⁹ Categorizing types of service is not straightforward. For example, the Native Counseling Court Worker Program is classified as “support”, although court workers are able to appear on behalf of clients. A service was only counted as providing PLEI if substantive information was offered about laws, rights, responsibilities or procedures. Not all advice and representation services also met the PLEI requirements.

¹⁰ Some services offered multiple types of services in more than one area of law. Therefore numbers are greater than the total number of *different service organizations* mapped and interviewed.

3.2 Geographic Location of Services

The Team mapped 32 communities in the Edmonton Judicial District. Table 4 provides details about the physical dispersal of legal and related services.¹¹

**Table 4 –
Physical Locations of Legal and Related Services**

Location	Legal Services		Social/Health Services
	Sole Purpose	Legal & Social/Health	
Athabasca	10	3	8
Barrhead	10	2	5
Bon Accord	-	-	-
Bruderheim	-	-	-
Calling Lake	1	2	-
Drayton Valley	7	3	6
Duffield	-	-	-
Edmonton	97	32	213
Edson	7	3	4
Enoch	-	1	-
Fort Saskatchewan	10	1	11
Fox Creek	6	1	4
Gibbons	-	1	1
Glenevis	5	1	-
Hinton	13	6	14
Jasper	10	3	4
Lamont	-	-	1
Legal	-	-	1
Mayerthorpe	6	2	4
Morinville	6	2	2
Onoway	-	-	1
Redwater	1	1	1
Sherwood Park	7	3	19
Spruce Grove	1	2	1
St. Albert	8	2	9
Stony Plain	7	3	17
Swan Hills	1	1	2
Tofield	1	1	1
Vegreville	7	1	13
Viking	1	1	1
Westlock	6	2	2
Whitecourt	8	2	7
TOTAL Locations in District	236	82	352
TOTAL Locations Outside District	19	1	10
TOTAL PHYSICAL LOCATIONS	255	83	362

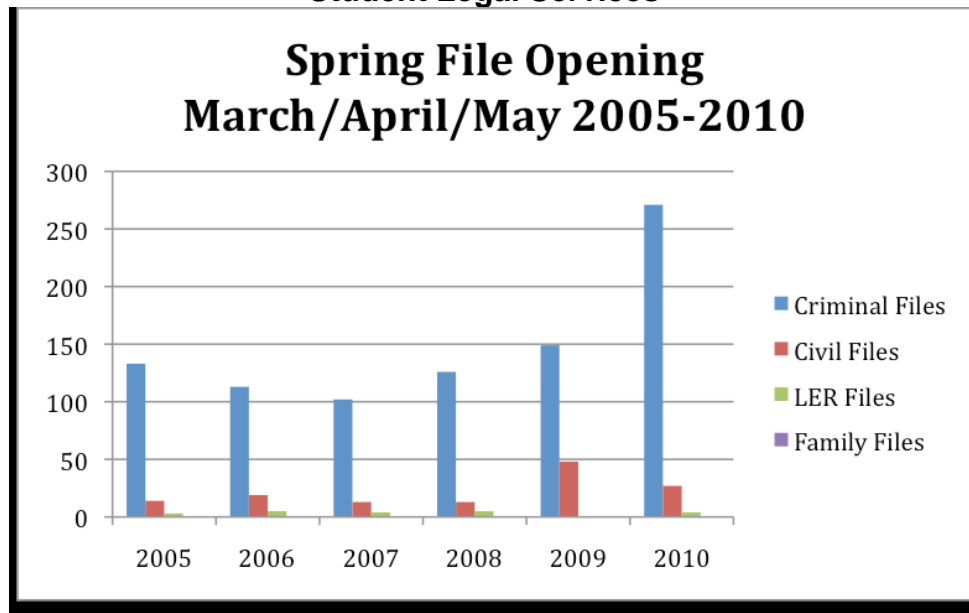
¹¹ Note that, although each service is only listed once in the mapping database, many have multiple physical locations in communities within the District.

3.3 Capacity of Existing Services

Slowly but surely everything is being taken away. We used to have legal aid here, now greatly reduced. We used to have four probation officers here, now only one. [And] the population was lower then and the crimes weren't as serious! [F01, p.12]

The changes to **Legal Aid Alberta (LAA)** services (fully outlined in Section 3.4.1), especially the reduction of income eligibility for representation certificates, is of acute concern to legal and social service providers involved with criminal, family and administrative law matters. The increase in demands on services already operating at or over capacity will be significant, and the related apprehension is captured in a number of the qualitative data quotes provided throughout this Report. For example, Student Legal Services recently reported on the impact that the changes to LAA have already had on their organization in 2010 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 –
Student Legal Services¹²**



This increase in workload has representatives concerned that they are not going to be able to continue to serve everyone who is eligible for their service. In a June 23, 2010 press release, SLS reports that:

¹² This figure is reproduced from the June 23, 2010 SLS press release regarding the impact of LAA changes.

We attribute most of the new criminal files to the reduction in full service certificates available to individuals through the Legal Services Centre. Although the graph does not indicate the nature of the criminal charges for each file, it is worth highlighting that we've seen a 300% increase in assault charges that are now frequently being referred to us by Legal Aid, among other more serious offences. Many of these offences are occurring in the context of domestic violence – which introduces a host of complications that make student representation difficult. Some require Queen's Bench appearances to amend bail and others bring with them the possibility of jail if found guilty at trial. This forces the student to advise that they will have to reapply for Legal Aid if they want a trial, many of whom have already been turned down by Legal Aid. This [is] a very difficult situation for a student to handle.

Although we are excited at the prospect of taking on more challenging files, our ability to assist these individuals comes at the expense of others. We no longer have enough caseworkers or administrative resources to manage the increased file load. As a result we've had to reduce the scope of our services in other ways. [For example,] we are no longer opening files for individuals with traffic, bylaw or regulatory offences (with a few notable exceptions).

Eligibility cuts that came into effect in 2010 will lock out about 30% of Albertans who were previously eligible for a LAA certificate. The Alberta Law Line has changed format to the Legal Services Centre and service providers perceive that its direct public access has been vastly reduced (although LAA representatives report that there will not be a significant reduction). Based on their experiences thus far, service providers predict that wait times will probably make it unviable for many people. Outside of Edmonton and Calgary in particular, there are few alternatives, as Duty Counsel services have not been increased and there are fewer alternate organizations (eg, Family Court Counsellors, NCSA) to which people can turn.

In addition, the Family Law Office lost some lawyers due to attrition, who have not been replaced during the hiring freeze.¹³ Thus capacity for this program has been reduced, while the LAA reorganization will cause increased demand.

Numerous reports and consultations have indicated a need for the LAA financial eligibility guidelines to be raised – not reduced – and for areas of coverage to be expanded. It is not surprising that there is widespread stakeholder confusion and anxiety about the current LAA situation.

¹³ We have since been advised that these vacant positions have been filled.

R: Clearly, [these LAA changes will] increase the pressures on services like Duty Counsel and people trying to self-represent.

P: Clearly ... You couldn't put any other spin on that. It is definitely going to impact our Duty Counsel and all other court services. Hopefully, such pressure will be noted. [10-04]

In criminal law, the real access issue has to do with Legal Aid, right? Because Legal Aid is 95%¹⁴ of criminal law. They are having meetings, roundtables ... where they invite different lawyers. And, in fact, I was invited to go - they want to hear our thoughts about expanding their services. Well, they say that, when I know that they just cut their budget, and they are cutting people off Legal Aid. So, while in public they say, "we're trying to expand services," privately they do what they always do, which is they just cut services ... The amount of people that can get Legal Aid has been reduced by about 30%. They just cut them off and say, "you can't have it." Most people don't know that because they're not there, but that's what's happened. So, yeah, that's a problem [09-L02]

The LAA Board and executive staff remain hopeful that some changes can be positive and that lost funding can be re-gained in time. It is anticipated that some of the changes responding to the Review recommendations will have a positive effect on access to services. For example, the intent is that the Edmonton Legal Services Centre will immediately increase access and assistance options for some Albertans in this Judicial District, but eligibility and service availability is complex (see section 3.4.1).

Family Justice Services/Family Law Information Centre (FJS/FLIC) also report a significant increase in demand for services. Representatives report that in the past three years they have experienced increases of approximately 6,000 inquiries each year. FJS is expected to face increased demands for all services and expanded mediation in association with the Edmonton Legal Services Centre.

In Hinton FJS/FLIC are also seen as a valuable resource but are reportedly understaffed and at capacity. In fact there is only one worker serving Hinton and area and she is currently on leave.

Family Justice Services was a very helpful addition, a very good resource in the building We're lucky to have that service in this region They want to have her to manage White Court as well, but I think that'll just bleed out the service. Especially with the cuts to legal aid. [F01, p.10]

¹⁴ LAA representatives report that criminal law actually accounts for closer to 60% of legal aid.

Since it was established in 2007, the **Law Information Centre (LInC)** has helped improve access to information about criminal and civil legal matters (see Section 3.4.3). However, the Edmonton LInC is currently being accessed by individuals from throughout the Edmonton Judicial District as well as other Districts such as Wetaskiwin, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat (mostly via telephone). At this time LInC is able to meet its demands for service, however, due to ever growing requirements by self represented litigants, LInC may need to employ more staff to meet the demands placed upon it. Human resources are very tight and leave existing staff with little to no time to update their skills development and training.

Urban service providers reported the need for enhanced capacity for **Victim Services**.

We often work with victims as part of victim services and make calls to people in spousal cases – we have five designated units that work on stuff like this but they only deal with the tip of the iceberg, the rest falls to us as volunteers. [F02, p.3]

Interestingly, Hinton and area was the first group that the Team has received feedback from that was satisfied with the state of Victim Services in their area. This was about the only type of legal service which they did not express an urgent need for improvement/enhanced capacity in.

Capacity to meet **court mandated treatment and probation** orders was also reported to be a significant problem.

[The judge] will give an order with 15 different conditions to help them, but if there's no-one there to help them, it doesn't work. [F01, p.2]

The judge gives everyone probation then they have community hours [and] we have to find spots for them. The town won't take them. So many businesses won't take them. The non profits have to do it. We can only have them mow lawns or pick up cigarettes so many times. [F01, p.7]

[The judge] expects the agencies out there to be serving the courts. That's his way of thinking, but there are too many gaps in our services and we can't accommodate him. [F01, p.7]

For young offenders and young persons – where do they go? There aren't facilities here for kids to go to that are sentenced. They go to AYOOC; nothing regional. [F01, p.7]

As far as addiction counseling goes and what the judge expects, there's a gap. We're maybe not fulfilling what he would like to see done. [F01, p.7]

The **Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC)** is a rarity in that it has actually been able to increase capacity in the past two years due in part to moving to larger premises that allow space for more daytime and evening clinic volunteers. Walk-in clients have increased at the new location but ECLC is usually able to see clients for a summary legal advice appointment within days – a week at most – of receiving requests for service. To this point the ECLC has chosen to focus on non-family and non-criminal matters, with the understanding that these areas are dealt with by other service providers. They have also chosen to focus on the provision of service in civil and administrative law. There are still additional legal needs in numerous areas in which they identify demand such as family law, employment/workplace injuries and some areas of immigration law. These areas tend to overlap with gaps in current LAA coverage.

The ECLC has wonderful volunteer lawyers but they're limited in terms of how many cases they can take on. [F03, p.5]

Service providers also reported increases in the demand for **Student Legal Services (SLS)**. SLS have expanded the areas in which they provide service since the Self Represented Litigants Mapping Project (SRLMP) (Stratton, 2007) was conducted in 2006, specifically in the area of family law, and are receiving increased calls from the outlying areas around Edmonton. SLS representatives remarked that their closure in April for exams is confusing for the public and other legal professionals. They also reported that they find they are often the referral of last resort when, if people were sent to them first, they could help them more easily. Many SLS clients also have addictions and mental health problems, which adds complexity to providing efficient and effective service. Additionally, they are turning away many people who are above their financial eligibility guidelines (previous LAA levels).

Service providers in Hinton and area reported that **Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)** is not currently running any court programs in that area but there is a high population of Aboriginal peoples and they are heavily relied upon for their other services.

There are very few instances where you'll find a lawyer's office in rural communities. Assumption and Fox Lake, way out there, are quite isolated in that regard. NCSA is one of the agencies that works well. People go there for support even if they can't make it in – they might phone to get help with a plea or to ask for more time. [F03, p.6]

Representatives from **Administrative Tribunals** also spoke about capacity issues: not only their own, but those of related legal services as well.

Whether it be the folks that are serving the tribunals or whether it's the folks that are providing advocacy or legal advice to people going before the tribunal or even if you referred to the department staff that represent the departments at the hearing – everyone is stretched very thin. There's a lot of work and a lot of people to be helped, and unfortunately time constraints are a barrier to that. I would put that for everyone involved in the process. It's not one area that's problematic. We have about 600 appeals a year – if every one of those individuals wanted to access SLS, for example, SLS would be overwhelmed. Each and every part of the process would like to spend more time on it, but they can't. It would be great for us to survey clients when they come out of the hearing. It would give us a lot of information on whether the process is working, whether it was easy to understand, whether they were comfortable, and so on. We simply don't have the resources to go hire someone to conduct surveys like this, however. I think the process could always be made better, but there are time and resource constraints everywhere. [09-A04]

Tribunal representatives reported that maneuvering through the legal processes that must be completed to even appear before them is the biggest challenge faced by members of the public. Currently the ECLC and SLS provide legal advice and representation to low-income individuals who have administrative law needs. They do not have the capacity to help everyone who could benefit from such supports. LAA also provides legal information, legal advice, brief services and representation in administrative matters such as refugee claims, landlord-tenant and income support. Representation in refugee claims may be by staff lawyers or roster lawyers. In landlord-tenant and income support, a small number of certificates are issued. However, the main services are legal information, legal advice, brief services and settlement advocacy (representation) and do-it-yourself clinics. In the past these services were mostly provided through the Alberta Law Line. LAA representatives report that it is expected that the Legal Services Centres will be able to continue and improve upon these services.

Indeed, tribunal representatives reported that individuals are more frequently opting to use legal representation when appearing before a board or tribunal. There are private lawyers to meet the demand for those who can afford them, but involving legal representation can add further complexity and subsequently slow the process.

One of the things that we have noticed in trends is moving from very technical base to more and more lawyers being involved in our hearings on the side of the Appellant. If he comes in with a lawyer, then right away the respondent wants a lawyer, so everybody starts to lawyer up. An interesting trend in that is that when the legal profession gets involved, their expertise is in the legal arena, and not in the technical their focus is on the legal process - on the hearing itself - with no knowledge on the technical side, and a lot of their energy is trying to debate and deal with legal issues when in fact the matter before the tribunal is trying to explain how something is constructed If the appellant is going to be representing himself, often my advice to them is just to speak from the heart ... what they were trying to achieve, and how they were going about it. Once they explain it, then quite often you'll find the tribunal getting to understand what the appellant was trying to achieve, and looking to the respondent, is there a way to make it a win-win. [09-A01]

3.4 Key Services in the Edmonton Judicial District

Some of the most widely known about and utilized legal services in the city of Edmonton are:

- Legal Aid Alberta
- Lawyers
- Court House Services
- Law Information Centre
- Family Justice Services/Family Law Information Centre
- Edmonton Community Legal Centre
- Native Counselling Services of Alberta
- Student Legal Services
- John Howard Society of Edmonton
- Elizabeth Fry Society

These are key services that people (and other service providers) tend to know about and access when they have legal problems/crises that they must address. Legal Aid Alberta, Family Justice Services and Native Counselling Services of Alberta are also heavily relied upon in rural communities. Additional key legal services (eg. Alberta Law Libraries and the Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd.) that focus on prevention and particularly on providing public legal information and education are discussed in Section 6.1.2.

Resources did not allow for in-depth interviews with all of these services but we were able to gain input by including many representatives in the Community Focus Groups and have also contacted these services for specific information that could not be obtained from their websites.

3.4.1 Legal Aid Alberta (LAA)

LAA is funded by the Government of Alberta, Alberta Law Foundation and Government of Canada to provide legal advice and representation to low-income individuals. As of April 2010, very significant changes have been made to the Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) service delivery model that affect all areas of Alberta, but in differing ways. These changes are recent and complex, with pilot Legal Services Centres, located in Edmonton and Calgary, currently offering services not yet available elsewhere in the province. For these reasons, we consider it appropriate to provide a detailed overview of LAA services and as much clarity as possible about eligibility guidelines and access processes.

In April 2009 a Legal Aid Alberta Review (<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/clearinghouse/publication.php?id=22322>) made 19 recommendations to the Minister of Justice, including substantial service delivery changes. This review was not targeted at doing more with less, but the financial downturn intervened, which resulted in less funding than had been anticipated. In order to continue providing as much service as possible and at the same time respond to the Review recommendations for service change and increased efficiencies, after long debate, the LAA Board decided to reduce eligibility guidelines by 30% for a saving of \$5.5 million. This means (based on previous usage numbers) that approximately 6,000 people will now not qualify for a certificate. Clients will no longer have the right to choose their Counsel.¹⁵ In part, this change is to facilitate a client pathway that first goes to Duty Counsel for evaluation of legal need, with a certificate being issued only if the matter cannot be addressed by other available service options. As well, LAA was concerned that clients sometimes choose Counsel without sufficient experience to address their case and it is hoped that the change will allow LAA to assign lawyers best suited to client needs.

LAA services are now focused on assessing clients' legal needs and providing services that best suit those needs. Appointing a lawyer for a client is no longer the main goal of LAA. It may be decided, for example, that mediation is the best way for a client to resolve a family law issue. If LAA staff determines that mediation is an appropriate first step they will guide clients through that process.

At the Legal Services Centres (LSCs) there will now be access to brief legal advice in person and by telephone.¹⁶ Telephone intake will be available across the province. As soon as fiscally possible, expansion of the Duty Counsel program is planned and LAA want to go ahead with the Review recommendation to pilot civil assistance, especially for debt. It is also recognized that a staff office is needed in Wetaskiwin. However, funding is not yet in place to support these initiatives and it is unclear whether, or when,

¹⁵ In June 23, 2010 a Special General Meeting of the Law Society of Alberta was held in Edmonton. Two motions aimed at advocating for adequate funding for LAA and rescinding all of the recent changes to LAA were carried and will be considered by the Benchers at their next meeting, which is to be held in Lethbridge, AB on September 30 and October 1, 2010. See: <http://www.industrymailout.com/Industry/View.aspx?id=213837&q=220598979&qz=a707df>

¹⁶ Brief services may include document review and preparation; third party contacts for clarification or issue settlement; settlement advocacy; and coaching for clients who can self-represent.

these plans will go ahead. The current availability of programs and services is geographically variable as outlined below.

Regional Offices

LAA has divided the province into eleven regions, each with a Regional Office. Regional staff travel on circuits, to many surrounding communities. Due to the recent changes, some circuiting will be reduced. For example, participants in Hinton reported that circuits in Grande Cache will end in September 2010. Regional Officers will now be able to do intake over the phone. This will improve the ability to make a LAA application for those Albertans who live in remote areas and are still eligible under the revised financial guidelines. Prospective clients may make first contact either with Regional Offices or with Duty Counsel at courthouses where this service exists. The basic eligibility guidelines outside of the city of Edmonton are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5 –
LAA Income Guidelines for Communities Outside of Edmonton**

Household Size	Monthly Net Income Level	Annual Net Income Level
1 person	\$919	\$11,000
2 persons	\$1,140	\$13,680
3 persons	\$1,620	\$19,440
4 persons	\$1,750	\$21,000
5 persons	\$1,883	\$22,596
6+ persons	\$2,014	\$24,168

These guidelines may be increased somewhat within the ranges listed in Table 6 if the applicant makes a contribution to the cost.¹⁷ If net income falls within the following ranges, legal aid coverage may be granted on the condition that payments are made (eg. down payment, monthly payments). Clients may be asked to start making small payments right away, or provide some kind of security agreement even before a lawyer is assigned to their case.

**Table 6 –
LAA Income Eligibility Guidelines when Clients Contribute to Costs**

Household Size	Monthly Contribution Range	Annual Contribution Range
1 person	\$919 - \$1,225	\$11,028 - \$14,700

¹⁷ Although cost contributions are requested, LAA report only recovering eleven cents on the dollar. Clients may make a subsequent submission concerning inability to pay if financial circumstances change, and accounts are written off if client makes a case not to pay. LAA representatives also reported that it has been suggested that increasing the amount recovered would improve their financial situation. LAA however resist this course of action because people accessing legal aid are the poorest of the poor.

2 persons	\$1,140 - \$1,516	\$13,680 - \$18,200
3 persons	\$1,620 - \$2,158	\$19,440 - \$25,900
4 persons	\$1,750 - \$2,333	\$21,000 - \$28,000
5 persons	\$1,883 - \$2,508	\$22,596 - \$30,100
6+ persons	\$2,014 - \$2,683	\$24,168 - \$32,200

Edmonton Legal Services Centre

Effective April 6, 2010, the Edmonton office of Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) changed how it provides services by launching its first Legal Services Centre (LSC) in Edmonton.¹⁸ In accordance with the priorities set out in the 2009 LAA Review, services will be provided in the following areas of law:

- criminal, including both adult and youth;
- family, including child welfare;
- immigration and refugee; and
- civil, including housing, income support, employment and debt.

Clients will be able to access legal information, referral services, brief services, legal advice and appropriate streaming to one of LAA's other legal services.

The eligibility guidelines provided in Table 6 apply to the Edmonton LSC for the issue of a certificate for legal representation. There are, however, different eligibility guidelines for other programs available through the LSC (Tables 7 and 8).

**Table 7 –
Income Eligibility to Receive Referrals ONLY**

Family Size	Monthly Net Income
1 person	\$2,700
2 persons	\$3,200
3 persons	\$3,850
4 persons	\$4,175
5 persons	\$4,500
6+ persons	\$4,800

If income falls within the guidelines below, clients will be eligible for legal advice by LAA staff lawyers, brief services (such as assistance with court forms), information that will help them resolve their issue and better navigate the justice system, and referrals to other agencies that may be able to assist. These clients will not be eligible for full representation by a lawyer in court, but LAA staff lawyers will be able to provide advice to assist clients in knowing what steps to take.

¹⁸ The Calgary Legal Services Center opened in June, 2010.

**Table 8 –
Income Eligibility for Legal Advice, Brief Services, Information
and Referrals ONLY**

Family Size	Monthly Net Income
1 person	\$1,750 - \$2,700
2 persons	\$2,165 - \$3,200
3 persons	\$3,085 - \$3,850
4 persons	\$3,340 - \$4,175
5 persons	\$3,585 - \$4,500
6+ persons	\$3,835 - \$4,800

Duty Counsel Program

Criminal and Family Court Duty Counsel can be accessed at the courthouse. There is no financial eligibility testing for assistance through this program. Duty Counsel provide free legal advice and assistance to people making their initial criminal or family court appearance unrepresented by counsel.

Wherever this service is available, LAA encourages clients to first contact Duty Counsel as they are best able to make an immediate assessment of the matter and facilitate prompt connections to relevant service components, including a Certificate for representation when appropriate.

Currently Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Lethbridge have staff Duty Counsel. In Edmonton and Calgary, the expanded Duty Counsel service model aims to provide early case resolution in less serious matters. In other judicial districts, Duty Counsel services are provided by local private Bar lawyers on a rotation basis and no change in service will occur at this time. Duty Counsel services are provided in:

- Adult and Youth divisions of Provincial Court
- Family Court (Provincial Court, Edmonton and Calgary and Court of Queen’s Bench, Edmonton)
- Domestic Violence Court
- Drug Treatment Court
- Mills/O’Connor applications
- Duty Counsel service is also available for persons requiring assistance for Mental Health Review Panel hearings and Institutional Disciplinary Hearings. In addition, LAA Duty Counsel provides legal services as required when Emergency Protection Orders have been granted, to assist clients in reviewing and opposing the Orders, and dealing with breaches of these Orders.

The Family Law Office (FLO)

FLO offices are located in Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge to assist clients who have a family law legal problem and who have qualified for services through the LAA intake and assessment process. Formal protocols are under development to facilitate

collaboration with Family Justice Services in assisting clients, especially when a parenting matter is involved or a mediation pathway is taken. FLO staff assist with:

- separation and divorce
- custody, access, parenting orders, contact orders
- child maintenance and spousal support
- guardianship
- child protection/child welfare
- matrimonial property disputes
- representation of children
- grandparent contact orders

The Immigration Services Program

This program, formerly available only in the Calgary area, is no longer a stand-alone program.¹⁹ Instead, it is now part of the services provided at the LSCs in both Edmonton and Calgary. The types of Immigration and Refugee matters covered for eligible clients are: refugee claims; detention reviews; admissibility hearings; removal appeals and appeals by the Minister; and judicial review for refugee claims. In limited circumstances, assistance with work permits will be provided as part of other services. Types of services available include:

- Legal information and referral (all clients)
- Legal advice, document preparation and brief services including the preparation of the Personal Information Form, the document which launches a refugee claim (financially eligible clients);
- Coaching for self-represented clients (financially eligible clients capable of self-representing)
- Representation at hearings or court (financially eligible clients not capable of self-representing).

LAA at Siksika Nation

This is a joint program of the Siksika Justice Department and Legal Aid Alberta that provides Siksika Nation members (primarily) with a wide range of high quality legal services. If the client's problem requires more than summary legal advice or representation, the legal resource agent can take an application for legal aid, dealing with:

- Criminal charges
- Child welfare matters
- Family law matters
- Employment and human rights
- Consumer rights and protection
- Other civil matters

¹⁹ The description of this program that appeared in the version of this report circulated for stakeholder review was taken directly from the LAA website. LAA management have, however, provided updated information clarifying the form this program now takes.

The Siksika Staff Lawyer provides Duty Counsel services in Criminal, Family and Youth courts, as well as brief services for clients who contact the office.

The Youth Criminal Defence Office (YCDO)

YCDO provides legal services for youth (under 18 years of age) who are facing charges in the Youth Courts of Calgary and Edmonton. Staff lawyers are appointed for youth who have qualified for assistance through Legal Aid Alberta or who have had a lawyer appointed by a Youth Court Judge.

If a young person wants to have a lawyer but is unable to hire one, the Youth Justice Court judge must refer the young person to a legal aid program. Should a legal aid program not exist in that area, or if the young person does not qualify for assistance from the legal aid program, the court will appoint a lawyer to represent them.

YCDO Duty Counsel provides legal assistance to unrepresented youth every day in Youth Justice Court (docket courts) in Edmonton and Calgary, including:

- Providing immediate legal advice
- making an application for judicial interim release (bail hearings)
- seeking withdrawal of charges
- entering guilty pleas
- speaking to sentence

Duty Counsel for Detained Youth: In addition to Duty Counsel at the courthouse, Legal Aid Alberta also provides Duty Counsel services specifically for youth in detention.

Legal Services Centre (formerly Alberta Law Line)

The toll-free Law Line number (1-866-845-3425) is still operational and calls from outside Edmonton will be accepted. However, former Alberta Law Line staff are now part of the LSC in Edmonton providing in-person and telephone services. Calls from LInCs are received on a priority basis. There is also a priority call pilot program with nine women's shelters across the province.²⁰ LAA management acknowledge that response time to individual callers may be delayed, resulting in lengthy wait times. We note that:

- there continues to be no eligibility criteria for gaining information and referrals via a direct call to the Law Line,
- the old [higher] eligibility levels apply for brief advice [as per those listed above],
- LAA is attempting to monitor discrete calls and waiting times.

²⁰ This pilot project runs until December 2010, at which point it is anticipated that both organizations will be making recommendations with respect to future directions.

The Impact of LAA Reductions and Changes for Rural Alberta

If people come in they often don't have money, even if they're filing a civil claim they may not be able to afford it. If you suggest family legal representation people immediately say they can't afford it. [F01, p.5]

There's going to be a decline. Summary offenses are going to be almost nil in the way of coverage. [F01, p.9]

The changes to LAA services are generally perceived by urban and rural service providers as further reducing access to affordable legal services and increasing strain on other existing service providers.

We find since legal aid's guidelines have changed there are far fewer ways for people to get help. [F02, p.2]

Our Family Court Counselor will be a lot busier because legal aid no longer covers this stuff. How long will it take people to get legal advice? It'll be much busier. [F01, p.5]

Family mediation services are tied to legal aid but only in Edmonton and Calgary. About the only thing that's going to work with legal aid is that they can get more legal advice over the phone if they qualify. [F01, p.9]

Legal Services Centre has changed the categories that they'll give information on. Our organization doesn't do personal injury or other similar types of torts. The Legal Services Centre doesn't provide any information on that stuff now, so we literally have no one to refer to. We could send them to the lawyer referral service, but how successful that is, is questionable. [F02, p.7]

Public Opinions about LAA

Of the 14 members of the public who participated, six had attempted to access LAA certificate services and four were successful.²¹ Of those, two reported that LAA was somewhat helpful with their legal needs and two reported that LAA was not helpful.

The two who attempted to access LAA and two more who did not even try reported that LAA did not take the type of case that they needed help with (eg. sexual harassment). The perception was also reported that the free hour of legal advice that is available from [formerly] Alberta Law Line is not actually free, and that individuals will get billed for it. This perception has been reported in other Judicial Districts as well. It is not clear what the source of this misinformation is.

²¹ All of the participants who had attempted to access LAA had done so before the recent changes.

One participant reported that LAA suggested that they sell their house in order to pay for the court case.²² This participant felt that they were being forced to sacrifice their only asset and their source of stability. This participant fell just outside LAA's financial guidelines, and in the end chose to self-represent.

Hopes and Fears for a Reorganized LAA

Since the announcement of the reduced LAA eligibility guidelines, many stakeholders have expressed deep concern about the impact on access to justice. Changes to the delivery of LAA continue to evolve. LAA management is concerned about the inaccuracy of some perceptions captured by the ALSMP research and continues to work toward increased and more effective information concerning services.

LAA representatives remain dedicated to access to justice and optimistic that the reorganization can have at least some positive outcomes. It is hoped that the guideline reductions will be a temporary measure and that funds can be secured to proceed with the expansion of Duty Counsel and Legal Service Centres across Alberta, along with plans to better develop PLEI and research components of LAA.

From the review, many of the recommendations were great recommendations. And expanded Duty Counsel was one of them as was mediation and the creation of LSCs. The imposition of our financial difficulties inflicted the reduction of eligibility guidelines. The intent is good and the projects themselves are good things. It's just the limit on the number of people that get to use them. [081-10-04]

3.4.2 Lawyers

Table 8 shows that there are very few lawyers in the rural communities of this Judicial District. Of the lawyers in private practice, almost 92% are in the city of Edmonton and a further 5.6% are in the prosperous commuter communities within 30 minutes of Edmonton (Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Stony Plain and Spruce Grove). The remaining 2% are scattered, with many communities having no lawyers.

²² We note that LAA management state that it is not Legal Aid official practice to tell people to sell their houses.

**Table 9 –
Lawyers who are Practicing in the Edmonton Judicial District**

Location	Bar Members		
	Registered ²³	Government	Private
Athabasca	4	1	3
Barrhead	2	-	2
Bon Accord	-	-	-
Bruderheim	-	-	-
Calling Lake	-	-	-
Drayton Valley	7	-	7
Duffield	-	-	-
Edmonton	2563	609	1757
Edson	5	-	5
Enoch	2	-	2
Fort Saskatchewan	8	8	-
Fox Creek	-	-	-
Gibbons	2	-	2
Glenevis	-	-	-
Hinton	10	4	6
Jasper	2	-	2
Lamont	-	-	-
Legal	-	-	-
Mayerthorpe	-	-	-
Morinville	2	-	2
Onoway	1	-	1
Redwater	1	-	1
Sherwood Park	47	2	43
Spruce Grove	19	2	17
St. Albert	41	2	37
Stony Plain	15	4	11
Swan Hills	-	-	-
Tofield	2	-	2
Vegreville	8	-	7
Viking	1	-	1
Westlock	4	-	4
Whitecourt	5	-	5
TOTAL	2751	632	1917

Courtesy of the Law Society of Alberta (2009)

There are very few instances where you'll find a lawyer's office in rural communities. Assumption and Fox Creek, way out there, are quite isolated in that regard. NCSA is one of the agencies that works well. People go there for support even if they can't make it in – they might phone to get help with a plea or to ask for more time. [F03]

²³ In some cases, the total number of registered Bar members may be higher than the sum of those in government and private practice. This is because those practicing in corporate settings have not been included in this Table.

There is a suggestion that there is a lack of criminal lawyers who specialize in working with young offenders – even in Edmonton – although it is not clear whether this is a matter of specialization or affordability.

There's a lack of lawyers that can help young offenders.... If you go to the Youth Defence, they have a lot of services, but a lot of young people don't even get that far. They have some Duty Counsel here but that's not enough. While DC is representing people in the court, youth might not be able to access them. [F01]

Even when private lawyers are readily available, finding affordable legal representation was reportedly a challenge, especially outside of Edmonton. For the urban population, some of the need is met by the ECLC and SLS in addition to LAA certificates and Duty Counsel.

Experiences with Lawyers

A recent poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid for the Law Society of Alberta (<http://www.lawsocietyalberta.com/#survey>), reported that most Albertans were satisfied with the services of lawyers in meeting everyday legal needs such as matters concerning real estate and Wills and estates. Public participants in the ALSMP (and previously in the SRLMP and *Civil Justice System and the Public* (<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/cjsp-en.php>)) were, however, generally involved in contentious civil and family court cases or criminal matters. These represent a small minority, and the most complex, of legal needs which can have serious financial and other personal consequences. Clearly, such cases are more likely to generate dissatisfaction. Furthermore, all Edmonton public participants contacted the project volunteering to be interviewed because they wanted to be able to talk about their difficult experiences with the legal process.

Even so, there is a consistent pattern of complaints made by members of the public involved in court cases, which cannot be easily dismissed, and which are quite often echoed by social service providers who attend court in a variety of roles. Some members of the justice community also raise the same kinds of issues in connection with lawyer services. Of the 14 public participants in the Edmonton District, nine had accessed at least one lawyer at some point while trying to resolve their legal needs (LAA and/or private). Of the four who accessed LAA, two had also accessed private lawyers at some point in their legal process. Of the seven who accessed private lawyers, three had contacted private law firms and four had chosen private lawyers based on recommendations from family or friends.

Notably, only two of the participants who had accessed lawyers also accessed Alternative Dispute Resolution Services. Both had accessed court-connected and one person had also accessed private Alternative Dispute Resolution Services. Both of these participants reported that they attended but the other party was not willing to

participate. One additional participant reported that they had asked their lawyer for a referral to a mediation service and the lawyer did not respond. A fourth participant's requests for alternative dispute resolution were rejected twice by the opposing party.

These participants were generally dissatisfied with the legal representation they had experienced. Five of the participants reported that even if they could afford to do so, they would not use a lawyer's services again. Two other participants said that, in the future, they would only use lawyer services for parts of their cases. That said, it should again be noted that this group cannot be considered to be representative of the general population because they actively sought out interviews with the Mapping Team. Therefore, it is possible that their experiences are different than those who did not seek out interviews.

The most common complaints made were that lawyers were not prepared for court dates, asked for delays (thereby increasing costs for both parties involved), and when orders are issued but not enforced, the lawyers demand more pay to go back to court. Perhaps not surprisingly, these issues were especially pronounced in relation to family law matters.

The best way to see your child is to stay away from the courts. This is why the law system is messed up. Divorce should be simple. Things become far too complicated because of lawyers. I've spent so much time on this I felt I could do a better job. The first lawyer I had was good, but then I got passed along to a junior colleague who screwed things up. I don't have much faith in family lawyers because of that and because of my dealings with my wife's family lawyer. I represented myself at that point. In family, lawyers write and defend lies – they don't have scruples. That being said, the family lawyer I have now is good. [07]

A member of the judiciary, who emphasized that most lawyers are competent and professional, nevertheless identified similar areas where members of the Bar could be more efficient and effective.

By arriving on time in the courtroom, by not double-booking themselves so that they have to be in two courtrooms on the same day, by not taking on too many files such that we can't book trial dates for 6-8 months down the road. Those are the obvious [ways to improve], and it's a small number of the Bar that would fall into that category. I think members of the Bar do what they can ... I can't think of any other suggestions, other than lawyers becoming more and better trained in alternate dispute resolutions and using it more often. [J03]

Service providers in one Edmonton focus group were specifically asked about their thoughts on public perceptions of lawyers. They reported hearing many, many complaints related to cost, delays, lack of outcomes and poor communication. While

legal service providers were generally more considerate of the complicated legal process that lawyers must navigate, they still proffered many objective observations indicating that the quality of lawyers varies.

P1: There's a common perception that their lawyer isn't doing anything for them, but then you look at the court file and it's huge. A lot of people don't understand what the lawyer is doing for them, and lawyers can't explain it. People may also have improper expectations about what their lawyer can do. They may only want sole custody and will accept nothing less.
P2: A part of that is people expect to be able to call every day and find out what's happening, but that's just not reasonable.
P3: People, particularly in civil matters, don't appreciate all the steps involved in a process. They may think the lawyer is doing nothing but that may be the process. [F02]

The following comment provides some particularly helpful insight into some of the public dissatisfaction with lawyers. Power differentials between parties can be as difficult, frustrating and ultimately 'unjust' for the lawyers as well as their clients.

It is frustrating to see a lot of people abusing the system. Whether it be larger property management companies ignoring the laws because people won't know their rights, or the more individual level in which people make frivolous claims and will use those claims to prevent people from enforcing their claims. Someone will bring a legitimate claim and then the other person will counter sue for defamation for 250k, and that may scare them off. [F02, p.9]

As discussed in Section 3.3, the observations of Tribunal members concerning lawyers were particularly interesting. Their opinions of lawyers varied, underlining that the lawyer's knowledge of the Tribunal process and the technical issues before it were as important as knowledge of the law involved. While Tribunal members reportedly observe (and commend) competent representation, it was also their perception that a lack of competence and of unethical behaviour does occur on occasion.

We have had a few problems with members of the Bar not sticking to their own code of ethics. I've had to adjourn on a few occasions, and direct them to get their behaviour sorted out by the time I'm back. [09-A03]

It is also possible to observe differing attitudes between public service and private Bar lawyers, especially concerning clients in criminal matters.

It's probably different for people in private practice; they don't have a chance to represent people in abject poverty. It's a really great experience because I think that the courts are very receptive to the work we do. Our cases often have lots of merit and good outcomes. It's a really privileged position to be in, to be doing this work when so few people are out there doing it. You really have a chance to have an impact on the law. [10-02]

3.4.3 Court House Services

Service providers spoke about the **Court Registry** in Edmonton in a positive light.

We're lucky to have the Clerks that we've got. From what I get in the other areas... they don't get the help that I get from you guys. [F01, p.10]

Court Services in Edmonton include:

1. The Taxation Office. This office provides information about lawyers' bills and taxation. On taxation they have the authority to review and allow, reduce or disallow the legal fees and charges in lawyers' bills.
2. Transcript Management. This service provides court transcripts to the public, for a fee.
3. The Office of the Sheriff – Civil Enforcement. This service was created as part of the Court Services Division of Alberta Justice to regulate the civil enforcement industry by responding to complaints and monitoring the civil enforcement agency activities. In addition, the Office of the Sheriff oversees civil enforcement agency and bailiff training.
4. The LInC, which will be discussed in detail in Section 3.4.4.

A key Courthouse Service is the **Alberta Law Libraries** (described further in Section 6.1.2), which was formed in 2009 through the amalgamation of Alberta Court Libraries and Alberta Law Society Libraries. The Alberta Law Libraries provide services to the judiciary, members of the Bar, Crown prosecutors, Justice Department employees, self-represented litigants and the public. Alberta Law Libraries are located in court houses and provincial buildings throughout the province and are accessible to members of the public.

3.4.4 Law Information Centre (LInC)

The LInC was launched in Edmonton (as well as Grande Prairie and Red Deer) in 2007 and in Calgary in 2009 in an attempt by the Government of Alberta to provide a “gateway” into the justice system for the public to begin finding out how to address their legal needs. The LInC mandate is to help people understand the Alberta court system. The Alberta Justice website describes the LInC services as:

The Law Information Centre can help you get the information you need for all civil and criminal matters. At LInC, a professional staff member will

help members of the public to understand Alberta's legal system. LInC will help individuals:

- learn about general court procedures,
- locate and explain court forms,
- learn about legal advice options, and
- find out about alternatives to court.

LInC will:

- give information about civil and criminal matters,
- explain what court forms can be used,
- explain the steps to take in making a legal application, and
- refer people legal and other resources in the community.

LInC will not:

- give legal advice,
- help choose how to solve your legal problem,
- help make legal applications, and
- tell what to say in court forms.

Staff cannot provide legal advice or representation, but will provide information about general court procedures, legal advice options and alternatives to court. Individuals can also access public legal information and education (PLEI), particularly about civil and criminal law. Staff will facilitate access to legal forms. The LInC in Edmonton is currently taking over mental health warrant applications from Family Justice Services.

Since April 2007 the LInC has also had a dedicated legal advice line to LAA. This service was developed jointly by LAA and Alberta Justice and is available for all LInC offices. As part of the development, Alberta Justice ensured that a private room with a dedicated phone was available for the provision of legal advice in most of the LInCs. LInC staff triage the clients and only the ones they direct are able to access this service. In return, the service was designed so that these callers have priority over regular Legal Services Centre callers. LAA provided legal advice to almost 900 LInC clients through this partnership in 2009-2010.

A LInC representative reports that people from all demographic groups access this service - across age, education and income spectrums. The demand for service is steadily increasing and staff are very busy. There is one director, one supervisor and four team members in Edmonton. They note however, that they are underutilized by people with high social needs such as the homeless and Aboriginal peoples. No formal examination has been conducted of why this is, but potential reasons given are low levels of trust in the system and people associated with it, as well as physical location. As one focus group participant stated, "many people associate Courthouses with having done something bad and being punished, not with receiving help." In Calgary, there had

been discussions in the Community Working Group about increasing collaboration with the downtown branch public library to establish an offsite LInC kiosk so people would a) learn that the LInC exists and b) still be able to access some resources if they refused to enter the Courthouse. This could be a potential means of increasing utilization by these populations in Edmonton and other Districts as well, but would require public library staff to be willing to participate and to undergo training

Although LInC is currently revising how statistics are collected, some early statistics based on an internal service evaluation are posted online (<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=j%2F7tbQNU%2FM0%3D&tabid=280&mid=881>). These statistics were based on exit interviews that were completed by clients in Edmonton, Red Deer and Grande Prairie. At that time people most often learned about the LInCs from Courthouse staff and the most common assistance provided was help completing legal forms, followed by providing information about how to file a claim.

The LInC is valued by other legal service providers as well as members of the public, and the service is widely utilized. Support is already in place from the judiciary and court offices. However, other services providers stressed the importance of continued support and funding so that the LInCs can thrive and grow in order to serve what most participants believe will be a growing number of self-representing members of the public. The staff who were recruited when the LInCs were established had many years of experience working for various courts and have vast knowledge about legal processes. However, there is currently a lack of consistency in how the LInCs across Alberta are run. This can impact what services are offered to individuals from one community to the next. For instance, the LInCs in Red Deer and Grande Prairie will assist with family law matters. In Grand Prairie this is because there is no Family Law Information Centre (FLIC). In Red Deer the FLIC assists the LInC. However the LInC in Calgary does not provide this assistance and the LInC in Edmonton only does so informally when individuals are referred by the local FLIC. Further complexity is added by the fact that the FLICs and the LInCs have very different mandates, so the FLICs do not actually provide the same types of assistance as the LInCs do. The FLIC Offices in Calgary and Edmonton both have all of the forms that the FLIC offices deal with. They are referred to the Edmonton office if they require assistance with filling out the forms or need to speak to a lawyer from Legal Services Centre. Individuals can receive general information from the FLIC offices in Calgary and Edmonton.

The LInC offices in Edmonton, Red Deer, Grande Prairie and Calgary are managed by individuals who work out of these court offices. There is currently no one person who oversees and has supervisory authority over all the LInCs to ensure consistency of service provision. However, there is currently a Transition Team, which is chaired by the Supervisor of the Edmonton LInC office and consists of members from the other LInC offices to help ensure consistency.

3.4.5 Family Justice Services/Family Law Information Centre (FJS/FLIC)

FJS/FLIC was launched in 2005 and is a group of programs and services that are offered by Alberta Justice and the Alberta Courts. They focus on providing free or low

cost services to members of the public with family law needs. There are currently eight programs that are offered in Edmonton.

The first is **Caseflow Conference**. This program is mandatory for individuals who are going to Provincial Court with family matters, and is intended to resolve disputes between parties and ensure they are prepared to proceed to court. The Caseflow Conference provides an opportunity for discussion of the parties' issues about the application(s) in a private, less formal atmosphere than a courtroom.

The **Child Support Resolution Project** attempts to help litigants resolve conflicts related to child support agreements prior to attending the Court of Queen's Bench. This service is mandatory for all interim applications or variations on child support Orders.

Family Court Counsellors provide information about options and services for resolving family matters that are alternative to going to court. They also offer assistance completing court documents and arranging court dates. In order to qualify, at least one dependent child must be involved and at least one party must reside in Alberta.

The **FLIC** provides information about:

- child support Guidelines, including the tables for each province;
- how to calculate child support;
- how to apply for or change a Queen's Bench Order in various family law matters; and
- how to oppose a family law application in the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta.

The FLIC website is: <http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/familylaw/>. Litigants can also access booklets and forms through FLIC.

Family Mediation Services offers free information and assistance with bringing applications concerning guardianship, parenting or contact, mediation services to assist families in resolving parenting issues, courses to improve parenting skills and communication between parents who are living apart, and other court-directed services intended to aid in resolving parenting disputes. In order to qualify for this service at least one party must earn less than \$40,000 annually.

The **Focus on Communication in Separation Program** is a six-hour, skill-based communication course teaching parents how to communicate effectively while living apart. This program aims to enhance the communication skills of parents, reduce parental conflict and improve long-term outcomes for children. Upon completing the course, parents will be able to reduce conflict through good communication and problem solving skills, decrease tensions arising from conflicts and decrease stress for children and parents (2009 Alberta Court Calendar). This voluntary program is for separated or divorced parents of young children.

The **Parenting after Separation** course is a free six-hour workshop that was developed in Alberta by the Court of Queen's Bench and Alberta Justice and is now used nationally

and internationally. The purpose of the workshop is to assist parents in understanding the process and effects of separation and to encourage parents to make positive choices about how they will continue to parent their children after separation. This program is voluntary for parents who are in Provincial Court but mandatory for parents who are in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Finally, the **Parenting after Separation for High Conflict Families (PASHC)** course is a three-hour seminar available to all parents who have already completed the six-hour Parenting after Separation course. Participants may be ordered to attend by a judge, or attend voluntarily. PASHC offers information about the process of separation, how to emotionally disengage from one another and how to identify and renegotiate boundaries. Parents will be encouraged to develop a *Parallel Parenting Plan*, which can be an effective tool to reduce conflict and minimize the contact between parents (2009 Alberta Court Calendar).

Other FJS services available in Edmonton include:

- Brief Conflict Intervention (where mediation is unsuccessful);
- Child Protection mediation;
- Child Support Recalculation (this is different from the Child Support Resolution Program);
- Open Parenting Assessments;
- Parental Conflict Intervention (where mediation is unsuccessful); and
- Parenting/Contact evaluations.

3.4.6 Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC)

The ECLC (called the Edmonton Centre for Equal Justice at the time of the SRLMP) was established in 2002. The ECLC is a non-profit organization that is funded primarily by the Alberta Law Foundation, as well as a variety of grants and significant financial support from various Edmonton law firms and lawyers. The ECLC offers free legal information, advice and representation to low-income individuals in the Edmonton area. The focus of the ECLC's services is in civil and administrative legal matters. The ECLC also has four satellite clinics (Abbotsfield Mall, Aboriginal Consulting Services Association, Millwoods Welcome Centre, and the Sage Seniors Association – downtown office).

This organization offers five main services (or programs). The first is the **Evening Legal Clinics**, in which volunteer lawyers meet with members of the public to discuss their legal needs and the steps they can take on their own to resolve them. The lawyers will help people fill out documents and make referrals to any other appropriate organizations. Clinics take place every week in the downtown office and one to two days a month in the satellite clinics.

The second program is the **Foreign Worker Program** for which staff provide legal information, outreach service and legal advice on immigration law to TFWs. The ECLC also offers an Immigration clinic at the downtown office on the last Thursday of every month.

The third program is **Legal Advice and Representation**. Staff lawyers provide legal advice and representation to individuals who are going to Provincial Court or the Court of Queen's Bench. They also represent individuals at hearings and appeals before administrative boards and tribunals. As they cannot serve everyone they use the following criteria to prioritize cases:

- the person will benefit greatly from ECLC's assistance,
- the case has legal merit,
- ECLC's staff lawyers have the skills and resources necessary to help with the case, and
- there are no other legal services that could assist the person.

The fourth program is **Outreach Services and Income Support Advocacy**. The ECLC will assist with relevant referrals and with the appeals processes for the following income security benefit programs:

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- Employment Insurance (EI)
- Old Age Security (OAS)
- Support for Independence (SFI)

The final program is the **Court Waiver Program**. The ECLC administers a waiver program which reduces the cost to file at Provincial Court from \$100 to \$25, and at the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS) from \$75 to \$0. The following comment describes the Court Waiver Program.

We administer a court waiver program for court and there's no flexibility there. We have the waiver program for Provincial Civil court matters. This reduces the filing fee down to \$25. Then we have the other Residential Tenancy Dispute Service program. This one will eliminate the \$75 dollar fee. The problem here is that if they lose, they have to file the appeal in Queen's Bench, which is \$200. There's no fee support there. That's a barrier for sure. It would be great if something like that existed. [10-02]

ECLC representatives reported that new Canadians stand out as a group that frequently accesses their services. They reported that, historically, Aboriginal peoples have been less likely to access their services but feel that has recently begun to change. They feel that the newly established Aboriginal Legal Clinic will continue to lead to increased usage by this group.

3.4.7 Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)

NCSA was launched in 1970 by the Government of Alberta, with a mandate to promote fair and equitable treatment of Aboriginal peoples. NCSA is primarily funded by

Provincial, Federal and Local Governments and the Alberta Law Foundation, and strives to plan and deliver culturally sensitive programming and public education about legal needs as well as rights and responsibilities as they apply to Aboriginal peoples.

NCSA has offices throughout Alberta but the head office is located in the city of Edmonton. NCSA offers more than 20 programs and services that are aimed at providing support to people who are going to court with criminal or family matters, as well as people who are facing parole or probation orders. NCSA also prioritizes the prevention of legal needs by offering educational services about the Canadian legal system. Additionally, healing and strengthening family and community relationships are the focus of multiple programs.

NCSA is probably most well known for the **Courtworker Programs** offered across Alberta. There are Criminal, Youth and Family Courtworker Programs. They offer clients in- and out-of-court support and advocacy. Courtworkers cannot provide advice or representation but will help prepare cases, assist with LAA applications and facilitate inter-service transitions or referrals as well as translation/interpreter services. There are currently one youth, two criminal, and two family Courtworkers in the Edmonton region.

Programs that are mandated to support individuals who are on parole or probation include:

- Parole Supervision – Aboriginal parole officers are contracted by Corrections Service Canada. There is currently one parole officer serving Edmonton.
- Stan Daniels Healing Centre – is a 72 bed facility in Edmonton that is a community correctional centre and a facility for individuals who have been conditionally released into the community.
- Young Offender Probation – provides community supervision for male and female Aboriginal offenders in keeping with the standards set by the Solicitor General and Public Security.

Additional services that prioritize prevention and personal healing in Edmonton and area include:

- Aboriginal Parent Link Programs – provides children and families with free services that support parents in their role as educators for their children.
- Aboriginal Parenting Programs – focus on developing practical parenting skills in order to promote healthy children.
- Cunningham Place Transitional Youth Shelter – is a transitional housing unit in Edmonton that allows families and youth at risk to receive culturally sensitive services and be housed for up to three years.
- Family Life Improvement Program – is a ten-week program that promotes personal development and helps individuals find pro-social solutions to problems.
- Family Mediation/Family Group Conferencing – is a collaborative dispute resolution service that helps families make and implement decisions regarding the care and protection of children who are experiencing abuse.

- Healing Tears Program – combines traditional and Western approaches to help individuals and their families overcome the effects of abuse suffered while in Residential Schools.
- Koche Mena Youth Group Home – is an open custody facility in Edmonton that serves Aboriginal male young offenders.
- Negan Tapeh – an Aboriginal youth centre that is run in partnership with the Edmonton Inner City Youth Program.
- Pohna – Keepers of the Peace – is a new program (inaugurated September 2009) developed at the request of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS). This program is intended to intervene with youth between 11 and 18 years of age who are involved in criminal and gang related activities.

NCSA also offers public legal education and information (PLEI) through a new program called the **Bearpaw Legal Education and Resource Centre**. This service will be described further in the PLEI discussion (Section 6.1.2).

NCSA service providers report that, although they work primarily with Aboriginal clients, they will help anyone who is low income. When asked about patterns of service utilization they reported that there is often a level of apathy among Aboriginal peoples. They are slow to access even NCSA's services, and often have to be actively encouraged to seek out these services by other professionals who are working with them in social, health or legal capacities. They report that Aboriginal clients are very slow to trust professionals, especially those who work in the justice system, and that few of the people who access their services are self-referring. In fact, mental and physical health service providers are responsible for a large portion – one service provider said “most” – of the referrals that NCSA receives in this District.

3.4.8 Student Legal Services (SLS)

SLS is located at the University of Alberta and is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation, the Federal and Provincial governments, and the University of Alberta Students Union. This organization was established in 1969 and is a student-managed, non-profit society that offers free legal information and representation to low-income individuals.

SLS currently offers civil, family and criminal law projects. The **Civil Law Project** assists people who are involved in issues such as:

- landlord and tenant,
- small claims,
- contracts, and
- bailment / personal property.

As part of the Civil Law Project, SLS provides legal information about:

- employment law,
- homelessness rights,
- human rights law,

- immigration law,
- legal name changes,
- sexual harassment law, and
- the law of credit.

The **Family Law Project** assists with child support orders and variations and runs a **Do-Your-Own-Divorce Clinic**, for which LAA has – through the Family Law Office – entered into a two year mentoring project with SLS that includes Staff Lawyer participation. SLS also provides general information only regarding:

- the *Family Law Act*,
- divorce,
- separation,
- custody and access,
- matrimonial property, and
- adult inter-dependent (common-law) partnerships.

SLS cannot provide direct assistance with Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs) or Court of Queen’s Bench matters.

Finally, the **Criminal Law Project** serves people who have been charged with an offence and cannot afford a lawyer, but do not qualify for legal aid. As part of the Criminal Law Project, SLS provides legal information about:

- assault,
- controlled substances,
- debt collection,
- domestic abuse,
- drivers licence suspensions,
- impaired driving,
- prostitution,
- sexual harassment,
- theft, fraud and possession of stolen property,
- traffic offences,
- trespass, and
- unpaid fines.

Representatives report that they see a wide range of people but feel that more Aboriginal peoples would qualify for their services than are seeking them out. Additionally, they suggest that some low income individuals may have the misperception that SLS does not offer services to the general public due to the organization’s name. In addition, individuals who live in other parts of the city may not travel to campus where the main office of SLS is located. SLS has attempted to increase accessibility for these individuals by establishing a downtown office. Still, low-income individuals residing in the outskirts of the city and its neighbouring communities may lack the resources necessary to travel to their downtown or campus offices.

3.4.9 The John Howard Society of Edmonton (JHS)

The JHS is a not-for-profit, community-based crime prevention agency that provides assistance to people in conflict with the law, their families, those who have the potential to be in conflict with the law, and victims of crime. JHS works to eradicate the root causes of crime to help build safety and harmony in communities.

Although none of the public participants reported that they had accessed JHS services, this is an organization that provides many services to offenders and people at risk as well as supports to victims of crime. It is also a community organization that is taking a leading role in advancing restorative justice. The legal services offered include:

1. The **Family Violence Prevention Centre** provides:

- Outreach Support
- Information / Referral
- Emotional Support
- Advocacy
- Safety planning/Risk Assessment
- Services available in Cantonese and Mandarin
- Assistance with overcoming barriers to leaving abusive situations
- Linkages with other services

2. The **Bridges Treatment Program**, through which they provide:

- Assessment
- Addictions Counselling
- Individual Counselling
- Family Counselling
- Recreational / Leisure Component
- Onsite School
- Transitional Planning
- Anger Management
- Drug Education
- Social Skills
- Relapse Prevention
- Work Experience
- Living Skills
- Access to Psychological and Psychiatric Services
- Music / Art

Admissions criteria are that those youth referred for admission to this program must:

- Meet community safety criteria
- Be assessed for treatment need
- Demonstrate need and readiness for treatment

- Have a custody and supervision sentence (preferably 90 days or more). Consideration on a case by case basis may be given for youth serving a community sentence.
3. The **101st Street Apartments** is a residence that aids in the transition between incarceration and community living. The following supports are provided:
- Skilled caseworkers
 - Occupational therapist
 - Psychiatric nurse
 - Therapy for aggressive behaviour
 - Community assessment and parole supervision

JHS also offers a **Public Legal Education** service, which is included in the PLEI discussion (Section 6.2.1).

3.4.10 Elizabeth Fry Society

Established in 1977, Elizabeth Fry is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation, Solicitor General of Alberta, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Stollery Charitable Foundation, and the United Way. The main objectives of Elizabeth Fry are to:

- provide a supportive environment for individuals, particularly women in contact with the legal system;
- work in conjunction with other agencies to provide programs and services to women in contact with the legal system;
- advocate improvements in the criminal legal system;
- assist with the reintegration into the community of female offenders;
- provide education directed toward the reduction of crime to institutional professionals, support groups and the community;
- increase public awareness of:
 1. Issues facing women in contact with the legal system.
 2. The need for programs for female offenders.
 3. The need for changes in the criminal legal system.

Legal services provided by Elizabeth Fry include:

1. **Aboriginal Women's Program**, which aims to assist women to break the cycle of violence and abuse for themselves and their children, support the efforts of women in reducing the likelihood that they will continue to come into contact with the legal system and encourage women to reconnect with their culture and develop a sense of themselves as Aboriginal people.
2. **Changing Paths** is a literacy and life skills program for women who are in contact with the law. The Changing Paths program works with women to:

- Reclaim their personal power and voice.
 - Expand personal choices and make healthy lifestyle changes.
 - Experience a positive group experience based on the sharing of personal life stories.
 - Build and strengthen decision making.
 - Communication and conflict resolution skills.
3. The **Court Program** assists those appearing in Provincial Criminal Docket Courts in Edmonton, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Morinville, Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan. Staff and volunteers:
- explain court procedure and terminology.
 - provide legal referrals.
 - provide Return Court Date Cards.
 - offer practical assistance and emotional support to those appearing in court, their family and friends.
4. The **Legal Clinic Program** assists federally sentenced women at the Edmonton Institute for Women by addressing their legal needs. A group of lawyers who volunteer their time to this program meet one-on-one with the women in the federal prison and they provide: legal information; referrals to LAA, SLS, or other agencies; and follow up.
5. The **Pardon Program**, which helps women with the process of applying for a Pardon.
6. The **Employment Services Program** offers services to women who have been, are at risk of, or are currently in contact with the legal system. Women accessing employment services face a variety of barriers such as poverty, mental health issues, addiction issues, child welfare issues and child care concerns, criminal records, isolation, illiteracy, lack of education and training and discrimination.

Working with each woman's unique situation and goals in collaboration with other community agencies, the "Work for Women" Employment Program seeks to reduce these barriers by;

- identifying individual barriers and personal strengths and goals,
- developing a collaborative, personal and achievable action plan,
- offering one-to-one resume development, life skills counseling sessions and providing access to job readiness workshops,
- providing job search tools including access to daily newspapers, Internet Job Banks, computers, telephones, photocopier and fax machines,
- advocating for women on issues related to Employment Standards and Human Rights,

- referring women to training programs, educational institutions and other community resources to address basic living needs, and
- assisting women to access casual labour opportunities and work clothing through the Bissell Centre.

7. The **Prison Liaison Program** helps women in the Edmonton Remand Centre (ERC), the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre (FSCC), and other Provincial Institutions. They provide;

- individual support, information and referral,
- recreational and social development programs,
- bail facilitation,
- advocacy and assurance of prisoner's rights,
- pre-release planning, and
- practical assistance such as providing available resources.

Other legal service providers remarked throughout the meetings that they had not known the extent of Elizabeth Fry's services and were very happy to learn of them.

3.5 Barriers to Accessing Existing Legal Services

Similar barriers to accessing legal and related services emerged in the Edmonton Judicial District as have emerged in previously mapped Districts. The major barriers include:

- Lack of service provider knowledge about other existing services
- Lack of public knowledge about how to address legal needs
- Lack of affordable legal services
- Lack of services that assist with civil matters
- Lack of confidentiality in rural communities
- Geography of the District
- Scattered service locations
- Transportation
- Poverty
- Cultural divides

3.5.1 Lack of Service Provider Knowledge

Service providers acknowledged that they often struggle with knowing what other services exist and the best services to refer individuals to. This can prolong legal processes and add complexity and stress for the public as well as increase workloads for service providers.

I think lots of times clients get jarred from one place to another. And this agency doesn't know what the other agency is doing. They get a lot of mixed messages. Things as simple as 'where's the food bank?' They need to create some kind of seamless service for clients from start to finish. When you look at what people have to go through if you look at the court system. If someone has a low education and is a single mother and has to go into the system, it can be very intimidating. They'll likely think they have no idea how to get through it. I've had people who are court mandated who come in screaming at us because they have no idea what they've been mandated to do. I think it's the responsibility of the government to give the seamless service, especially through the justice system Government does this knee jerk reaction in a recession and cut back services that have already been cut back. [F01, p.8]

P1: Just for me – I've heard of all of these organizations but I'm not clear on what our mandates are and how we all fit in the panoply of what resources are out there. If I was a person who needed legal service I would have trouble knowing where to start.

P2: Most people who talk to us outside the courthouse just have no idea. They don't know about Student Legal Services or legal aid. First time in court and they're lost.

P3: A lot of people who haven't been directly referred may have missed their first appearance because they believe that's the trial. They don't have evidence so they don't show up because they think they'll lose. If there was better information out there about what to expect this might not happen as much. Lots of people feel like they'll just be turned away.

P4: Especially on the family side it's difficult to know who to refer to. Things are in flux, different services serve different populations at different times. [F02, p.6]

Service providers stated that there is a need for a comprehensive inventory of legal services that is available online and well maintained.

Something like Clicklaw, where people can go and get good information on what legal services do ... I attended the pro bono law conference in the spring and it sounded like they were trying to set up something like that for Alberta, so that would be really helpful. [F02, p.12]

Tying back into the database – it'd be nice if every service provider was responsible for the content, and they could update it as frequently as they like so it's always up to date. Every time you make a referral you could double check that they actually do it. [F02, p.13]

3.5.2 Lack of Public Knowledge about How to Address Legal Needs

Service providers reported that members of the public often struggle because they not only do not understand the legal system or know their rights and responsibilities, but

they often do not have the language or the communication skills to effectively explain their situations or argue their cases.

The need of everyone in our society is to be able to communicate more effectively. The difficulty with communication leads to inability to resolve matters themselves, leads to bringing matters into the courtroom to have a judge make the decision. And what happens is on its way to trial, they may suddenly be able to communicate, they may suddenly get more motivated to communicate more effectively and motivated to resolve it. But for some people, that's extremely difficult, and it's stressful, anxiety-laden ... for most people when they're looking at having to go to court on a certain day. So, again, the greater availability of those people who are good at assisting others in communication, such as mediators, more of those services should be provided, and it should be even on a walk-in basis. [J03]

Service providers reported that family law matters are often cumbersome and confusing for people. For example, the forms and process for applying for visitation rights, child maintenance and other family law orders are excessively long and complex with literacy requirements that challenge those with even a university education. Individuals are told where they can print or pick up forms to fill out and are given some information on how to serve documents, depending on which service they approach (eg. FJS) but they are unable to find any place that will offer free assistance with the forms.

Finally, it was evident from the feedback collected in this District that the public has a general lack of understanding about civil legal needs that is even more pronounced than in criminal and family areas of law. People are particularly unlikely to recognize and thus actively take measures to avoid or efficiently address civil matters, especially those that are not related to family breakdown and care of children.

3.5.3 Lack of Affordable Legal Services

Although the city of Edmonton has a number of options for accessing free or inexpensive legal services, there are limitations to the types of legal needs that people can find cost-effective legal assistance for (eg. employment issues). Also, existing service providers are often limited as to who they can help by financial eligibility criteria. The lack of affordable legal advice and representation was frequently mentioned in the focus groups. This was a particular concern due to the widespread anxiety about the recent changes to LAA.

I think we could probably use more court workers and I'm sure everyone will say that in the outlying areas. It's not just Aboriginal people, but people in that same socio-economic bracket. They make too much for legal aid. We have a lot of people who have nowhere else to go, whether they're Aboriginal or not. [F03, p2]

People outside of [LAA's] income guidelines: they're caught in the trap between not making enough and making too much. The circle of referrals has been getting worse, too. [F02, p2.]

Service providers also spoke of the need for increased *pro bono* legal services. One lawyer's perception was that the amount of *pro bono* work being done has actually decreased in recent years.

Originally when legal aid was starting, part of the expectation of being a lawyer was that you donate your time for certain cases. Now though, there are firms of 300 lawyers in Edmonton where no one does pro bono A lot of that needs to start at the top. My impression is that students would be happy to do pro bono if the firm counted it towards their targets. A lot of people aren't given that opportunity though. [F02, p.15]

It's quite possible for students in law school to finish their degree without doing any pro bono work. There's nothing in the faculty mandate stating they have to. [F02, p.15]

3.5.4 Lack of Services that Assist with Civil Matters

As mentioned in Section 3.4.3, service providers and members of the public reported a lack of affordable options, particularly for civil legal matters. Matters such as Wills, estates and adult guardianship are rarely noted as priorities when discussing access to legal assistance. However, these matters can be far from minor and can be devastating if not handled properly (cf. Access to Justice Study Committee State Bar of Wisconsin, 2007; Law Foundation of BC, 2009).

I talked to him and I said, “because you’re doing this business still with the money, I need to get a divorce so that I’m not going to be held legally responsible for any debts that you may incur. And I don’t want to have to go to court and fight about it, so I’m getting a divorce for that reason.” And, I did. He actually gave me some assistance [with] court costs but he became ill, and I supported him when he was ill, even though we weren’t together. And he made out a new Will during that time so that I was his beneficiary And, so, he wanted me to inherit his insurance money from work because that would kind of help make up for what was lost when we were together from his gambling He wanted me to have [his Will]...and the night before his surgery, he had called me to make sure I still had it, and that everything stays the same. And he appointed someone else from where he was working, if things went wrong, they were to say, “pull the plug.” He didn’t want to live incapacitated, so that person was in Arizona when the surgery happened. They didn’t pull the plug, and so he’s incapacitated, but still alive, and in a continuing care facility. What happened since then [is that a relative has] applied for guardianship of him, and I was advised that because she’s a blood relative and I’m an ex-wife, the chances are she’s going to get it, and so as far as I know, her lawyer phones me to say, “I want that Will.” And I said, “probably not.” I have no idea what my legal rights are I don’t think it matters anymore what his wishes are. [11]

The need for increased capacity to provide poverty law²⁴ assistance with a wider variety of cases was also expressed. Additionally, as will be further examined in the discussion about experiences of new Canadians (Section 4.3.1), service providers and members of the public suggest that TFWs’ civil rights are routinely violated and that greater legal attention and support needs to be devoted to actively providing assistance to this very vulnerable group of people. The perception among members of the public we interviewed was very much that money – and, with that, power – dictates legal outcomes; that “justice” has little to do with how legal needs are resolved.

If I had lots of money, I’d just tell [this lawyer], “you’re on retainer - and go to bat for me”, and I know he would, you know. But he can’t do it. He’s not working for free. [11]

3.5.5 Geography of the District

We mapped 32 rural communities in this District. As can be seen in Section 2.0, many of these are small communities and the dynamics differ from those in large urban

²⁴ In this context, *poverty law* is defined as needs that impact on the basic necessities of life and are common with low-income people, such as income assistance (social assistance, EI, Pensions), housing/shelter (landlord & tenant, co-op housing, not-for-profit housing) and disability (WCB, disability pensions, AISH). In certain circumstances, this might include estate planning for people who live in poverty but have dependent children; professional licensing to assist people to gain access to livelihood that is barred until their licensing issues are resolved.

centres. Rural service providers reported that they often feel ignored or “lumped in” with Edmonton when it comes to decisions that are made about service provision such as service cuts, automating services and hiring freezes.

Rural service providers are often responsible for providing services to multiple communities and so are limited in the amount of time they have available in any particular community. Because their time and resources for each community are already limited, service changes and cuts that may be manageable in the city of Edmonton are devastating to the quality of service provision in rural communities. It should be noted that service providers in Hinton are serving Grande Cache as well, which is actually outside of this Judicial District.

Grande Cache is done. There won't be a legal aid face-to-face office after the 17th [of May] It'll be by phone from now on. Edson might be cut off in September ...The Grande Cache people will have to find a way to come to Hinton for face-to-face. [F01, p.3]

Family Justice Services through the court building go to Grande Cache and Edson only, they don't go to Jasper. The thinking behind that is that there are enough Jasper services. They do the Grande Cache circuit on court days and then Edson once or twice a month. [F01, p.3]

[LAA] goes to “Edson twice a month. We're only on a call basis for Jasper.” [F01, p.3]

Four days a week [court services] are travelling. We're on average in Edson around seven days a month, Jasper and Grande Cache are twice a month. [F01, p.4]

Grande Cache is the one I worry about the most; it's the furthest away and doesn't have much in the way of resources. There's also a maximum security prison. They don't have an actual law office there. [F01, p.4]

They're down to one of me [addictions counselor] there [Grande Cache]. The person there has to do so much, he's the supervisor and manages so much else [Edson, Hinton, and Jasper]. [F01, p.4,]

Our [Native Friendship] program has funded one position up there. It's really bad up there [in Grande Cache]. [F01, p.4]

Rural service providers also said that their circumstances need to be considered separately from urban service providers' because there are fewer organizations that can fill gaps. For example, SLS or the ECLC can help fill some gaps left by the LAA changes in Edmonton. Additionally, rural services are dealing with more people who are accustomed to face-to-face services and are not comfortable with accessing services via telephone or Internet.

Service providers in Hinton and area reported that Aboriginal peoples in that area are particularly unlikely to access telephone or internet-based services due to language barriers and relative lack of exposure to life off-Reserve (see Section 4.3.2). It takes a lot of time and effort for service providers who live and work in the area to earn the trust of Aboriginal residents. This trust can only be transferred to services that involve direct contact with “warm bodies.”

For rural services, securing funding beyond the bare essentials will always be a challenge, particularly when finances are spread thinly. Organizations have to make decisions about where to spend the money they do have and it often costs less per client to provide services in urban areas than in rural areas. The dilemma facing service providers is deciding how they are going to get the most distance out of their financial resources, and serving more people in urban centers often looks like the more economically prudent choice.

3.5.6 Lack of Confidentiality in Rural Communities

Another complexity that rural service providers reported is a lack of confidentiality for service users. Because the populations are relatively small and many people travel between communities for work and other purposes, people are highly likely to know each other and to learn of the circumstances leading to the use of services. This is even a problem for service providers themselves, as they frequently know clients personally.

Confidentiality is further compromised by lack of physical space for services and quarters that are often shared due to the fact that services are travelling on circuits between towns.

A lot of people feel as though they don't have confidentiality because there's a lack of space. They don't want to talk to a lawyer or anyone really because they just don't have the space. Two lawyers might share an office. You have to do things with Clerks but everyone can hear you. [F01, p.2]

3.5.7 Scattered Service Locations

The physical locations of services can also be challenging. This is more manageable in the city of Edmonton due to public transit. However, rural service providers reported that it is a struggle for their clients. This is because few towns have their services located close together and there are also few options for public transportation when people do not have their own vehicles.

Infrastructure is a bit of a barrier because of the spread out nature of the town. There's public transport but it runs maybe once an hour. Services are scattered. In Edson the services are pretty close together. In Hinton things are separated. In Edson mental health and addictions are together. If services like this, for instance, were in one location it would be so much easier. There should be a second floor in the provincial building and services all close to each other. This is a no-brainer for the provincial government. If you want to streamline services you should do it. That's the logical place for that expansion to take place. All the court services should be in one building. [F01, p.5]

Rural service providers state that infrastructure as well as physical service space is lacking in Hinton in particular, and expressed the desire to see the Courthouse expanded or provide a Provincial building so that space, travel, confidentiality and resource issues could be reduced.

3.5.8 Transportation

Transportation was not reported to be a challenge within the city of Edmonton. As with other Districts however, it is a barrier for rural residents. There are no options for transportation between communities except, in some instances, taxis which are costly. People are often left to try to negotiate a ride to appointments with friends or relatives.

We also deal with a lot of transportation issues. People are across the province and the nearest courthouse might be miles away. Also people on reserve can't guarantee they'll be at a courthouse at a certain day. [F02, p.6]

3.5.9 Poverty

Issues of poverty as a barrier to social and legal justice along with the needs of low-income people are recurrent themes throughout the Report.

If you are over the income guideline for legal aid you will think it's more important to putting food on the table. Justice has always taken a backseat to those needs. Aboriginal people are vulnerable to this. Discrimination can be very covert. In terms of us having access to gainful employment our opportunities are limited in subtle ways. Leads to this vicious cycle of unemployment and poverty and lack of access to justice resources. [F03]

3.5.10 Cultural Divides

Racism and discrimination are visible in this District and this was especially reported with regard to Aboriginal peoples.

It's almost normal for Aboriginal people to be hated on the streets. Some people will just throw change at them on Jasper. It's very dehumanizing. I honor them every time they come in because it takes a lot for someone to want to be a productive member of the society. I think I just want to say that bringing people up to be recognized as humans is a big challenge, that's where we need to start. We have a tsunami of youth coming up. That's the biggest population coming up right now and need to make sure they have the strength and heart to bounce back up when things get tough – on or off reserve. [F03, p.3]

Part of my work was answering calls from Aboriginal individuals on matters of racism and discrimination all over. Every time I worked an advocacy case there were barriers in accessing services. Human Rights Commission would only accept a certain number of cases per year. The likelihood of a given individuals' case being accepted was low. So many parameters in place for what the Human Rights Commission would take on meant that there was structural discrimination. Human Rights Commission had one or two individuals who would hear these cases – their capacity was limited the ECLC – even the cases that they take on, they're limited as to what they can do So many gaps and barriers in terms of advocacy. Even the Institution for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women is limited. [F03, p.4]

Need for Increased Cultural Awareness

The number of other visible minorities living in rural communities between Edmonton and Jasper are still quite small. Service providers in Hinton and area reported that the cultural and ethnic composition really has not changed very much at all in recent years whereas many parts of Alberta have seen large influxes of immigrants and people from across Canada. They also reported that Aboriginal peoples have only very recently begun moving into towns from reserves. As a result, residents have not had a lot of exposure or need to learn about other cultures.

This lack of knowledge and exposure also applies to service providers, who reported a need for effective cultural sensitivity training. This was not limited to rural service providers, but was also seen as an ongoing need for service providers in the city of Edmonton as well.

One thing someone mentioned is that EPS [Edmonton Police Service] doesn't really have cultural awareness about our people. They think that when you're silent you're being disrespectful when it's actually showing respect culturally. Only place in the city here teaching such courses is NAIT and it's a new program that they launched (for only their employees). EPS does have a class that teaches a little bit of cultural awareness on all diversities, but it's not mandatory. It only mentions maybe a day of First Nation people, which to me is really sad. They should know who we are, why we're here, and who they are. They should know our background and be respectful to people in the area. [F03, p.3]

4.0 UNDERSTANDING LEGAL NEEDS IN EDMONTON

The following section contains a discussion about the types and incidence of legal needs that people have, and the services that are available to address those needs.

4.1 Statistics

Statistics were provided by SLS, Court Services, and ECLC. By referring to these, and to national and provincial statistics about the prevalence of legal problems, along with the observations of the service providers and researchers, we are able to provide some insight into the primary legal needs in this District.

4.1.1 National Prevalence

National statistics on the prevalence of legal problems among Canadians paint a picture of vast everyday need (Currie, 2006, 2007, 2009). These surveys have repeatedly found that approximately 47% (11.6 million) of Canadians have a legal problem with potentially negative consequences for their everyday lives.²⁵ Analysis of the data specific to Alberta places incidence at 52%.²⁶

This is evidence of a need to effectively address prevalent legal problems. Table 10 provides a breakdown of legal problems by frequency according to the type of problem, and compares national and Alberta rates. Participants tended to report more than one legal problem with the average in Alberta and nationally being around three.

²⁵ It should be noted that the surveys Currie conducted (2006, 2007, 2009) ask participants to report any legal problems they have had in the past three years, as opposed to only recording legal problems that they currently have.

²⁶ For a more detailed discussion of this research, refer to the ALSMP Calgary Judicial District Report (pp. 42-46) available at <http://cfci-fcjc.org/docs/2009/mapping-calgary-en.pdf>.

**Table 10 –
Prevalence of Legal Problems in Canada and Alberta**

Type of legal Problem	Frequency of Problem ²⁷	
	National % (N = 8873)	Alberta % (N = 600)
Consumer	22.0	25.4
Debt	20.4	27.0
Employment	17.8	19.0
Wills & Power of Attorney	5.2	6.7
Family: Relationship breakdown	3.6	5.0
Personal Injury	2.9	4.3
Police Action	2.0	3.0
Discrimination	1.9	1.7
Housing	1.7	1.0
Hospital treatment or release	1.6	1.8
Other family	1.4	2.0
Threat of legal action	1.2	1.3
Social Assistance	1.2	1.7
Disability Benefits	1.0	1.2
Immigration	0.6	0.2

As can be seen in Table 10, the general patterns for incidence of problems in Alberta are very similar to the national pattern.²⁸ It should be noted that family law problems are divided between relationship-related and other matters. When combined, family matters at 7% are the fourth most frequently reported problem in Alberta. When both disability benefits and other social assistance are combined, benefits rank eighth in Alberta, accounting for 2.9% of reported problems.

Frequency of a problem does not, however correlate with perceived seriousness. By far, respondents considered social benefit problems, followed by family matters, to be the most serious. In contrast, the more prevalent consumer and debt problems were viewed as the least serious.²⁹

The prevalence of legal problems demonstrated by this research reveals the

²⁷ Percentages do not add to 100% because some respondents reported more than one problem within each category. Percentages are not rounded because of the extremely large number of Canadians potentially represented by the national statistics (95% confidence ratio), where 1% equals approximately 250,000 Canadians. National percentages are taken, with permission, from Currie (2007, p.12). Alberta numbers were provided in a personal communication from Ab Currie, December 7, 2009.

²⁸ The small percentage differences that occur cannot be considered significant because the sample sizes are not comparable. While 600 respondents is a sufficient number to make the Alberta results reliable within the province, it is a mere fraction of the total national sample. Percentages were also provided for the number of each type of problem reported by Alberta respondents (a total of 938). While this changes the numbers within each category, the overall frequency pattern is very similar.

²⁹ While it seems intuitive that for the most part consumer problems would not have as serious an impact as many others, the same is not true of debt. Based on the CJSP data reported in Stratton & Anderson (2008), we would suggest that debt is seen as manageable until it precipitates or combines with other problems, such as family breakdown, loss of job, foreclosure, etc.

potential need for legal services as an everyday occurrence for a significant portion of the population. In fact, as the survey focuses on problems already perceived as serious, it likely underestimates actual legal need, which would also include many non-problematic everyday matters such as making a Will or formalizing a contract. The national research concerning the prevalence of justiciable³⁰ legal problems (Currie, 2007) indicates a much greater need for legal services than has traditionally been understood.

4.1.2 Service Statistics

The Team requested statistics from all services where representatives were interviewed. To date, three sets of statistics have been collected for legal service providers in the Edmonton Judicial District. Thus, as was anticipated might be the case when this project was proposed, it is not possible to draw conclusions about public need and service capacity in this manner. Instead, service providers' interview responses are used to derive qualitative themes about the public's legal and related needs in Edmonton. These data are supplemented by the national data, researcher observations and 14 interviews with members of the public.

Service providers share some insight about the challenges they face in collecting statistics. Some reported that they are still developing methods and policies for data collection. Others reported confusion about how to collect and count statistics.

[Service] aren't allowed to count phone calls as a [statistic]. If you meet a person in body it counts. You can play with numbers as much as you want. You can do that to the degree where it looks like we don't have a need for extra services here. If she could count those phone calls you might see that there's a big demand. Some of the barriers are just in the lack of thinking behind how some of these resources are put out there. [F01, p.9]

Student Legal Services (SLS)

SLS maintains very detailed statistics about how the organization is being accessed and the types of legal needs that individuals are presenting with. As Table 11 illustrates, this organization is widely utilized.

³⁰ Justiciable is defined as "capable of being decided by a court".

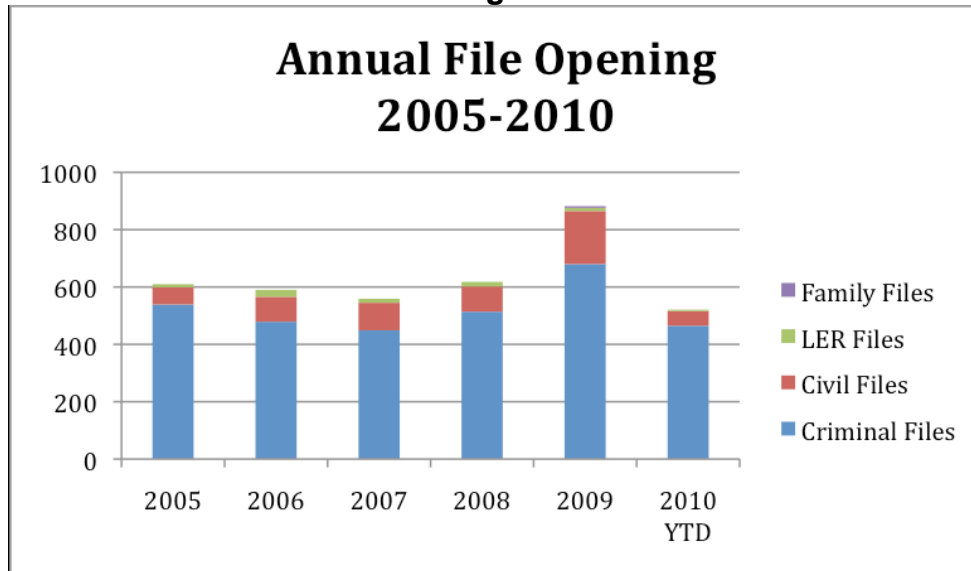
**Table 11 –
Student Legal Services: Annual Statistics**

Category	Total	Category	Total
Files Opened		Files Assigned to Caseworkers	
Civil	184	2007	256
Criminal	682	2008	289
Family	6	2009	311
PLEI/Reform	11		
Total	883		
Files Closed		Website Traffic	
Civil	184	Pageviews	210,017
Criminal	686	New visits (%)	79.68
Family	6		
PLEI/Reform	11		
Total	887		
Telephone Inquiries		Walk-In Inquiries	
Civil	1484	Civil	333
Criminal	2396	Criminal	77
Family	797	Family	48
PLEI/Reform	34	PLEI/Reform	-
Commissioner Services	50	Commissioner Services	6
Legal Agency Referrals	680	Legal Agency Referrals	9
Pamphlets/Webpage	9	Pamphlets/Webpage	-
Pro Bono	11	Pro Bono	3
Specific Person	1761	Specific Person	246
Miscellaneous	297	Miscellaneous	3
Total	7519	Total	691

Aside from the history of numbers of files assigned to caseworkers, these statistics are based on services offered in 2009. The numbers of contacts related to civil, criminal and family law matters are proportionate to the numbers of files opened in Provincial Court (see Table 13).

To give the 2009 statistics some context, Figure 3 shows the total numbers of file openings each year since 2005. The number of files opened in 2009 increased by more than 25% over previous years. This may be due, at least in part, to a poster campaign that SLS ran in 2008 using Zoom Media. Additionally, SLS launched a new website in 2008/09. As can be seen in Table 13 however, the number of criminal files opened were decreasing until 2006/07, but have increased each year since.

**Figure 3 –
Student Legal Services**



The SLS numbers continue to increase. As of May 2010, the number of file openings suggest that their 2010 total numbers are likely to surpass 2009. As was reported in Section 3.3 however, much of the 2010 increase is attributed to changes in the LAA service provision, causing clients that were previously eligible for legal aid to turn to SLS for assistance.

The Edmonton Community Legal Center (ECLC)

As is reflected in Table 12, ECLC is being heavily accessed by individuals for general information as well as legal advice and representation. The fact that the majority of cases that were referred to the volunteer lawyers were related to landlord/tenant, followed by immigration matters follows what other service providers are reporting.

**Table 12 –
Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC) Statistics: 2009**

Category	Frequency
Information and Referral Services	7,547
Volunteer Lawyer Clients	1,409
Types of Cases	
Contracts	10% ³³
Employment	17%
Immigration ³¹	20%
Landlord/Tenant	28%
Other ³²	10%
Gender	
Male	54%
Female	46%
Age	
25 or younger	7%
26-35	20%
36-45	25%
46-55	27%
56-65	14%
over age 65	7%
Marital Status	
Single	45%
Married	23%
Separated/Divorced	20%
Common-Law	7%
Widowed	5%
Income Source	
Employment	38%
Canada Pension Plan (CPP)	17%
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)	15%
Employment Insurance (EI)	13%
Student Financial Assistance (SFI)	12%
Health Information	
Disability	28%
Physical Health	79%
Mental Health	38%
Citizenship	
Canadian Citizens	77%
Permanent Residents	12%
Aboriginal	24%

³¹ Most of these were TFWs.

³² Most of these were related to Human Rights issues.

³³ Note that the percentages for any one category may not add up to 100% as not all clients chose to report this information.

The ECLC client group contains a strong Aboriginal representation. The percentage of clients who self-identified as Aboriginal in 2009 was 24% (25% in both 2007 and 2008). This is very encouraging, given the concerns that many service providers have about the under-representation of Aboriginal clients. While ECLC is anticipating that their Aboriginal Clinic will help them to strengthen their connection with this population, only two of these clinics have been held thus far, so they do not attribute the increase experienced to-date to the clinics. Instead, factors such as the new city-centre location, perceived independence (separation from government) and/or reputation may have played a role in successfully attracting Aboriginal clientele.

Additionally, approximately 11% of the ECLC clientele are not permanent residents or citizens. Considering that this group comprises only about 1% of Edmonton's population (see Section 2.1.1), this would suggest that temporary residents such as temporary foreign workers are also actively seeking this organization out. The fact that the ECLC is attracting both Aboriginal peoples and non-permanent residents (as well as non-citizens) speaks both to its value and to its accessibility to vulnerable populations.

Court Services – Provincial Court

As can be noted in Table 13, civil claims have gone down slightly since 2004/05 and family and youth claims have increased slightly, but neither change has been statistically significant. The numbers of traffic tickets has risen significantly, but this increase is impacted by the introduction of electronic tickets.

The numbers of criminal charges commenced have increased significantly since 2006/07. This pattern is consistent with the rise of criminal file openings that SLS (Table 11) saw in 2009. Service providers have suggested that the influx of people emigrating from other provinces could lead to more crime. Additionally, the recent loss of income experienced by many people and stressors that accompany economic downturns could play a role in the increase in crime statistics.

**Table 13 –
Edmonton Provincial Court Volumes**

Area of Law	2004/05 Volume	2005/06 Volume	2006/07 Volume	2007/08 Volume	2008/09 Volume	Average Annual Volume (2004-2009)
Civil						
Claims Filed	6,913	6,046	5,059	5,250	5,684	5,790
Appeals Files	48	51	33	27	30	38
Transfers from Q.B.	10	5	12	20	16	13
Courtroom Time (hours)	1,985	2,061	1,704	1,632	1,427	1,762
Family & Youth						
Actions Commenced	2,088	1,359	3,167	3,334	3,548	2,699
Child Welfare Actions Commenced	5,031	5,345	5,314	4,769	4,486	4,989
Youth Tickets	5,515	5,739	5,480	6,561	6,247	5,908
Electronic Tickets	-	-	-	-	1,375	1,375
Charges Commenced	19,057	19,122	18,887	19,654	20,040	19,352
Charges Concluded	18,915	18,210	18,622	18,446	19,582	18,755
Courtroom Time (hours)	3,668	3,581	3,405	3,772	4,128	3,711
Criminal						
Charges Commenced – Adult ²¹	48,432	46,666	43,107	45,484	48,572	46,452
Charges Concluded – Adult	45,751	46,519	47,877	57,843	53,089	50,216
Average Preliminary Hearings per Month	229	267	328	269	211	261
Average Courtroom Time (hours)	7,877	8,763	9,120	9,590	9,761	9,022
Traffic						
Tickets Received	302,740	303,744	279,600	333,868	393,107	322,612
Electronic Tickets	-	-	-	94,897	222,449	63,469
Charges Commenced	199,797	199,953	185,080	213,311	243,101	208,248
Charges Concluded	194,015	199,083	179,252	204,960	236,455	202,753
Average Courtroom Time (hours)	1,836	1,971	1,769	1,760	1,870	1,841

4.2 Specific Populations and Specialized Legal Needs

Feedback from focus group and interview participants, allow us to identify legal needs that are common and/or currently on the rise:

Administrative Law

- Employment – labour laws
- Income Support (WCB, EI, Pensions)
- Human Rights
- Immigration

- Mental Health/AISH
- Poverty Law
- Residential Tenancy

Civil Law

- Accident/Injury
- Bankruptcy and foreclosure (slow but steady increase)
- Human Rights
- Residential Tenancy
- Small Business Debt (noted steep increase, particularly with builders)
- Wills and Estates

Criminal Law

- Domestic Violence (sharp increase reported by several services)
- Drug Possession/Possession for the purposes of sales
- Drunk Driving
- Personal Robberies (increase reported)
- Probation Breaches
- Serious Summary Offences (with jail time)
- Summary Offences (alcohol/addictions related)
- Traffic Tickets (multiple, unpaid)
- Young Offenders

Family Law

- Family law generally, but especially;
 - Child Protection,
 - Common-law Property and Separations,
 - Emergency Protection Orders,
 - Grandparents' Rights,
 - Maintenance Enforcement, and
 - No Contact and Restraining Orders.

Table 14 shows the numbers of existing legal and related services that specialize in serving particular populations and needs, allowing a comparison between the identified needs and the services able to respond to these needs.

**Table 14 –
Specialization of Legal and Related Services**

Specialization	Legal Services		Social/Health Services
	Sole Purpose	Legal & Social/Health	
Aboriginal	5	9	3
Accidents/Injuries	-	-	-
Addictions	2	4	3
Alternatives to Court	10	5	-
Children	14	8	5
Consumer Issues	3	2	-
Crisis Intervention	1	4	5
Debt Management	-	1	-
Disabilities	3	-	1
Employment	1	3	1
Families	13	8	10
Family Violence/Abuse	10	14	1
FASD	-	1	1
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgendered	-	-	-
Housing & Tenancy	7	1	4
Human Rights & Citizenship	12	4	-
Immigrants	3	4	-
Low Income/Poverty	7	1	-
Men	2	1	5
Mental Health	1	6	7
Pensions & Benefits	4	1	1
Seniors	7	-	2
Taxes & Finances	-	-	-
Victims & Offenders	38	17	1
Wills & Estate Planning	1	-	-
Women	7	7	5
Youth	18	14	8

When it comes to needs such as human rights violations, domestic violence, criminal offenses, and child protection, there are a fair number of options available. Of course, the impact of existing services depends not only on the appropriateness of the services but on how well-known they are by other service providers and members of the public.

On the other hand, legal needs related to accidents and injuries, small business, debt, bankruptcy and foreclosures, and Wills and estates planning were some of the most frequently mentioned needs (corroborating Ab Currie’s findings), yet there are next to no legal services that offer specialized supports to meet these needs.

There are a number of services that offer legal supports for matters related to family breakdown. However, service providers report that what is really needed is options for obtaining free or low-cost legal advice, as well as more options for legal representation. Options for receiving these specific services are still lacking.

4.2.1 New Canadians

Service providers in the city of Edmonton reported that English as a second language (ESL) services and the need for translation/interpretation services for people with legal needs, is a major issue. This is also true with regards to First Nations dialects in rural communities around Hinton. Although there are options for French service provision in urban centers and some smaller communities (often due to informal means such as a staff member who happens to speak French), more and more people in Alberta are unilingual in languages other than English and this trend is not going to slow. Currently, efforts to accommodate people who are not fluent in English or French are haphazard to say the least. The languages that service providers identified as being most frequently spoken are: Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog, Punjabi and Urdu.

New immigrant women are especially vulnerable in domestic violence situations. They are often unaware of Canadian laws and the resources that are available to them, and their situation is made worse when language barriers exist.

While findings in this District echo those in previous Reports, they also bring to light an important reality for service providers across Alberta. Put simply, it is becoming more and more difficult to provide efficient and effective service to communities in this province through a largely mono-lingual justice system. There is a real and growing need for most organizations to provide additional language training to staff. However, we recognize that this takes time and funding. Other options would be to increase the use of services such as CanTalk or to provide incentives for qualified persons who are fluent in priority languages to fill vacant positions.

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs)

TFWs are a group that is of particular concern to legal service providers in the city of Edmonton. Their feedback, as well as stories shared by members of the public, indicate that labour and contract laws as well as temporary residency rights are so commonly violated as to suggest “routine practice” by employers.

When you see someone who's part of the general Canadian culture - they have a sense that they know what their rights are and feel like they'll be supported. It's totally different for foreign workers. They have a defeated sense and believe they just have to survive. They don't have a sense that the authorities will work for them. This is actually similar to some of our First Nation clients as well. Lot of foreign workers out of jobs, they may make a choice to work unauthorized, but of course that problem could be avoided if there was more support [02].

When I arrived, I was told that if I complained I'd be on the first plane back home. There is fear everywhere. We would rather suffer the bitterness in silence than try to deal with the legal services - using our money to pay for phone calls to just hear answering machines - it is a reminder that we are alone here. It is expensive to access legal services here and they are not accessible Lack of time is a huge factor for me and others. When you are working seven days a week how can you get time to see legal services? There is shame of returning to my country without having a positive experience in Canada. Bosses have challenged me for refusing overtime on nights I go to church. Boss said "you came here to make money not go to church. If you want to become a pastor, go back to your country and be a pastor." He asked me if I was Christian or Muslim. I said that was an illegal question and never to ask it again. Boss said that, if I did not work straight overtime on weeknights they would take everything from me. I said to go ahead, even take my life. I'd still have heaven. I also said that my contract stated 40 hours a week ... not overtime anyway.... Boss told me this was the last chance and the next time they talked, I'd be gone. And I responded by saying the next time they talked it would be at a neutral table with proper authorities. Employers are also cutting foreign workers to eight hours a week in some cases, when they were promised full time work I am working seven days a week [but paid] only regular wages, rather than 1.5 [for overtime]. I calculated back as far as labour standards allow and figured out I am owed \$4000. [P09]

Of additional concern is the fact that service providers feel that they are being accessed by only a very few of the TFWs who need and would qualify for assistance. One public participant highlighted in detail why this under-utilization can occur, through his own explanation for not yet addressing his legal needs.

There are signs on buses and LRT about "temporary workers having permanent rights." The ads say it is as easy as pressing 1, 2 or 3 but, if you actually try, this is a deterrent rather than a support. You will keep having to press numbers until you give up. Legal services must be pro-active rather than reactive. Why are they waiting behind the desk for people to come to them with problems? They must walk their talk. Seek out companies that employ temporary foreign workers and speak to the staff about their rights. The recruiters are the biggest criminals. Maybe they assume that temporary foreign workers are stupid or undignified because they are taking menial jobs We were told that we could look for other jobs once in Canada but then we found out that we must say with the job came over for. This violates labour laws in Alberta. But the employer has all the power. There should be a body who has the authorization to inspect all companies who hire temporary foreign workers. They should talk to the workers about not being fearful and what to do if employers threatened them or force them to violate their contracts. The legal system here is rotten and it belongs to the rich and powerful. The reality and the facts of the legal system do not coincide with the ideal. There is a wide gap. [P09]

4.2.2 Aboriginal Peoples

There are a number of services that specialize in working with Aboriginal peoples in the city of Edmonton. Some examples include:

- An Aboriginal legal clinic is offered one Thursday per month by ECLC at Aboriginal Consulting Services.
- An Aboriginal Liaison Community exists (with ties to EPS), but is struggling to stay in operation.
- NCSA is 40 years old this year. As discussed in Section 3.4.6, their purpose is to provide informed access to the justice system, but also to provide information to court personnel to understand the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples. In some cases NCSA provides translation services, but not much of that is done in this District. Their primary role in the courtroom is to provide information but not advice. Workers appear in court, sit in the courtrooms or at the courtroom door. People can approach them if they are looking for a court worker. In other cases the judge will ask a court worker to provide information. Sometimes they stop proceedings until the individual can get the information they need. NCSA provides services to non-Aboriginals as well.
- The Wicahitowin Justice Action Circle is attempting to create an inventory of justice and related services that specialize in helping Aboriginal peoples.
- The Oteenow Employment & Training Society does intake, job boards and employment counseling, including helping people work through legal issues. They would like to incorporate more legal services into their programs.

We work with partners around the city to provide training. We find a lot of people that have criminal issues can't get employment or don't have the necessary skills. This is problematic especially in urban areas ... with employment counselors they work through those barriers. The first step is called maintenance in which we work on barriers like housing or legal or childcare. Then they move into our skills development quadrant our goal at the end of any training is to make sure they have employment Clients often don't know where to go, and they often need help in the form of an advocate. They feel intimidated and they can't walk into organizations that will help, or into the courtroom because they're so scared. We build life skills, culturally based, that gives them the self-confidence they need to speak up for themselves [F03, p.3].

There is still a need for more culturally sensitive services (and service providers) across the District.

People pay more attention to you and listen to you more if you are non-Aboriginal, and some lawyers think Aboriginal people have too many rights. There is an attitude among some lawyers that we get everything for free. I have only had two good lawyers. The rest, when I was younger and more naïve, only took advantage of me. [10]

There is also a lack of services and information in Aboriginal languages. Service providers in Hinton and area reported a need for services in Cree, Ojibwe and Sauleau (also known as Dane-Zaa).

Legal Issues

There are many professional Aboriginal people in the Edmonton Judicial District who experience the same range of legal needs as other Albertans. It is also the case that Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately present in low income groups, including among the homeless and people living with addictions. Because of this, and because prejudice against Aboriginal peoples is a fact of daily life, there are a number of specific legal problems that also disproportionately affect this group:

- Breaching probation
- Jay walking tickets
- Unlicensed drivers / unregistered cars
- Public intoxication
- Pardons
- Child protection

Providing services for Aboriginal peoples is further complicated by a general lack of trust they have for the justice system.

The need for advocacy is very high, families should be able to talk to someone they trust and get a lawyer Wouldn't it be good to have child welfare matters brought in front of a more Aboriginal-focused court? Something else that's different from what it is. If the court itself was different, or built through Aboriginal people with Aboriginal practices and beliefs beyond it, you might see quite a different child welfare world. [F03, p.6]

Sentencing practices were also mentioned as requiring reconsideration, particularly with regard to Aboriginal peoples and contextual issues.

Sentencing – many people involved in the justice system have a need for support and counseling. Their histories are traumatic and they're victims of their environments. We put them in jail even at young ages. There needs to be more alternative measures. [F03, p.7]

Services providers and the public reported that criminal histories often haunt Aboriginal peoples and negatively impact sentencing. Participants felt that lack of information, lack of willingness or ability to respond to charges, and discriminatory treatment, have led to criminal charges that often could have been avoided.

When facing minor criminal charges as a teenager (approx 30 years ago), the firm that represented me advised me to plead guilty to “just get it over with”. I was too young and naïve at the time to truly understand the ramifications these guilty pleas would have on me to this day. My criminal record makes it very difficult to find a job. [10]

Aboriginal clients are also seen as under-utilizing available services. The ECLC, LInC, Citizen’s Appeal Panels and Law Enforcement Review Board are examples of organizations that expressed concerns about the low number of Aboriginal clients accessing their services, even though it is known that they have disproportionate involvement with the associated issues.

We don’t see a lot of Aboriginal people accessing our services We opened an Aboriginal clinic so maybe that’ll change it. [10-02]

We find that in the urban centres, the homeless and urban Aboriginals are less likely to use our services although they are over-represented in the justice system. [10-04]

Service providers identified a lack of trust towards any person/body who is involved with government services, and a perception that the justice system is not there to serve or protect Aboriginal people. One service provider who has worked in both rural communities and the city of Edmonton stated that Aboriginal people build relationships slowly and with individuals, not services. Once they get to know somebody who provides a particular service and come to trust that person, they will seek him or her out – whether he or she is Aboriginal or not. It is not necessarily creating new and specialized services that is the answer (unless there is a lack of a particular service, in general), but it is about relationship-building between individual staff in a service who are knowledgeable about Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal members of the community.

Participants identified a lack of awareness among Aboriginal peoples concerning employment and labour law. First Nations youth are finding opportunities for off-reserve oil industry employment and there is Federal support for training which includes related PLEI. However, program providers reported significant resistance from the majority of Reserve Administrations, which remain the primary (or only) employer on reserves. Past distrust of the legal system combined with possible conflict of interest, create roadblocks to providing PLEI which addresses Human Rights, Employment Standards and other work-related legal issues.

Urban Aboriginal participants suggested that social and political pressure should be applied to Band Councils to ensure that PLEI is provided to Band members, and to ensure compliance with Employment Standards. One barrier to achieving this is the jurisdictional complexity of governmental fiscal and legal responsibilities for First Nations on reserves, especially involving workplace standards.

Despite all of these concerns, not all feedback about Aboriginal peoples' experiences with legal services were negative. Aboriginal service providers spoke positively about the work that LInC and FLIC are doing. They also recognized the efforts that are being made to enhance restorative justice options in this province.

Can aboriginal people find the services they need for their legal needs? Well, we work with John Howard a lot, refer them there. Lots of referrals to Elizabeth Fry. Kids In The Hall Bistro, which works with youth that are on their own or have been in care their whole life and are trying to learn how to work. Lot of success with those programs.

4.2.3 People Living with Disabilities and Addictions

Without exception, all service providers refer to a significant number of clients having addictions and mental health issues and barriers. The need for legal service providers who understand and can advocate for people living with mental illnesses was highlighted by service providers and members of the public in this District.

I got sent to the U of A hospital in '89 for depression. I was told by a doctor that something was wrong with me and that it was probably because I "wasn't having sex with men" that I had problems. I went to a find work program after enrolling on AISH. I was stalked and sexually assaulted in '96 by a co-worker. I was working for the City of Edmonton at the time. My boss had basically been forced to hire me to meet a quota. I was there for two years. My boss wouldn't give me any work to do. He wouldn't train me and complained about me in front of co-workers. So, when the incident happened, I had witnesses but I didn't report the incident to the police until '98. I was too depressed to do so sooner. The cop I got was bad. He dismissed me and wouldn't look into it There are no advocates for high functioning people with mental health issues. I have called 211 multiple times over the years (I always get referred back to 211). Nowhere does casework or individual advocacy. If you haven't done something wrong, nobody cares about you. [06]

Several of the social issue tribunals also made the same point, stating emphatically that the lack of addiction treatment programs and mental health advocacy and supports is an issue for the delivery of legal and justice services **of all kinds** to this population.

Drugs and alcohol - 98% of everything in criminal court has something to do with drugs and alcohol.... I'm always making referrals to drug and alcohol rehab I mean in the February budget, our government just cut treatment centres. They didn't add more - they cut them, and then said the reason they did it is because there's no demand for them, which is really ridiculous. [081-09-L02]

Homelessness

The Hinton Focus Group discussed transience issues resulting in drug and vagrancy charges, but not of homelessness per se. The Edmonton Focus Group however, raised homelessness as a barrier to accessing legal services and as a precipitant of legal needs.

I know in dealing with the Bissell I'll go and talk with some of their case workers, people there are homeless and are very intimidated to come into the court house. They won't know what services we have. That's a barrier right there – people don't want to come into the courthouse. There's the airport security, and people associate the court with being in trouble, not with help. [F02, p.6]

It's also hard to find ways to communicate with homeless people. Some centers offer mailboxes and so on, which is great. Lots of people will come in but then we don't know how to communicate with them. Any service that will bridge that gap will help. [F02, p.6]

4.2.4 Victims of Domestic Violence

In the Edmonton and Hinton Focus Groups, several major service providers reported a recent significant increase in domestic violence related matters. This can occur due to increased stress around finances that gets taken out on loved ones, which is a pattern that has been shown to follow economic downturns. Service providers also suggested that the increase in people from other countries may be impacting the rates, because of a lack of awareness of Canadian laws such as the Zero Tolerance policy. They also reported that people who are marrying Canadians are coming here and being abused once they arrive.

[P]eople from mainland China whose partner is Canadian come and start to be abused right away. Sometimes they don't have immigration status and this means they can't apply for assistance, they think they might be deported if they talk about the abuse. For those individuals who have just arrived and have no status, there are no resources and those people are very vulnerable. They often go back to their partner because at least they have money and have a roof over their head. [F02, p.5]

As with St. Paul and Calgary, participants reported a lack of resources for men who are victims of domestic violence. Service providers, particularly in the rural focus group, reported that the incidence of women being charged is increasing. Often both partners are charged for the same incident but it appears there could be a growing recognition that men can also be victims of domestic abuse.

4.2.5 Violence against Children

Rural service providers noted another disturbing trend that they have observed in the communities around Hinton, especially in Edson: an increase in sex crimes perpetrated against children. They could not point to any particular cause, but said they are being called upon to work with victims and offenders in an increasingly high number of incest and sexual assaults involving minors.

They did report an accompanying increase in violent crimes generally, and noted that this trend approximately followed the height of the economic boom and the subsequent recession. At the same time, they report that the demographics of those communities have not changed very much at all, as they were not prime locations for people who were looking for work in the oilfields and other related occupations.

4.2.6 Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs)

In 2006, Edmonton was one of the three judicial districts mapped as part of the *Alberta Self Represented Litigants Mapping Project (SRLMP)* (Stratton, 2007). This project took place because of growing concern about an increasing number of litigants appearing in every level of civil and family court without legal representation. An increase in the numbers of unrepresented accused was also noted.

The current research indicates that the numbers of people self-representing continues to increase. It is agreed among stakeholders that the reduction in financial eligibility for legal aid will further swell these numbers. Crown and criminal defence have expressed alarm about the impact on people facing summary charges. Even prior to the legal aid reductions, the ALSMP has repeatedly heard much stronger concern about unrepresented accused than was the case in 2006.

The SRLMP data revealed a range of reasons for people self-representing that suggested there are at least seven different groups of SRLs. Participants in the ALSMP have confirmed these groups, which are:

1. People who have an overall lack of resources (eg. low income, education, literacy).
2. People who have low income but some social supports (eg. education, communication skills).
3. People who have low income but are living with additional social barriers (eg. disabilities, language).
4. People who could afford a lawyer but are unable to find one.
5. People who were previously represented by a lawyer but are no longer (eg. ran out of money).

6. People involved in cases where representation is supposed to be unnecessary (eg. small claims, administrative tribunals).
7. People who could retain a lawyer but prefer to self-represent.

The final category of SRLs includes – but is not limited to – individuals who are termed *vexatious litigants*. Vexatious litigants are a significant problem within the justice system. Our former Justice Minister, Ron Stevens, described vexatious litigants as follows:

A vexatious litigant is someone who persistently files proceedings that have already been determined by a court, persistently files proceedings that can't succeed or that have no reasonable expectation of providing relief, persistently files proceedings for improper purposes, inappropriately uses previously raised grounds and issues in subsequent proceedings, persistently fails to pay the costs ordered by a court as a result of unsuccessful proceedings, persistently takes unsuccessful appeals from judicial decisions, or persistently engages in inappropriate courtroom behaviour.

Some common characteristics often apply to vexatious litigants. They may include opinionated and narcissistic behaviour and asking the same questions repeatedly. For some vexatious litigants, losing a case may fuel feelings of injustice and lead to ongoing legal action. Some exhibit behaviour that is consistent with some types of mental illness (http://www.law.ucalgary.ca/system/files/Blog_JWH_Vexatious_Litigants_revised.pdf).

Services Available for SRLs

In 2006, The SRLMP mapped 66 services in the Edmonton Judicial District that offered supports to SRLs. All 66 services still exist. Three have changed names as well as some aspects of their service provision. These are:

- The Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC) was formerly the Edmonton Centre for Equal Justice. Current service provision is discussed in Section 3.4.4.
- The Legal Services Centre of Edmonton (LSC), which was formerly the Alberta Law Line. Recent changes to its service provision are discussed in Section 3.4.1.
- The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) is now part of Alberta Health Services and is officially referred to as Addictions Services.

Of the 66 services originally mapped, 42 provided PLEI only and an additional 8 provided PLEI as well as some summary advice for a total of 50 services (Stratton, 2007, pp. 19-20). We have mapped an additional 22 services that offer PLEI. This is not because 22 new services have been created since 2006, rather it is because only “key” service providers were included in the SRLMP and the boundaries used for that project were slightly different (eg. Hinton was mapped under the Grande Prairie Judicial District).

The major addition to services that provide legal supports to SRLs has been the Law Information Centre (LInC, discussed in Section 3.4.3), which opened in the Edmonton Courthouse in April 2007. The ALSMP has heard numerous excellent reports of the positive impact of the LInC.

NCSA offered the Aboriginal Legal Resource Centre and Bearpaw Media Productions, in 2006 but has since also established the Alberta Aboriginal Legal Education Centre (AALEC). This program conducts workshops around the province – often in remote Aboriginal communities - that address a variety of legal and related issues (see Section 3.4.6).

Service providers in the Edmonton Judicial District continue to report increasing numbers of SRLs. For example, Edmonton's Court of Queen's Bench Registry reports that approximately 25% of the people they see are SRLs. Furthermore, the range of demographics is widening across educational, socio-economic and ethnic groups and there are very few service options for those with medium level income.

Ten of the 14 Edmonton public participants (71%) reported that they had self-represented at some point while trying to resolve their legal problems. Of those who self-represented, they cited the following reasons for doing so:

- Could not afford to retain a lawyer (2).
- Did not qualify for legal aid (4).
- Did not want to retain a lawyer (2).
- Had retained but fired a lawyer (2).

Service providers who specialize in working with SRLs reported that they represent just about all demographic groups, and as the quote below illustrates, cover many legal matters. Although, no particular types of legal problems were identified by participants in this District as being ones that SRLs were more likely to have than represented individuals, all of the public participants who had self-represented had family and civil legal needs related to family breakdown. Service providers did note that new Canadians who have language barriers and/or are low income are particularly likely to self-represent and commented that the number of SRLs with vexatious matters is small, but extremely time-consuming (not wanting to pay taxes being an example given).

We see a lot of people who are immigrants, some of them have second languages issues and you just have to be really patient to understand them and to have them understand you. There are a certain number of people who are clearly low income but not necessarily homeless. Some of them have addiction or mental health issues. We also have a segment of the population that just don't want to pay a lawyer – some who can't afford to and some who just want to self represent. Some of them don't really understand how much work it is to do your own research and some of them find it out pretty quickly. They can be pretty flummoxed about what they have to read and how long they have to wait. Some people are on AISH. A number of elderly people think they have time on their hands and they don't want to pay anyone so they don't get a lawyer. That tends to be small stuff like car accidents or people who have been dismissed from their work, or a lot of family issues like custody. Sometimes small business people, looking for something like how to write a waiver. It's quite broad. [F02, p.2]

The increase and improvement in services for SRLs is commendable. Even so, there are clearly still significant gaps in services to meet the needs of all SRLs. As well as the issue of income eligibility criteria and the gaps in areas of law covered (which are discussed throughout this report), individuals often have multiple legal needs and addressing them all is particularly challenging. Furthermore, the legal process is very complex and intimidating, especially in larger urban centres where people do not know who the key professionals in the justice system are.

Outside of Edmonton, say in Wetaskiwin, Sherwood Park, all of our circuit points, we probably have, and this is just from my personal experience, a higher number of litigants who are self-representing outside of the larger cities. But again, at those circuit points, the courthouse is more accessible, better parking, less intimidating, I would think, and so they may have a higher comfort level to represent themselves. [J03]

Service providers believe that the numbers of SRLs are going to continue to increase. The gap between income cutoffs for LAA and the income that households need to earn to be able to afford private lawyers is too wide. Options other than LAA, such as ECLC and SLS have limited capacity to accommodate the increasing demands.

4.3 Public Experiences with Legal Services

We were fortunate to be able to conduct interviews with 14 members of the public who had recent (within the previous year) and/or ongoing legal needs. Unlike the Calgary Judicial District where we had actively recruited the majority of the public participants, these were exclusively individuals who sought us out and asked to participate. As can be seen in Table 14 the demographics of the Edmonton public participants differed from those in Calgary.

**Table 15 –
Public Demographics**

Demographics	Edmonton	Calgary
Ethnicity		
First Nations/Métis/Inuit	7%	26%
Visible Minority	50%	13%
Caucasian	43%	61%
Born Outside Canada	50%	14%
Age		
Range	36 - 68	22 - 65
Mean	45	42
Unreported	2	-
Income		
Range	\$14,000 – 150,000	\$12,000 – 120,000
Mean	\$34,080	\$32,762
Unreported	29%	39%
Participants Below Low Income Cutoff ³⁴	40%	11%
Homeless	-	42%
Education		
Less than high school	-	7%
High school	21%	23%
Partial post secondary	29%	7%
Trade/College diploma	29%	26%
University degree	7%	7%
Graduate degree	-	10%
Multiple degrees/diplomas	-	7%
Unreported	14%	20%

There are no significant differences between educational attainment and income ranges between the two groups. As the mean income indicates however, there was a large proportion of participants in the low income range (below LAA income cutoffs) in Calgary. Of the members of the public who participated in Edmonton, none were homeless at the time they participated, whereas in Calgary 48% were homeless. Also, in Edmonton a larger proportion self-identified as belonging to ethnic minority groups. On the other hand, in Edmonton, only one participant was Aboriginal while in Calgary eight were.

³⁴ Based on calculation provided by the Government of Canada's Income Statistics Division (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2010005-eng.pdf>), the cutoff for a family of four living in an urban community as of 2009 was \$29,089 after taxes. The percentages for this category are calculated based on the number of participants in each District who reported their annual income, as opposed to the total number of participants.

Public participants reported legal needs that fell into the following areas of law (note that some participants had legal needs that fell under multiple areas of law):

Administrative

- Employment – labour laws
- Immigration

Civil

- Accident/Injury
- Adult Guardianship (*Power of Attorney*)
- Employment Contracts, Benefits and Insurance
- Human Rights (Charter discrimination)
- Poverty Law
- Professional Negligence/Misconduct
- Residential School Claims
- Wills and Estates

Criminal

- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault (victim)

Family

- Child Custody
- Child Support
- Divorce
- Spousal Support

Members of the public were asked which legal services they had accessed and how they came to know about these services. A list of commonly mentioned legal services was provided and then they were asked to list any additional services they had accessed. As Table 16 indicates, most of these individuals self-identified any legal services they accessed.

**Table 16 –
Legal Services Accessed by Members of the Public**

LEGAL SERVICE³⁵	Found by Participant	Participant Referred to
Court Counters	7	-
Legal Aid	6	-
Alberta Law Library	4	1
Alberta Law Line/Legal Services Centre	3	-
Family Justice Services/Family Law Information Centre	2	2
LInC	2	1
Student Legal Services	2	1
Lawyer Referral Service	2	-
Victims' Services	2	-
Edmonton Community Legal Centre	1	-
Public Library	1	-
Native Counselling Services	-	-
Native Friendship Centres	-	-

This group of individuals were not generally happy with the legal services they had received, which was a primary motivator for wishing to participate in the ALSMP. However, of those services that multiple participants accessed, the highest levels of satisfaction were with the Court counter Clerks (86% found them to be at least somewhat useful) as well as the Law Libraries and Law Line (75% each).

Participants experienced particularly high levels of frustration regarding their experiences with family law matters. This is understandable as family matters tend to be complex, time consuming – thus expensive - and emotionally charged. Lack of enforcement of court orders is a particularly contentious issue. Although not always considered a legal service issue, for litigants this is clearly an access to justice issue resulting in costly private Bar services and public costs for demands on court services. There is also a lack of legal/court services that ensure enforcement of orders, which is particularly acute for family court orders.

³⁵ Some participants found and often accessed more than one resource.

I'm dealing with family issues right now. My wife and I are divorced. She made claims of violence but there was no arrest I've never been convicted for the violent offences she claims, but her lies had a profound influence. I dealt with criminal and family lawyers but ultimately she got custody even though there was no proof. I've wasted 140 to 160k and years of my life on this³⁶. My wife just up and left, and has evaded three court orders for me to get joint custody since then. There have been outrageous court delays leading to extra cost and wasted time. It cost twenty thousand dollars to get a five thousand dollar reduction in child support There haven't been any repercussions for my wife for avoiding court, and meanwhile my kids had to suffer She refused to follow court orders and just hoped I would run out of money. Part of the problem was I could only get interim orders, which had to be renewed. [07]

Some additional complaints were reported that were not limited to a particular area of law. For instance, multiple participants reported that there was no support available for someone who wished to file an official complaint and/or initiate legal action against a lawyer or member of the judiciary.³⁷ The cost of legal processes – financial and personal – as well as delays in legal processes, were also common complaints.

4.3.1 Linkages between Legal Needs and Health and Social Well-being

Numerous service providers spoke about people losing work time to attend at legal services or multiple court dates, with ultimate risk to their job for repeated absences. For certain people, the demands of dealing with the legal process and their life circumstances (eg. not being able to afford child care, employment that does not allow for flexibility and/or paid time off) actually result in an inability to be employed until their matters are resolved.

We notice a lot of people who don't go back to work until they resolve their legal issues. This means that delays in the court process means they spend more time unemployed. [F02, p.5]

³⁶ This participant reported that they had attempted to use both court and private mediation services but that their estranged spouse refused to attend mediation.

³⁷ This would indicate the possibility that at least a portion of the members of the public who sought us out to participate were indeed vexatious litigants, and this may well be true. However, it cannot be assumed that every individual who has a negative experience with a lawyer and wishes to take formal action is vexatious.

5.0 GAPS AND PRIORITIES IN MEETING LEGAL NEEDS

5.1 Gaps in Legal Services

I've noticed an increase in people who are feeling defeated early in the process. The referral process is turning into more of a labyrinth for people. You can tell people have given up as soon as you talk to them. The perception I'm noticing a lot more is that people are thinking they won't find help anywhere. [F02, p.7]

Service providers and members of the public identified four categories of missing or inadequate legal services. These are:

- Inadequate access to advice and supports for civil, criminal and family matters.
- Lack of preventative services for children and youth.
- Enhanced services for Aboriginal peoples.
- Services for New Canadians

5.1.1 Inadequate Access to Legal Advice and Support

Service providers reported a lack of supports for people with Family Law matters, particularly for people whose cases are being heard in the Court of Queen's Bench. The major gap that was identified in relation to family law matters was the lack of options for help finding and completing legal forms. While the FLIC assists with family law matters, they do not assist with locating or completing forms. They are referred to the Edmonton LInC office if they require assistance with filling out the forms or need to speak to a lawyer from Legal Services Centre. But the LInC does not officially help with family law matters. SLS does not provide legal advice and representation for family law matters at all or for civil matters that are before the Court of Queen's Bench.

Focus group members also felt that there should be specific supports for people who are seeking visitation with children, and they felt this is particularly lacking for fathers.

One of the things I'd like to see is advocacy for fathers who pay their maintenance and want to have visitation with their kids. Where would they go for help? Who would they talk to? [F03, p.3]

Finally, service providers also reported the need for more Civil Duty Counsel and more coordination of services with the LInC (eg. scheduling regular civil legal information sessions at the LInC in which individuals could seek advice from Duty Counsel). In addition to civil and family advice and representation, rural service providers also spoke of the need for more criminal lawyers.

5.1.2 Lack of Preventative Services for Children and Youth

Service providers also reported a lack of supports for youth and their families. There are not enough supports to help keep children and youth from getting caught up in the justice system and further alienating them from their families and communities.

For young offenders and young persons – where do they go? There aren't facilities here for kids to go to that are sentenced. They go to AYOOC, nothing regional. [F01, p.7]

I think there aren't enough lawyers. If you go to the Youth Defense they have a lot of services, but a lot of young people don't even get that far. They have some Duty Counsel here but that's not enough. While Duty Counsel is representing people in the court, youth might not be able to access them. [F02, p.8]

We've had young offenders under the School Act, and there isn't anyone for them to talk to. They may only have the person from the department talking to them, and they might not have their best interests at heart. The parent and children would really benefit from having someone to talk to about what's happening. [F02, p.8]

LAA does offer a number of services for at-risk youth in Edmonton and area that are provided in collaboration with other legal and social services:

- Just Us Girls, a program to help young mothers 12 to 24 years of age in trouble with the law.
- The Youth Restorative Action Project.
- The 2010 Urban Games in Edmonton, a sporting/education/job fair for street-connected youth.

LAA also has support services provided through its social workers (alternately called Client Resource Workers, Youth Workers or Family Resource Facilitators, depending upon the staff law office they are located in). For more information on any of these services, see 2009 and 2010 [News Releases](#). These are viable options for referrals for urban service providers, but not for those in rural areas.

5.1.3 Enhanced Services for Aboriginal Peoples

Service providers reported that, although earning the trust is a challenge for existing Aboriginal serving agencies, there is still room for additions and improvement to the types of services that are offered.

If you need Family Court services and you're not near an NCSA office, you often don't get that help. That's a huge gap. Family court issues are huge. We can provide support for people before they're apprehended, but often times people come too late. [F03, p2]

I still think Hinton is very transient. Most of the local stuff is mischief, but repetition, the same kids doing the same things over and over. Breach charges, above anything else, are the most common ... Without being prejudiced, there should be a separate Aboriginal program for breaches, because right now they just aren't going ... Yeah, they used to have sentencing circles tied to it but not anymore. [F01 p.3].

Alberta has only 5 providers of Aboriginal court services;

- Yellowhead,
- T'su Tina
- Siksika,
- Kainai, and
- NCSA.

In Hinton and area, there is a need for PLEI as well as legal services to be provided in Aboriginal languages, as so many Aboriginal people in this area have never learned English.

My clients are all mandated so they're on probation and the judges ordered that they attend addiction service. Personally there is a high Aboriginal population that I'm meeting with and just recently I've encountered some language barriers particularly around Aboriginal culture and their language. Luckily I've had people volunteering to do translating. We're getting through it, but it would be helpful if there was somewhere for them to access so they could get proper wrap-around services. [F01, p.1]

5.1.4 Services for New Canadians

There are services available to new Canadians in this District, however there is an identified need to reach out to new Canadians and provide basic legal education on a pro-active basis.

We're inundated with requests from immigrant associations and people who want us to give introductions to Canadian law and give education about the whole process. We only have a certain amount of money to use so there's not a lot of funding for that education. [F02, p.5]

For instance, PLEI needs to be written in very plain English; at a lower level than most resources are currently written. There are services such as the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Catholic Social Services that have useful print material, but it was suggested that they need enhanced funding to increase their capacity to produce and disseminate these materials.

The Alberta Law Libraries have already begun providing general informational sessions in the Edmonton and Calgary Public libraries (these sessions are advertised in the Metro in advance). They also provide general overviews of the Law Libraries and what they have to offer that are specifically for New Canadians. These overviews are currently offered in English and French. In Edmonton, Law Library staff maintain an internal database of courthouse staff who speak various languages so they can access them if translation is needed. There are plans under way to begin providing general information sessions in German and Spanish as well. In addition to helping facilitate the increased production and wider circulation of print material, funders could look at facilitating increased information sessions that are tailored for this population and delivered in highly accessible venues such as public libraries.

5.2 Challenges in Filling the Gaps

5.2.1 Lack of Funding and Resources

As has been mentioned throughout this Report, the current provincial government hiring freeze has resulted in severe staff shortages for legal services across this District. Rural providers spoke about the freeze with more urgency, as they had fewer staff to begin with. Often, if just one person goes on leave or resigns their position, they are cutting the staff complement by a third or even half. Additionally, there are not as many alternative non-government options to refer individuals to for assistance.

The recent changes to LAA (see Section 3.4.1) were the source of the most glaring gap and the most mentioned challenge to meeting public needs. There is a perception among legal service providers (as seen in ALSMP Focus Groups as well as other justice community meetings in the Edmonton area that Forum staff have attended in 2010) that more people are getting sent to Duty Counsel by LAA, rather than being offered certificate services, and that Duty Counsel cannot keep up with current demand or anticipated increases in demand unless their services are expanded. LAA representatives report that this is not actually happening and, because the changes to LAA are so recent, it is far too soon to be able to examine these claims by referring to service statistics.

There is also the perception among service providers that the Legal Services Centre answers fewer calls and does not address the same range of legal needs as the Alberta Law Line. LAA reports that there was a temporary reduction in phone line capacity for a two week period during the transition to the Legal Services Centre but that there should be no ongoing difference in services.

The most significant fears and frustrations expressed by service providers relate to a perceived general lack of options to refer members of the public to who are in the middle income category, thus do not qualify financially for Legal Aid. Additionally, there is frustration and some confusion about the limitations on civil matters which the well-known organizations such as LAA, SLS and the ECLC can offer legal advice and representation for.

6.0 IMPROVING LEGAL SERVICE DELIVERY

There is much that is already being done well in this District in terms of improving the accessibility of legal services. This Section will examine:

- Legal services that received praise,
- public legal education and information (PLEI),
- service provider relationships, and
- creative formal and informal initiatives.

6.1 Good Practices to Build On

Participants highlighted specific existing legal services as well as PLEI provision as examples of what is going well in the Edmonton Judicial District.

6.1.1 Legal Services that Received Praise for their Responsiveness

There were a number of services in the Edmonton area that were praised by service providers for the quality of service they provide. The Court Registry was mentioned as having staff who are competent, efficient and responsive to individuals' needs.

We're lucky to have the Clerks that we've got. From what I get in the other areas... they don't get the help that I get from [them]. [F01, p.10]

Feedback on the Edmonton LInC is glowing from all quarters. In addition to the focus group participants, the judiciary as well as Queen's Bench and Provincial Court representatives all praised this service.

Probably about a quarter of the people we see are members of the public who are representing themselves. We're very fortunate that LInC is around now, if people don't know what to fill out or what to do we refer them there. LInC has also been helping us with some Surrogate files. That's one area we probably lack in. Legal Aid really doesn't help people on Surrogate matters. Unless we help them in our office, where we can't give legal advice, there really isn't much help for people in those matters. Other than that and I think I speak for everyone on the QB side, LInC has been wonderful. They help them prepare their documents which makes our lives much simpler. [F02, p.4]

For Queen's Bench, having FLIC as well as LInC is just great. We can't express how useful they are and how fortunate we are to have them. [F02, p.11]

FJS, Family Court Workers and Duty Counsel were also all noted for providing quality service and helping alleviate the workload for other services. NCSA was also praised for the support they offer to individuals.

NCSA. The court worker program is great. The court workers are greatly respected in each of their areas. Family, youth, criminal and probation. Almost to the point where some of the judges respect them as much as the lawyers in the courtroom. To me that's huge, and it creates an opportunity for Aboriginal justice program that isn't mainstream and is uniquely ours but is as respected. [F03, p.5]

Rural service providers also spoke positively about the responsiveness and helpfulness of the RCMP. Finally, several Edmonton participants provided positive feedback about the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service.

P1: We have a huge landlord and tenant client base, so the Landlord and Tenant Resolution Board is very, very helpful.
P2: We use that as well.
P3: Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution has taken a huge burden off the court. It has made the court list come down quite a bit. You got people who are satisfied with it, but there are still that odd percent who don't like it. More often than not it's great though.
P4: It does speed things up a great deal.
P5: And it's cheaper. [F01, p.11-12, 5 Ps]

6.1.2 Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI)

There are many sources of PLEI, particularly in the city of Edmonton. In order to capture all of these providers and the topics of PLEI that are offered, Table 17 provides a summary of the legal and related services that disseminate PLEI for each of the four main areas of law. It is beyond the scope and capacity of this Project to examine all the PLEI that each service offers, however, based on Internet research and information provided by the participants we interviewed, we have compiled lists of topics that are commonly covered by existing PLEI.

**Table 17 –
Services That Offer PLEI by Area of Law**

Areas of Law	PLEI Providers	Topics
Administrative	Alberta Appeals Secretariat Alberta Children & Youth Services Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre Alberta Courts Alberta Law Libraries Alberta Superintendent of Pensions Alberta Workers Health Centre ASSIST Community Services Center Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta Canadian Bar Association – Alberta Child & Youth Advocate Civil Liberties Research Centre Dial-A-Law (Calgary Legal Guidance) Edmonton Community Legal Centre Edmonton John Howard Society Edmonton Public Library Environment Family & Community Support Services Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Services Hinton Municipal Library Justice & Attorney General Legal Aid Alberta (through the Legal Services Centre and Siksika Nation Legal Aid Office) Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd. Municipal Affairs Native Counselling Services of Alberta Queen's Printer Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service Seniors & Community Supports Service Alberta	Civil liberties and human rights Financial benefits (appeals) Forms Insurance regulations Legislation Licences, registration and permits Pensions Tenancy regulations
Civil	Alberta Arbitration & Mediation Society Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre Alberta Conflict Transformation Society Alberta Courts Alberta Insurance Council Alberta Law Libraries ASSIST Community Services Center Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta Better Business Bureau – Alberta Canadian Bar Association – Alberta Catholic Social Services Child & Youth Advocate	Child maintenance Civil liberties & human rights Credit Consumer rights Debt management Employment standards Fine options Guardianship Homeless rights Human rights Immigration

	<p>Civil Liberties Research Centre Dial-A-Law (Calgary Legal Guidance) Edmonton Community Legal Centre Edmonton Immigrant Services Association Edmonton John Howard Society Edmonton Public Library Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Services Hinton Municipal Library John Humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights Justice & Attorney General Landlord & Tenant Advisory Board Legal Aid Alberta (through the Legal Services Centre and Siksika Nation Legal Aid Office) Legal Resources Centre of Alberta Ltd. Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre Mennonite Centre for Newcomers Metro Continuing Education Native Counselling Services of Alberta Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton Seniors & Community Supports Service Alberta St Albert Municipal Enforcement Student Legal Services of Edmonton Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women</p>	<p>Income support Landlord & tenant rights Mediation/Arbitration Power of attorney Real estate law Rights and citizenship/freedoms and responsibilities Self-representation Seniors Settlement Small claims Temporary foreign workers Traffic violations Wills, personal directives, Wills and estate law</p>
Criminal	<p>A Safe Place: A Shelter for Abused Women Alberta Conflict Transformation Society Alberta Courts Alberta Health Services Alberta Law Libraries ASSIST Community Services Centre Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta Canadian Bar Association – Alberta Changing Together – A Centre for Immigrant Women Child & Youth Advocate Community Corrections Dial-A-Law (Calgary Legal Guidance) Edmonton Community Legal Centre Edmonton Immigrant Services Association Edmonton John Howard Society</p>	<p>Abuse laws Abuse of seniors Arrest warrants Assault Breaches Child abuse Child sexual exploitation Controlled substances Court procedures, processes, terminology Diversion Driving offences Drug abuse Elder abuse Family violence Identity theft</p>

	<p>Edmonton Police Service Edmonton Public Library Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Enforcement Hinton Friendship Centre Justice & Attorney General Legal Aid Alberta (through the Legal Services Centre, Siksika Nation Legal Aid Office and the Youth Criminal Defense Office) Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd. Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre Native Counselling Services of Alberta Royal Canadian Mounted Police – K Division Seniors & Community Supports Service Alberta Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton St. Albert Municipal Enforcement Student Legal Services of Edmonton Victim Services Units WINGS of Providence Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women Youth Emergency Shelter Society YWCA Zebra Child Protection Centre</p>	<p>Immigrants Impaired driving Persons in care (rights) Prostitution Release conditions Restorative justice Restraining orders, peace bonds, no contact orders Sentencing Sexual assault Sexual harassment Theft Trespass Victim education and support Youth records</p>
Family	<p>A Safe Place: A Shelter for Abused Women Alberta Arbitration & Mediation Society Alberta Children & Youth Services Alberta Courts Alberta Health Services Alberta Law Libraries ASSIST Community Services Centre Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta Canadian Bar Association – Alberta Changing Together – A Centre for Immigrant Women Child & Youth Advocate Dial-A-Law (Calgary Legal Guidance) Edmonton Community Legal Centre Edmonton Immigrant Services Association Edmonton John Howard Society Edmonton Police Service Edmonton Public Library Family Justice Services</p>	<p>Access/contact Adult interdependent relationships Child protection/welfare Child custody Children at risk Divorce Domestic/Family violence Emergency Protection Orders (EPO) Getting married Maintenance (child support and spousal support) Matrimonial property Mediation/Arbitration Parenting rights & responsibilities</p>

	Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Enforcement Hinton Friendship Centre Hinton Municipal Library Justice & Attorney General Legal Aid Alberta (through Central Alberta Law Office, Family Law Office, Legal Service Centre and Siksika Nation Legal Aid Office) Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd. Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre Metro Continuing Education Native Counselling Services of Alberta Service Alberta Student Legal Services of Edmonton Yellowhead Emergency Shelter Society YM/YWCA Zebra Child Protection Centre	Separation Variation of Court Orders
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In this Report we focus on the organizations and services that are major providers of PLEI to residents of the Edmonton Judicial District, as determined by service mandates and participant feedback. Information about these services has been obtained from their websites and print material and in some cases interviews with representatives.

Alberta Justice

Multiple key services that provide PLEI are overseen by Alberta Justice.

1. Detailed in Section 3.4.3, the LInC’s primary objective is to provide PLEI, particularly about criminal and civil legal matters. While staff cannot give legal advice, they can distribute print PLEI and help individuals find online information and legal forms. They can also help individuals understand court processes.
2. The FLIC (as described in Section 3.4.5) offers PLEI about:
 - child custody/access,
 - child support and Federal child support guidelines,
 - opposing family law applications in Court of Queen’s Bench,
 - spousal support, and
 - variation of Court of Queen’s Bench Orders,

FLIC provides online and hardcopy resources (eg. links to court forms) related to;

- Alberta Judgments,
- Alberta Maintenance Enforcement Program,
- Alberta Rules of Court and Alberta Practice Notes,
- Federal *Child Support Guidelines* and *Child Support Tables*,
- FAQs,

- glossary of legal terms, and
- statutes.

FLIC also provides booklets that include court forms and instructions related to family law matters. These include:

- Court forms under the *Family Law Act*
- *Family Law Act* Application Kits
- Forms and Instructions for applications under the *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act*
- Procedure Booklets under the *Divorce Act*
- Other miscellaneous court forms

Key legislation that can be accessed via FLIC are:

- *Divorce Act* (http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm)
- *Family Law Act* (http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm)
- Federal Child Support Guidelines/Child Support Tables
- *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act*
(<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/familylaw/iso/iso.htm>)

3. In addition to information provided through the FLIC, FJS also offers a variety of PLEI through the **Family Court Counsellors** and **Intake Assistance Program**. Topics dealt with are:

- child contact,
- contact orders,
- enforcement of contact/access orders,
- grandparent contact,
- guardianship, and
- parenting orders.

The following online resources are provided:

- Downloadable Family Justice Services Brochure (<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/cs/familyjustice/MediationServices.pdf>).
- Downloadable brochure on highlights of Alberta's *Family Law Act* (<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/cs/familyjustice/FamilyLawAct.pdf>).
- Downloadable Overview of Alberta's *Family Law Act* (<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/cs/familyjustice/FLAOverview.pdf>).

The *Family Law Act* is the main legislation referred to and the target audiences are parents and grandparents.

4. The Ministry provides PLEI through its Justice Education Speakers Centre related to:

- Aboriginal, civil, constitutional and criminal law,
- being a judge,
- corrections / probation/courts,
- cyber crime and Internet safety,
- family law in Alberta,
- maintenance enforcement,
- medical examiner,
- prosecuting a criminal case,
- policing and security,
- Public Trustee,
- role of defence lawyers,
- victim services, and
- young offenders.

The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are provided on the website. This information is mainly targeted at children and youth as well as community organizations.

The Alberta Law Libraries

Alberta Law Libraries formed in 2009 through the amalgamation of Alberta Court Libraries with Alberta Law Society Libraries. Alberta Law Libraries provide services to the judiciary, members of the Bar, Crown prosecutors, Justice Department employees, self-represented litigants and the public. In 2009/10 Alberta Law Libraries in Edmonton provided information to answer 6,194 reference and research questions, 2,841 of which were asked by self represented litigants and members of the public.

Alberta Law Libraries are located in court houses and provincial buildings throughout the province and are accessible to members of the public in the following communities:

Banff	Fort Saskatchewan	Peace River
Calgary	Grande Prairie	Red Deer
Camrose	High Level	St. Albert
Canmore	High Prairie	St. Paul
Drumheller	Hinton	Sherwood Park
Edmonton	Leduc	Stony Plain
Edson	Lethbridge	Vermilion
Fort McMurray	Medicine Hat	Wetaskiwin

The Libraries exist to help Albertans navigate the legal information landscape. A team of legal information professionals work collaboratively to meet the needs of clients in every region of Alberta. Alberta Law Libraries provide expert legal research services to the judiciary, Crown and Justice employees. Members of the public and self-represented litigants are guided to reliable sources of legal information without being given legal

advice. Access to legal research assistance and the Libraries' collections is provided to all Albertans free of charge.

The libraries are actively engaged in educating clients on the effective identification and use of reliable legal information sources, both print and electronic, as well as information on the Canadian justice system. In-person seminars, tours and library orientations are offered regularly and a number of research guides and online tutorials are being made available. Alberta Law Libraries also works with other organizations to provide legal information workshops and presentations to members of the public.

Alberta Law Libraries provide Albertans with access to an impressive array of electronic legal research tools and a vast print collection. When the information needed cannot be supplied by the libraries, they will obtain it on behalf of the client or will refer them to the appropriate agency.

The Alberta Law Libraries were spoken about very favourably by other service providers. The only concern expressed was that members of the public cannot currently sign out materials, so they must complete their reviews of information at the library or copy all the material they may need. However, library staff are currently exploring the possibility of having a selection of resources that are targeted for the public and can actually be loaned out.

More information on Alberta Law Libraries' collections and services can be found on their website at www.lawlibrary.ab.ca.³⁸

Edmonton Community Legal Centre

Described in Section 3.4.4, the ECLC is one of the key providers of free legal services in Edmonton. Through in-person and print material, the ECLC provides PLEI on topics such as:

- Debt
- Employment / wrongful dismissal
- Immigration
- Income support advocacy
- Human rights
- Landlord and tenant
- Small claims
- Wills
- Work permits

For the most part, clients who are not booked for a clinic appointment were either beyond income guidelines, had a legal problem that was not a civil matter, or did not have a legal problem and were referred to an appropriate community agency. All clients who are not booked for a clinic appointment are given information and referral to an

³⁸ The Alberta Law Libraries website is currently being updated and current information about the services offered was provided for this Report by representatives.

appropriate community, legal services agency, or lawyer referral service. The ECLC does not provide assistance with or PLEI for family or criminal matters.

Government of Alberta

In addition to Alberta Justice, we mapped departments of the Government of Alberta that also provide relevant PLEI.

1. **Alberta Health Services** provides PLEI through the Child and Adolescent Protection Program (CAP). CAP provides education for professionals about how to recognize and respond to child abuse.

2. **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)** offers information about disabilities, financial assistance and personal health benefits. AISH provides a variety of tip sheets:
 - AISH Facts
 - Eligibility for AISH
 - Applying for AISH
 - Treatment of Income and Assets
 - AISH Health Benefits
 - AISH Personal Benefits
 - Employment Income
 - Employment Supports
 - Living in a Facility
 - Reporting Changes
 - Appealing a Decision
 - Overpayments and Debts
 - Terms used by AISH

AISH also provides an Online Policy Manual (http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/aish/PolicyManual/AISH_Online_Policy_Manual.htm), as well as access to information about the *Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act and Regulations*. This PLEI is intended for individuals over the age of 18 with disabilities that substantially limits their ability to earn living.

3. **Finance and Enterprise – Alberta Superintendent of Pensions** provides online documents to assist Albertans understand their pension plans or locked-in accounts and the relevant laws.
 - a. Accessing Pension Funds (http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/pensions/pdf/info_accessing_pension_funds.pdf).
 - b. Forms (<http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/pensions/forms.html>)

This PLEI is intended for pensions administrators as well as members of the public and as based on legislation resulting from the *Employment Pension Plans Act (EPPA)*

http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=e08.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779737055).

4. **Seniors and Community Supports - Protection for Persons in Care** provides online and print PLEI brochures about abuse and seniors, as it related to hospitals, nursing homes and seniors lodges.

This information is based on *The Protection of Persons in Care Act* (http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=P29P1.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779745609) and is primarily intended for seniors as well as health care providers.

John Howard Society of Edmonton

The JHS **Public Legal Education** program aims to promote a better understanding of the criminal justice system and the consequences of breaking the law. This program provides educational presentations for grades 1 through 12. These presentations are designed to be age appropriate, student-centered and relevant to the student's school and home experiences and are available to Edmonton and surrounding areas. They are free of charge, however, JHS will accept an honorarium. Educators are also available to present current, accurate and relevant information on aspects of the Criminal Justice System in a community setting.

Presentations are delivered by a team of highly qualified Criminal Justice Educators whose backgrounds include youth work, corrections and instructional development.

Elementary Education Programs:

- Grade 1: Cooperation and Sharing
Discussion, story and video
- Grade 2: Responsibility
Discussion, story, video and a craft
- Grade 3: Communicating Emotions
Discussion, PowerPoint, story and video
- Grade 4: Rules and Laws
Discussion, activity and video
- Grade 5 & 6: Youth Criminal Justice Act
Discussion, PowerPoint, student workbooks and video

Junior High and Senior High Education presentations include a discussion with PowerPoint, student materials and video. The focus is on the following:

- Basic Principles of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*
- Legal Rights
- Diversion
- Sentences
- Youth Records

Teachers receive a support package to facilitate follow-up discussion. There are also Online Teaching Resources that have been developed to support rural teachers and extend Social Studies, Health, C.A.L.M., and Legal Studies instruction relating to the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, Drugs, Family Violence, Bullying, and Gangs.

Legal Aid Alberta

LAA's PLEI activities have included the development and publication of PLEI materials online and in hard copy (including the Family Law Handbook, which received an Honourable Mention from PLENA), workshops and other PLEI sessions, and do-it-yourself clinics (eg. in dependent adult matters and in family law). LAA's PLEI covers topics in:

- family law, including child welfare and divorce,
- criminal and youth justice,
- immigration and refugee matters, and
- areas of civil law, including housing, income support, debt, employment matters, human rights and Wills & estates.

Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd. (LRC)

The LRC is a major provider of PLEI to residents in this District. The LRC provides general information to members of the public from Edmonton and surrounding communities who call in with questions. PLEI is also provided via print material and a variety of topic-specific websites.

1. **LawNow** is a legal magazine that is published in hardcopy and electronically on a bi-monthly basis. LawNow provides legal information that is intended to help individuals make informed legal decisions that impact their personal and professional lives.
2. **Landlord and Tenant Information and Services** (<http://www.landlordandtenant.org/splash.aspx>) is a website that provides information about applicable laws that both landlords and tenants must abide by in Alberta.
3. **ACJNet Alberta** (<http://www.acjnet.org/alink/about.aspx>) is a website that the LRC created in 1999 in collaboration with Alberta Justice. It includes a legal services directory called *A-Link* that is intended to serve as a directory for professionals to use in order to make referrals to other legal services and resources in Alberta. Services in 24 communities across the province are mapped and categorized according to: North, Central, South or Calgary and Area.
4. **Legal FAQs Canada** (http://www.law-faqs.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page) was created by the LRC in 1994. Legal facts are organized according to Federally or provincially relevant information (Alberta only). This site is updated as new questions become common, issues arise or laws change. Topics cross all areas of law.

5. **Oak-Net** (<http://www.oak-net.org/index.html>) is a website that was developed in 2002 and funded by the Alberta Law Foundation. This site is a source of legal information for elderly people and addresses issues commonly faced, including:
 - Elder abuse
 - Fraud
 - Grandparent's Rights
 - Powers of Attorney
 - Wills

6. **ROSENET** (<http://www.rosenet-ca.org/index.html>) is a website that was developed in 2005 in partnership with Changing Together: Centre for Immigrant Women. It is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation and the Alberta Human Rights Education fund and provides information about Canadian laws as they relate to domestic violence and specific issues faced by immigrant women.

7. **VIOLET** (<http://www.violetnet.org/>) is a website that was developed in 1998 in partnership with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and funded by Status of Women Canada and the Office of Learning Technologies. This site provides basic facts about the law as it applies to abused women in Canada.

8. **Training and Presentation Programs** - Staff present training sessions at teacher's conventions, library meetings, law-related conferences, and for special groups such as the staff from women's shelters across Alberta. The topic and approach of each session is tailored to the specific group. LRC gives a limited number of workshops each year for teachers, librarians and other information and service providers. Custom workshops may be available upon request on the following topics:
 - How to locate legal materials on the web
 - Seniors and the law
 - Planning for the future: Wills, personal directives, powers of attorney
 - Law for landlords and tenants
 - Public Legal Education theory and practice
 - Social networking for public legal educators

Availability of workshops is dependent on availability of staff and resources.

Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)

NCSA is described in detail in Section 3.4.6, however NCSA does offer a department which focuses on the provision of culturally relevant information, including PLEI.

Bearpaw Media Productions (BMP) is a department within NCSA that has been producing easy-to-understand educational resources for, about and with Native people since 1976. BMP employs Aboriginal producers, directors, actors, musicians, technicians and consultants to ensure the Aboriginal lifestyle, culture and traditions are

clearly expressed throughout their productions. BMP covers a wide range of topic areas including: legal information, crime prevention, justice, health, addictions, money management and social issues. Videos are competitively priced and intended to appeal to a cross-cultural audience. Over the years, they have proven suitable for use in classrooms, training, seminars, conferences and workshops.

As a subcomponent of Bearpaw Media Productions, the mission of the **Bearpaw Legal Education and Resource Centre** (formerly the Alberta Aboriginal Resource Centre) is to be a leading resource for information, education, culture and recreation, contributing to life-long learning, and adapted to a holistic development of the Aboriginal individual, family and community.

The Bearpaw Legal Education and Resource Centre was created to promote awareness of the legal rights and obligations of Aboriginal people living in Alberta and to enhance Aboriginal peoples' connection and access to justice. Their goals are to contribute to the legal education and knowledge of the Aboriginal people of Alberta and provide programs and facilities for these purposes; to increase NCSA's capacity for the collection, translation, facilitation and distribution of legal information; to create a central clearinghouse of accessible, user-friendly legal education resources for Aboriginal people in Alberta; and to increase the legal resources available to Aboriginal people in Alberta through a targeted, multi-method distribution strategy.

BearPaw Education offers public legal education and information specifically designed by and for Aboriginal people, focusing on areas of the law that are of special significance to Aboriginal people. They offer workshops and a website with links to legal information and resources, downloads, legal education videos, informational brochures and fact sheets, and research and publications on pertinent legal topics.

The following are examples of the workshops that Bearpaw Legal Education and Resource Centre creates and facilitates in communities across Alberta that address commonly faced legal needs. Each program is designed to work within NCSA's mission statement. Examples of workshops include:

a) Breach and Administration of Justice Charges

This workshop explains the many types of pre-sentence release conditions (requirement to appear on court dates, report to the police, curfews, etc.), the importance of following such conditions and the consequences of not following them. A short video is viewed during the presentation and each participant is given a copy of a *Breach* comic book.

b) Parenting - Legal Rights and Responsibilities

The target audience for this workshop is youth from the ages of 12 to mid-20's who are parents or parents-to-be. This workshop highlights the legal rights and responsibilities that come with having children, including financial responsibilities during pregnancy, the naming and registering of children, access to treaty rights,

parenting and contact rights upon separation and various financial resources that are available. The AALEC has also prepared and printed a 30-page *Aboriginal Parenting Handbook* that is given to all workshop participants.

c) Landlord and Tenant Rights

This workshop highlights the legal rights and responsibilities of tenants and the expectations of landlords that come with moving into, residing in and moving out of a rental property. After the workshop, a checklist brochure is given to workshop participants. The target audience is anyone currently renting or seeking rental accommodations.

d) Traffic Violations: A Guide to Driving Offences

This workshop explains the various types of traffic violations and their respective consequences as well as the difference between parts 2 and 3 of a violation ticket and the Traffic Court process. It also explores the Graduated Driver's License Program. This workshop is accompanied by a fun-yet-informative short video on the consequences of receiving a traffic violation ticket. The target audience is high school students and other new drivers.

e) The A-B-C's of the *Child, Youth & Family Enhancement Act*

This workshop helps participants navigate their way through Children's Services and explores the legal rights, programs and resources available to families. The target audience is frontline family support workers and families who are involved with or at risk of becoming involved with Children's Services.

f) Identity Theft

This workshop explains what exactly identity theft is and how to protect against it, as well as what victims can do. The Identity Theft workshop features a short docu-drama on the subject as well as an Identity Theft Bingo game for participants to play. The target audience is seniors and anyone else wishing to become better informed about this serious crime.

Student Legal Services of Edmonton (SLS)

SLS is described in Section 3.4.8. Through the **Legal Education and Reform Project**, its major PLEI arm, SLS promotes legal outreach by providing legal information to the general public in a way that makes the legal system more accessible and serves the needs of the low income community in a holistic manner. The Legal Education & Reform Project has three main areas of focus:

- **Community Outreach:** Outreach throughout the City of Edmonton is a central aspect of the Legal Education & Reform Project. SLS staff meet people where they are - at community centres, cooperatives and gathering

places where they feel welcomed and safe.

- **Legal Reform:** Legal reform focuses on areas of law that can be changed, adapted or created in order to protect the rights of the underprivileged. SLS staff research municipal bylaws, Provincial statutes and even Federal legislation, and actively advocate for changes in laws that are unfair or unjust.
- **Legal Education:** The Legal Education Project is concerned with informing the public about specific areas of law, the general functions of the justice system and how to navigate and understand our legal system. SLS provides legal education through Lectures, Mock Trials and Summer Law Camps.

SLS provides PLEI in-person, as well as via their website and print materials. SLS reported producing 32 brochures and handouts in 2009.

University of Alberta – Faculty of Extension

This faculty offers law courses that include contract law and construction documents, municipal law, environmental law, conflict of laws, planning law. These courses are available in the daytime, evening and online. The U of A also partners in the production of the LawNow magazine (described above under the Legal Resource Centre).

Gaps in PLEI Provision

There are great strides being made in the Edmonton Judicial District in the production and dissemination of PLEI, but there is still a need for more proactive efforts to educate service providers as well as members of the public about the justice system, processes and available services.

Education for self represented litigants is important, but also very important for people who have lawyers. [F02, p.9]

We see a lot of people that would have been well served with a little bit of education about what the legal system is and what it can do for you before things break down. It would be a huge asset and would take a lot of the burden off of the system. [F02, p.9]

Service providers felt that PLE is an important part of increasing public understanding and should be part of the school curriculum. The Legal Resource Centre offers a program aimed at high school leavers, as well as a website called ABC LawNet (<http://www.abclawnet.ca/abc/default.aspx>) that is dedicated to providing information to students and teachers and school presentations that are conducted by lawyers. The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre also provides PLEI materials as well as training for teachers in Alberta. However, service providers felt that still more effort needs to be made to reach and educate students; to make legal education a regular part of the

school curriculum. The importance of public libraries as sources of PLEI was also noted. Service providers felt that they should be used more as means of reaching the public. Advertising on public transportation was also suggested as a means of relaying important information about resources and basic legal information.

What about advertising on buses and so on, things like “are you in a dispute with your landlord?” or “do you need information about first time renting?”. That costs money, but maybe some funding from Alberta Law Foundation for a targeted ad like that could be useful. [F02, p.14]

Specific topics that were identified as being inadequately covered were:

- Legal needs commonly faced by Aboriginal peoples (Section 4.2.2).
- Very plain language resources for new Canadians relating to domestic violence, human rights, residency requirements, work permits and child protection (Section 4.2.1).
- The laws pertaining to common-law relationships.
- Debt (personal and small business).
- The laws relating to accidents and injuries.

6.1.3 Service Provider Relationships

Patterns of referrals to a core group of providers, is present in the Edmonton Judicial District just as it has been in previously mapped districts. ECLC and LAA were most commonly mentioned in the referral scenarios that interview participants responded to, but participants were limited in the range of services they knew about. Representatives of administrative tribunals in particular expressed a need to give referrals, but had very limited knowledge of potential sources of legal or social support assistance. Even private lawyers reported that other legal services are inaccurately referring people to them; in some cases legal services that specialize in making referrals.

One of the major ones is the Alberta Law Line [Legal Services Centre]. Even they refer people here for legal matters we don't help with. We'll get some from Student Legal Services. Social workers (social assistance office, the hospitals). LInC people are great and tend to know what we do. Other lawyers. Temporary Workers Advisory Office. Catholic Social Services, the Mennonite Centre. Referrals from colleges (especially Norquest). We participate in the Homeless Connect, and get referrals from there. Legal Aid.

Identifying legal issues isn't easy, and for that reason it can be hard for people to send referrals to us. Other agencies see their clients through their organization's perspective and may not see the kind of issues that we can help with. [10-08]

6.1.4 Networking

Networking and collaboration in the Hinton area stood out as being especially strong, and rural service providers were clearly very eager to talk and express their views.

We have a great relationship with probation right now. A really solid understanding of boundaries as far as what we can provide in reporting and what she can get out of. The probation officer here is alone and manages a lot, so the person from Edson comes in and helps out a little bit. [F01, p.10]

We have a family mediator from Edmonton (judicial dispute resolution) that helps out as well. Good working relationships with Children's Services as well. [F01, p.10]

Criminal and civil sides aren't talking to each other – in order to change one order there's a whole process and then different processes along the way. It takes time and effort and it's hard to keep down a job if you're going through it. [F02, p.4]

I think we're lucky because we do know Legal Aid and Native Counseling. We work well with each other. Where there are links there's good communication there. [F01, p.10]

In Stony Plain ... we have a group that includes the Judges, the Sheriffs, Native Counselling, the Crown, Legal Aid, the Defence Bar. And when I say Sheriffs, it should be Sheriffs/RCMP. I don't know if you know but we now have a provincial police force called the Sheriffs but no one's ever told anybody this. And court staff. And we meet about once every three months It's great, and we're the only ones that do it for twenty years in a criminal lawyer's practice never would the defence lawyers ever be invited So, the Crown will talk to the Police. The Crown will talk to the Judges. They'll all meet together with the Sheriffs, but they'd never talk to us - we don't even exist. We have no input whatsoever, and now, last year, and this came from judges - certain judges. They said, "Why don't we do this? If we don't talk to them, how do we know what they think?" So, they asked us, for the first time ever, to come and have meetings with them. And, of course, because we've always been the ones that never got to come, and we're always excluded, we are very sensitive to any other groups that were being excluded. So, we said, "If you're going to invite us finally, why wouldn't you invite everybody who has a stake in what goes on?" So, that's what we've done And so, it's fantastic. [081-09-L02]

The pattern of their feedback and conversations during the meeting suggest that more opportunities are necessary for them to share their experiences and feedback. More challenges were identified in Edmonton, however the urban services providers reported positive feelings and experiences about the other services they do connect with. Both rural and urban service providers indicated a need for increased understanding of what services are actually able to do, and their capacity to do it.

Agencies need to educate themselves. I find there's a lack, kind of an apathy, when it comes to getting their staff to get information that's already out there. There's a lot of closed door mentality, a lot of agencies don't want to share because of funding. Everyone is a little guarded. It's a justified fear right now, given the funding situation My experience, however, has been that when we call up an agency and ask to do a presentation they are quite receptive. When an agency takes the initiative to do things like that it's welcomed. If we notice something coming up we should be the ones to take initiative and present.

Coordination of services between government and non-government services would be good. Legal Aid scaled back their services in family so severely – if we could use their lawyers through a partnership it would be great. It's in discussion but there are a lot of levels of bureaucrats. It's also a funding issue. [F01, p.13]

The problem is that the networking is for specific groups. It's not as often for legal groups. There isn't a large cohort of poverty law groups. We had been trying to publish a newsletter The intention is to share within the legal poverty law community legal developments and resources I think so many of the agencies are focused on how many clients are coming in the door and serving them that we could do a better job of informing each other and keeping each other updated. If we lost our intake person, for instance, we would be lost because the contacts would be lost as well. The agency can know about us, but it comes down to the individual staff and relationships. There needs to be better communication between the clinics in Red Deer, Edmonton and Calgary. [10-02]

They should have mental health and alcohol and drug abuse counsellors available in courts everyday for every docket. But that's never going to happen. And, again, I'll just give you a quick example. It makes no sense for me to be in court and have someone talk to me who I clearly can tell after doing this for twenty years has some mental problems or has some clearly drug abuse problems. And I can tell them, "this is what you should do, and here's where you should go." But, in a half hour, I'm walking out the door, and I'm not going to talk to them again. And, anybody who knows people in that situation knows that they have a hard time dealing with anything ... anything. To think that they're going to be able to struggle their way through and get to the mental health professionals or the alcohol professionals, it just doesn't happen. It happens in smaller communities, or in smaller towns, where they know where the A.A. and AADAC is, but in Edmonton, it doesn't happen. Legal Aid ... after twenty years, they put an office in the courthouse. Like, why they didn't do that twenty years ago, I'll never know. Great idea, right? I used to always say, "go see Legal Aid." Well, now I can say, "Go see Legal Aid - they're right there." So why isn't that next office mental health? Why isn't the next office A.A. I don't understand that. Cause the government won't pay for it, that's why. [081-09-L02]

PLEdge is Edmonton's PLEI network, which has been in existence for approximately five years. The Legal Resource Centre and LAA (Legal Services Centre) were founding members. Additional members include: Alberta Justice, Alberta Law Libraries, the ECLC, LAA (Family Law Office and Youth Criminal Defense Office), LInC, NCSA, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and SLS.

6.2 Creative Approaches to Meeting Needs

One member of the judiciary reported an innovative approach to increasing capacity.

Well, I can tell you one thing that we have done in ... Provincial Court, Family and Youth Division What's difficult, often, is we double and triple book trials because, inevitably, one of them will settle before court, or something will happen that they need to adjourn the trial And, sometimes, all three of them ... are ready to go, and it's very disappointing for the litigants if they've got their witnesses there and the matter cannot go ahead. What we've been doing for a number of years, among our Bench, is if I'm in another courtroom where the two matters scheduled for trial have both settled, and by 10:00-10:30, I'm now free, they will move the extra bookings from that other courtroom into my courtroom, and I'll now hear them. And that's called a Duty Judge. And so we have that Duty Judge system, which operates morning and afternoon. It has been wonderful ... We're able to hear emergency apprehensions, or emergency applications that walk in everyday on a fairly expedited basis Instead of trying to get the litigants and the lawyers to change the way they approach it, we have now changed our approach The lawyers are aware of the fact that we're doing that - the litigants, probably not, but it is helping. That's made a big difference. [J03]

6.3 Creating Affordable Legal Advice & Representation

Unbundling legal services (also known as limited retainers) as well as the increased use of supervised paralegals, are both ideas that are being considered in the justice community to increase the availability of affordable legal services. Participants identified, for example, that this is already happening to a degree. LAA's new service approach actively moves towards unbundling and the increased use of paralegals.

6.3.1 Unbundling Legal Services

Service providers saw the usefulness of unbundling legal services, but there were again concerns about which parts of legal cases and which types of cases this approach will work for. Additionally, there were concerns that lawyers may be very reluctant to take on parts of cases because they cannot guarantee the quality of the work that has been done before or after they are involved. It was noted that a Limited Scope Retainers pilot

program, involving five lawyers especially trained by a California expert is underway in Edmonton in the Legal Services Centre of LAA.

6.3.2 Paralegals

Not much feedback was given in this District about the role for paralegals. There was, however, some support – with cautions about the need for proper training and supervision – for the increased use of paralegals. Representatives of administrative tribunals were particularly positive about the role that paralegals can play.

We would welcome [paralegals] with open arms. The more assistance that is available for people is a good thing. We can certainly see that an advocate can be just as effective as an attorney because it is an informal process. There are no rules of evidence, so it's not essential that someone be trained as a lawyer to present in front of these tribunals. [09-A04]

If you could get someone that could speak on behalf of someone that's fine, it doesn't have to be a lawyer, but it would still have to be someone who knows what they're doing. You don't want the blind leading the blind. A little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing. Things can get more complicated than they might need to be. They'd have to be well versed enough to avoid red herrings. Things like articling students, which are used now, are a good example of how [paralegal service is] useful. [09-A05]

I don't think it necessarily needs to be a lawyer. Even ACL assists families quite well in hearings. So, again, they've got more experience at going to hearings than a family does. So, I don't necessarily think it needs to be a lawyer. It's someone who sort of understands not just the process, but the program, as well. [09-A06]

Staff previously acting as Legal Aid Officers have been properly trained and are now supervised by the team lawyers to provide brief services in the Legal Services Centre. LAA has been using paralegals, under lawyer supervision, to provide some services for a number of years. For instance:

- for over eight years through its former Immigration Services Program, paralegals completed the PIFs and provided some brief services. (The paralegal services have been carried over to the Legal Services Centres in Calgary and Edmonton), and
- for over five years through Law Line and the Siksika Nation Legal Aid Office where paralegals called Legal Resource Agents provided legal information, assistance with forms and some brief services.

The former Law Line Legal Resource Agent positions are now in the Edmonton Legal Services Centre. As well, former Edmonton and Calgary Regional Office staff, the Legal Aid Officers, have been trained so that they can provide these kinds of paralegal services. Both of these former staff groups now comprise the new Legal Services

Centre paralegals. They provide legal information, assistance with document preparation, and other brief services as required.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations which follow have been developed from a combination of evidence and analysis. Findings have been based on the mapping of services; the perceptions and experiences of service providers; the observations of the Research Team; the experiences of Focus Group Participants and members of the public; and the knowledge of other research and models of successful service delivery.

The eleven Recommendations are designed to enhance legal service provision in the Edmonton Judicial District. These recommendations are summarized in Table 18, which is then followed by a more detailed discussion.

**Table 18 –
Recommendations for Improving Legal Service Delivery in Edmonton**

Recommendations	Reference Sections of the Report	How to Achieve the Recommendations	Justice Community Partners to Involve
Alberta Law Foundation			
Enhance PLEI for Aboriginal Peoples	2.1.2 4.2.2 6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a series of pamphlets addressing relevant topics. • Publish in Aboriginal languages. • Distribute to public services (eg. libraries) & social/health services. 	NCSA LRC
Enhance PLEI for people in Common-Law Relationships	6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish print material that specifically addresses laws as they apply to common-law unions. 	ECLC, LRC, or SLS
Enhance public knowledge about the law and legal rights/responsibilities related to accidents and injuries.	4.2 6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased distribution of print materials to key social and health services. • Facilitate public presentations at accessible venues such as libraries. 	ALL or LRC

Recommendations	Reference Sections of the Report	How to Achieve the Recommendations	Justice Community Partners to Involve
Enhance the accessibility of relevant PLEI for new Canadians	2.1.1 4.2.1 6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or facilitate wider distribution of a series of pamphlets addressing relevant topics. • Publish in relevant languages. • Distribute to immigrant serving agencies, libraries and social/health services. • Facilitate information sessions to be conducted at public venues such as libraries and immigrant serving agencies. 	ECLC, LRC or SLS
Enhance access to legal education and advice related to debt and bankruptcy (personal and small business).	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the provision of public presentations and limited legal advice sessions in accessible venues such as public libraries. 	LRC ECLC
Help build trust in Aboriginal Communities.	4.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all staff members in organizations for which ALF is a key funder have the opportunity to participate in cultural sensitivity training. • Dedicate staff within existing organizations to specialize in serving Aboriginal clients. • Provide incentives for Aboriginal peoples to complete training that will allow them to work in legal organizations (eg. as a Legal Assistant). • Train individuals who live in Aboriginal Communities to act as advocates. 	All Legal Services

Recommendations	Reference Sections of the Report	How to Achieve the Recommendations	Justice Community Partners to Involve
Alberta Justice			
Enhance capacity to provide PLEI and legal advice.	3.4.3 6.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a partnership between LInC and one Duty Counsel to coordinate regular legal clinics at LInC. 	LInC LAA
Expedite court processes.	7.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide JDR training for members of the judiciary. 	Alberta Courts
Enhance responsiveness to Aboriginal peoples in rural communities.	4.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a sentencing circle in Hinton. 	Alberta Justice
Establish a multi-service provincial building with social, legal & court services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider opportunity to co-locate services in the City of Edmonton 	
Legal Aid Alberta			
Separate consideration of the capacity & needs of rural & urban communities.	3.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Duty Counsel services. 	LAA

7.1.1 Recommendations for the Alberta Law Foundation to Consider

- 1) There is a need to **increase production of PLEI to address specific gaps in available resources**. As can be seen from Section 6.1.2, there is an admirable amount of work being done in the Edmonton area to increase the availability of quality PLEI. There remains a small number of specific gaps in PLEI that need to be addressed:
 - a. **Aboriginal Peoples**. As outlined in Section 4.2.2, Aboriginal peoples were identified as having specific legal needs which include:
 - i. Breaching probation

- ii. Child protection
- iii. Jay walking & littering tickets
- iv. Pardons - what they are, why they are useful & how to apply
- v. Public intoxication
- vi. Driving without a licence / unregistered cars

Service providers emphasized that Aboriginal peoples are reluctant to voluntarily address legal issues and that this is exacerbated, especially in the rural areas of the Edmonton Judicial District, by very high proportions of non-English speakers and low English literacy. There is some PLEI already available about the above legal needs that is targeted at the general public and not always widely circulated. Existing PLEI needs to be further developed to be understandable by this Aboriginal population (we recommend Grade 5 reading level). Improved availability could be achieved through consistent production, wider distribution and a larger selection of languages for print materials (telephone and online information is not an effective way of reaching this population). We recommend that a series of pamphlets be produced about common legal needs faced by Aboriginal peoples. These would be easy to read pamphlets for each topic that include details about;

- i. brief descriptions of relevant laws,
- ii. rights,
- iii. responsibilities,
- iv. clear step-by-step instructions about how to avoid/respond to the above legal problems and why it is important to do so, and
- v. contact information for legal resources and services.

In addition to English and French, the priority languages needed to accommodate Aboriginal peoples are;

- i. Cree,
- ii. Ojibwe, and
- iii. Saulteau.

In addition to legal service providers, this PLEI should be distributed to public libraries, as well as local social and health services providers, particularly those services with staff who regularly travel to reserves (eg. public health nurses, Children's Services).

- b. **Accidents and Injuries.** As indicated in Section 4.2, service providers identified these as legal needs which their clients commonly present with, and for which there are virtually no referral options. This may be a topic area that the Alberta Law Libraries could consider creating a public presentation about to conduct in public venues, if appropriate resources were provided. Additionally, it is recommended that PLEI resources on

accidents and injury be distributed to related social and health agencies (eg. AISH, Social Assistance).

- c. **Common Law Relationships.** As indicated in Section 6.1.2, clear information is required about the law as it pertains to common law relationships. Members of the public need clarity about length of relationship for various legal purposes (eg. tax, property, social benefits), the law pertaining to separation in common law relationships, and the division of assets upon break-up. The LRC provides some print and online information about common-law relationships, however, participants did not seem to be aware of these resources. We would suggest working with the LRC to facilitate the production of information related to these subtopics and to enhance circulation to legal as well as key social services agencies (eg. AISH, Social Assistance).
- d. **New Canadians.** As discussed in Section 4.2.1, new Canadians have particular legal needs which relate to employment standards/labour laws, landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, domestic violence and child protection. There is some PLEI already available about these legal needs, however, availability needs to be enhanced for this population. This can be achieved through consistent production, wider distribution and larger selection of languages for print materials. We recommend that a series of easy-to-read pamphlets about common legal needs of new Canadians (including non-permanent residents) be produced, including:
 - i. brief descriptions of relevant laws
 - ii. what individuals should expect
 - iii. their rights
 - iv. their responsibilities
 - v. what constitutes illegal actions (for them or by other parties), and
 - vi. how to avoid/respond to illegal actions (including contact information for legal resources).

In addition to English and French, the priority languages based on immigration patterns in Edmonton and area that print material should be produced in are:

- i. Arabic
- ii. Hindi
- iii. Mandarin
- iv. Punjabi
- v. Tagalog
- vi. Urdu
- vii. Vietnamese

Organizations such as the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and the LRC are already producing quality PLEI for New Canadians. It would be prudent to examine the materials that such organizations are currently producing and consider what resources are required to increase its distribution and impact. Additionally, the Alberta Law Library in Edmonton is looking at expanding the general information presentations for New Canadians that are held in public libraries and languages in which they are conducted. Ensuring access to sufficient resources to provide sessions that address the major legal topics identified in this Section as well as the regular delivery of information sessions regarding how to navigate the law libraries would be another viable option.

Professionals who work with new Canadians in the Edmonton area were asked specifically to comment on the categories of related PLEI and required print languages. They acknowledged that print PLEI in the suggested languages would be helpful but stressed the need for print material in very basic English, as they frequently encounter individuals who are not functionally literate in their primary language and who are limited in their new language. Increased presentations in public venues, as suggested above, about relevant topics in these languages would also be particularly helpful for those individuals who are struggling with literacy in general.

2) ***Enhance access to legal education and advice related to debt and bankruptcy (personal and business).***

As emerged in Section 4.2 with the comparison of the most frequently reported legal needs in Edmonton and area versus the numbers of legal and related services that offer specialized services, some of the most frequent needs that service providers are approached about relate to:

- personal debt and bankruptcy,
- foreclosures, and
- small business debt.

As illustrated by Currie (2006, 2007, 2009), people often fail to recognize that financial problems, particularly regarding personal financial obligations, are indeed legal matters. Even when people understand that they have a legal problem which must be addressed, they are often uninformed regarding the ramifications of their decisions. For example, people tend to think that all evidence of bankruptcy will “disappear” from their credit records after 7 years, but creditors actually have access to that information after the 7-year period and will consider it when making lending decisions. Additionally, the public is inundated by companies advertising credit amalgamation services via mass media. There is a lack of awareness that utilizing such services negatively impacts credit ratings, or that there are often fees involved in using these services.

Publicly accessible presentations, accompanied when possible by question and answer sessions in which limited free legal advice can be provided, would be an ideal method for increasing public knowledge about these matters. We suggest that the LRC's capacity to add presentations about financial matters to its public library series be facilitated. The option should also be explored of providing resources for a legal professional such as a volunteer lawyer from ECLC to offer limited legal assistance (eg. 5 minutes per person to a maximum of 1 hour) at the end of each session.

3) ***Help build trust in Aboriginal Communities.***

As emphasized in Section 4.2.1, one of the major barriers to providing services to Aboriginal people is their long-standing lack of trust in the justice system and government, in general. It is often suggested that separate Aboriginal-service organizations. However, after reviewing the feedback from this District, we are not convinced that continuing to segregate Aboriginal peoples by segregating services is the only answer.

Service providers who have worked extensively with Aboriginal peoples commented that this population builds relationships with individuals, not organizations. Organizations that already exist can provide effective services if they have the time to train staff about Aboriginal cultures, provide services that are responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal people they serve, and have staff members who stay with them long-term and can get to know the members of the communities they serve. These staff members do not all necessarily have to be Aboriginal themselves but it is ideal to have at least some employees who are, particularly when the organization is working to build relationships within this population. The ECLC's Aboriginal Legal Clinic is a good example of providing specialized Aboriginal services within an existing organization.

Service providers who are Aboriginal and/or have experience serving Aboriginal peoples, stated that cultural sensitivity training is very important for all staff members (not just front line). ALF could consider funding such training for any staff who have not already received it, in key organizations which they fund, such as the ECLC or SLS,.

Additional suggestions for enhancing relationships include:

- Dedicating staff members within specific organizations to work with the Aboriginal communities they serve, so that clients consistently work with the same individual(s).
- Provide incentives for Aboriginal people to complete training that is relevant yet not overly demanding in terms of years of training required, such as Legal Assistant or even general Administrative Assistant training. In return, these individuals will learn about and work within local legal organizations, serving as contacts for members of the local Aboriginal communities.
- Or, as was also suggested in the Fort McMurray Judicial District, select individuals in rural Aboriginal communities who express interest and commitment and are respected within their communities, could be offered training to act as

advocates or providers of general – not legal – information and help people access local legal and related services.

Priorities

While any of these recommendations would enhance access to legal services if acted upon, in the event that ALF needs assistance in selecting from among these, we offer a “top three” list based on our interpretation of the findings in this District.

- 1) Facilitate increased PLEI and free legal advice regarding financial matters (see Recommendation #2). This approach would require only a modest financial investment while increasing accessibility for the broadest population. Financial challenges are relevant to many residents in the current financial climate, and helping individual members of the public make the wisest decisions about managing their debts and financial choices will assist them to recover from the recession.
- 2) Facilitate enhanced access to information on relevant topics for new Canadians. As set out in Recommendation #1d, service providers identified the provision of materials in very plain English as the priority, although the additional languages listed are viewed as important as well. Funding is recommended for the major PLEI providers that have been suggested, to ensure they have the needed resources to produce and distribute appropriate materials, as well as facilitating the Alberta Law Libraries’ public library presentation series.
- 3) Enhance relationship-building with Aboriginal peoples in the District (see Recommendation #3). Acting upon this recommendation requires a greater funding and resource commitment, but is imperative to empower legal services to gain the trust of Aboriginal peoples.

7.1.2 Recommendations for Alberta Justice to Consider

- 1) ***Enhance capacity to provide PLEI and legal advice through increased coordination of services.***

Service providers suggested a need to enhance coordination of PLEI services, especially those that specialize in serving SRLs. It was suggested that the LInCs should report to one individual/body in order to help them to move forward and ensure consistency of services and service delivery.

Additionally, there is a need for the LInCs to develop capacity for the provision of legal advice, especially for individuals who have complex legal needs. As noted in Section 3.4.3 a partnership is already in place between the LAA Legal Services Centre and the LInC. Service providers suggested building on that by holding regular legal clinics at the LInC, with Duty Counsel providing this service. It was recommended that these legal clinics be held twice a week, particularly to help prepare people with court dates the same week. Priority topics that were suggested for these information sessions would be residential tenancy, family and civil matters.

2) ***Expediting court processes by reducing the number of cases that go to court.***

As can be seen throughout this Report, delays in legal processes are a common complaint. One method of expediting court processes is by reducing the number of cases that have to be adjudicated, especially in family law matters. One approach is to enhance the court's capacity to provide quality dispute resolution (ADR/JDR).

*For provincial court, I would like to see mandatory JDR training, if you're doing JDR, and funding for that, because it is so valuable. It can help to clear our trial courts, or our trial dockets up the will is there to get everyone trained - not everyone does the training [but] we have a solid number of judges doing that kind of work, proficient at it - that I think is important There's some real dos and don'ts around how to be effective.
[J03]*

There is currently ongoing dialogue between Alberta Justice and LAA through its Mediation Project, to develop streamlined processes and "hot" or priority referrals. In addition to seeing this partnership become a reality, providing JDR training for all members of the judiciary would greatly increase the courts' JDR capacity and – equally importantly – would enhance ability to recognize when JDR may be a viable option for individuals.

3) ***Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness of Judicial Processes for Aboriginals***

As was established in Section 4.3.2, in Hinton where there is a high and underserved Aboriginal population with summary conviction and breach issues, service providers also explained that it is very difficult to ensure that Aboriginal peoples will attend court dates and comply with sentencing conditions. One possible solution which would be more culturally appropriate for this very traditional Aboriginal population, and would alleviate some of the workload of the courthouse and circuits in Hinton and area, would be to establish a sentencing circle; a restorative justice program to address summary charges and related probation conditions and breaches.

4) ***Establish a multi-service provincial building with social, legal and court services.***

The majority of rural centres in Alberta and across Canada place most social/legal services in one provincial building that is often linked or adjacent to the provincial court. Service providers recommended co-location of key legal and related services to be considered for Hinton. Participants recommended that this approach be considered in urban centres such as Edmonton as well. In addition to accessibility convenience, this responds to a major concern for rural populations by allowing a degree of confidentiality about which services people are accessing. This of course, requires extensive financial commitment, however it is public knowledge that a new courthouse is being considered

for Edmonton and with that, the co-location of related services should be encouraged. It must be underlined that attention will have to be paid to the mandates of services and to locating them in ways that protect privacy and confidentiality, especially for members of the public who are accessing multiple agencies.

Priorities

We recognize that some of the recommendations that emerged are much more easily accomplished than others (eg. Recommendation #4). Among the less complex recommendations, we recommend beginning with enhancing the coordination of PLEI and free legal advice provision (Recommendation #1). Acting upon this recommendation would increase access to legal supports for the all members of the public in Edmonton and area.

We also recommend focusing on increasing access to justice for rural Aboriginal peoples in this District by acting on Recommendation #3 and helping legal service providers in Hinton and area to provide culturally relevant sentencing options such as a sentencing circle.

7.1.3 Recommendations for LAA to Consider

- 1) ***Separate consideration of the capacity and needs of urban and rural communities.***

Rural service providers stressed that province-wide services tend to be very “urban-centric”, making changes based on what will work in urban centres, then applying these changes to rural communities as well. The recent changes to LAA (see Section 3.4.1) have caused great concern in the justice community in general, but rural service providers predict that the impact will be especially negative for their communities. Unlike Edmonton (and we would add Calgary), there are few to no alternative local options for affordable legal advice, information or representation in rural communities. Service providers fear that more individuals will avoid addressing their legal needs, make detrimental choices (eg. pleading guilty due to perceived lack of options or being intimidated by the system) and/or face greater delays in having their cases addressed, in the face of reduced LAA services.

People who live in rural communities remain more accustomed to and reliant upon face-to-face services, often knowing service providers personally and being less likely to seek services that they cannot access directly. Thus, even when faced with fewer options, rural legal service providers felt that residents of small rural communities are far less likely than urban residents to access online or telephone-based legal services.

We recognize that LAA is facing severe financial constraints, however we recommend that the capacity and needs of rural communities be considered separately from those of urban centres when making changes to service provision. One specific recommendation is to expand Duty Counsel services to accommodate the reduction in LAA circuits and certificates.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Edmonton Judicial District is well-serviced, especially within the city itself, but more connections need to be made between existing services. Coordination of complementary services must be made a priority in order to improve access and enhance efficiency. It is, to a great degree, more a matter of taking full advantage of the services and resources that are in place than adding new services.

In the same vein, there is good PLEI and very well regarded providers in Edmonton, but the PLEI needs to be more proactively and widely distributed, especially to the identified marginalized populations.

Rural services need to be given more attention so that they are not paralyzed by the impact of changes that may be manageable in larger urban centres. The Provincial hiring freeze has, for example, been challenging for urban government services but crippling for rural service providers – many of whom had only a small staff at their full complement.

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APPENDIX A

Services that Participated in the Edmonton Judicial District

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
Alberta Appeals Secretariat
Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society
Alberta Children and Youth Services
Alberta Conflict Transformation Society (ACTS)
Alberta Employment and Immigration
Alberta Finance and Enterprise
Alberta Health Services
Alberta Justice (Court Services)
Alberta Law Society
Alberta Law Libraries
Alberta Seniors and Community Supports
Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
Athabasca Tribal Council
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
Centre of Hope
Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) Region 6
Citizens' Appeal Panel
Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta
Edmonton Community Legal Centre (ECLC)
Edmonton John Howard Society
Edmonton Police Service
Elizabeth Fry Society
Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)
Family Justice Services
Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society
Fort McMurray Public Library
Hinton Friendship Centre
HIV/AIDS Society
Justice and Attorney General
Justice Circle
Justin Slade Youth Foundation
Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board
Law Enforcement Review Board
Law Information Centre (LInC)
Legal Aid Alberta
Legal Resource Centre of Alberta
Métis Local 1935
Municipal Affairs
Municipal Government Board
Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)
Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
Northern Lights Health Authority

Nunee Health Authority
Oteenow Employment & Training Society
Paspew House
Persons with Development Disabilities (PDD) Appeal Secretariat/Panel
Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying
Provincial Court of Alberta
Provincial Youth & Family
RCMP
Salvation Army
Service Alberta
Solicitor General and Public Security
Some Other Solutions (SOS)
Student Legal Services (SLS)
The Multicultural Association of Fort McMurray
YMCA