



Ryan Turnbull

Member of Parliament
Whitby

July 23, 2020

The Honourable David Lametti, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

RE: Legal Aid Funding Shortfalls Due to COVID-19

In August 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau denounced the cuts made by the Ontario Progressive Conservative government to legal aid. At that time, our government stepped up with \$26.8 million to ensure that legal aid services continued for immigrants and refugees in Ontario. This was an important investment on top of previous investments in legal aid made by the federal government.

The Durham Community Legal Clinic provides free legal services to low-income individuals in the Durham Region, including more than 4000 individuals in my riding of Whitby. These services are vital and serve some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Community Legal Clinics are funded by Legal Aid Ontario (LAO). LAO receives their funding through the provincial government, as well as through the Law Foundation of Ontario. Funded through the interest on the trust accounts of legal service providers, the Law Foundation of Ontario required by statute to provide 75% of its funds to LAO. Given that these funds are generated through account interest, they depend on economic activity and interest rates. COVID-19 has resulted in record low interest rates along with decreased economic activity. This perfect storm has led to LAO anticipating a decrease between \$60-\$70 million.

The Durham Community Legal Clinic benefits residents in Whitby by providing legal services. Through its community partnerships, the Durham Community Legal Clinic's Access to Justice Hub provides free wrap-around service delivery to residents. These services include free year-round tax filing, newcomer services, employment and training support, support obtaining government ID, and support for people living with brain injuries, among many other valuable services.

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The Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario is requesting one-time funding from the federal government to offset the anticipated shortfall from the Law Foundation of Ontario. This funding is critical to protecting the legal rights of individuals in Whitby and therefore, I support this request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Turnbull", is written over a light blue grid background.

Ryan Turnbull
Member of Parliament for Whitby

CC: The Hon. Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P., Minister of Finance
Mr. Omar Ha-Redeye, Executive Director, Durham Community Legal Clinic

Encl: Letter from Omar Ha-Redeye to Ryan Turnbull dated July 23, 2020