

June 28, 2019

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Honourable Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Honourable William Morneau
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office, Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Honourable Doug Downey
Attorney General of Ontario
Ministry of the Attorney General
11th Floor, 720 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Hussen, Minister Lametti, Minister Morneau, Premier Ford, and Attorney General Downey,

Re: An Open Letter to the Federal and Provincial Governments

We are a coalition of organizations concerned about funding cuts by the Government of Ontario to immigration and refugee law services provided through Legal Aid Ontario ("LAO").

Ontario has justified these cuts by stating that funding legal services for immigrants and refugees is the responsibility of the federal government. In fact, legal aid for refugee and

immigration services has been, and remains, a responsibility shared between the two levels of government. These cuts have left LAO struggling to provide immigration and refugee services to thousands of low-income immigrants and refugees in Ontario.

LAO has responded to these cuts by drastically curtailing the services provided to low-income immigrants and refugees in Ontario. The effect is that vulnerable people are left without representation as they struggle to navigate a complex legal system, often without speaking either of Canada's official languages. These individuals are expected to complete forms, collect and submit evidence, prepare their cases, and appear before hearings at the Immigration and Refugee Board or Federal Court without the assistance of a lawyer. We know that is required to ensure that refugee claimants and others have a fair chance to make their case.¹ **It is unconscionable that vulnerable people are forced to go without legal representation because of a funding dispute between the federal and provincial governments.**

We are therefore calling on the federal and provincial governments to find a new funding agreement to provide legal aid services to immigrants and refugees in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International

Ontario Federation of Labour

Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers

Canadian Council for Refugees

The 519

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Toronto Board of Rabbis

Urban Alliance on Race Relations

Black Legal Action Centre

Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto

¹ Rehaag, Sean. "The Role of Counsel in Canada's Refugee Determinations System: An Empirical Assessment." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 49.1 (2011) : 71-116.
<https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/ohlj/vol49/iss1/3>

South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
Willowdale Community Legal Services
Neighbourhood Legal Services
AURA – Anglican United Refugee Alliance
Clinique juridique francophone d'Ottawa
East Toronto Community Legal Services
The Society of United Professionals
Garthson Leadership Centre
Ballet Creole
HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario
Income Security Advocacy Centre
South Riverdale Community Health Centre
Workers' Action Centre
Korean Legal Clinic
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre
Women's Healthy Environments Network
The Centre for Spanish Speaking People
Parkdale Community Legal Services
Canadian Environmental Law Association
AIDS Committee of Windsor
North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services
Millennial Womxn In Policy
Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation

Secular Synagogue

Decent Work and Health Network

Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

Ottawa Sanctuary City Network

Butterfly – Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Network

Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre

Sojourn House

Unison Health and Community Services

Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

Justice for Children and Youth

Canadian Association of Muslim Women in Law

University Settlement

Health Providers Against Poverty

Romero House

Adam House

Casa El Norte Refugee Assistance Organization

FCJ Refugee Centre

Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support

Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario

Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre

Community Legal Aid Services Program

Scarborough Community Legal Services

Flemingdon Community Legal Services

Matthew House

Advocacy Centre for Tenants of Ontario

Planned Parenthood Toronto

Street Health

Ontario Sanctuary Coalition

Northumberland Community Legal Clinic

ARCH Disability Law Centre

Shelter and Housing Justice Network

Peterborough Community Legal Clinic

Street Nurses Network

Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic

AIDS ACTION NOW!

West Toronto Community Legal Services

Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention

Osgoode Hall Law Union

Mental Health Legal Committee

Legal Assistance of Windsor

Canadians Helping Asylum Seekers in Israel

Law Union of Ontario

Toronto Overdose Prevention Society

Toronto Raging Grannies

Lake Country Community Legal Clinic

Alliance for Healthier Communities

CATIE

Migrants Resource Centre Canada

Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights

S.E.A.S. Centre

The AIDS Network

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund

Congregation Darchei Noam

Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services

JSpace Canada

Danforth Jewish Circle

Mississauga Community Legal Services

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church

LIFT Toronto

SAAC – Senior Advisory and Advocacy Council

Asian Canadian Women's Alliance

Noor Cultural Centre

Beth Torah Congregation – Neighbourhood Faith Group

Envision Education Foundation

Neighbourhood Interfaith Group

Islamic Foundation of Toronto

Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative

Rexdale Community Legal Clinic