

THE FIGHT TO PRESERVE LEGAL AID SASKATCHEWAN

Summer 2018



● OUR HISTORY:

The Saskatchewan legal aid system was created in 1974 and envisioned as a poverty law system that would take a comprehensive approach to helping lift people out of poverty. Landlord/tenant disputes, workers' compensation claims, Canada Pension Plan appeals, and welfare hearings were all handled by Legal Aid. Since that time, the scope of the service has been drastically reduced to emergency family and criminal matters for the poorest and most vulnerable people in Saskatchewan.

The first legal aid office to organize was Saskatoon and then the union expanded to represent all offices in the province.

● WHO WE ARE:

CUPE Local 1949 represents more than 150 legal aid employees including lawyers and administrative staff in 12 offices across Saskatchewan. Legal Aid Saskatchewan is a "pure" staff system while other provinces and territories have varying degrees of "certificate" lawyering by private lawyers. In practice, having in-house staff results in better service for clients and lower remand rates.

We are lawyers and administrative staff dedicated to serving and advocating for the most vulnerable people in Saskatchewan.

● WHAT WE'RE FACING:

We have been without a new collective agreement since 2016. The Employer is seeking major concessions at the bargaining table. We have been facing crisis levels of overwork and chronic underfunding with no recognition of this workload crisis from the Employer.

Now the Employer is moving to contract out duty counsel work, consolidating Saskatoon offices, and has laid off several full-time staff in Saskatoon, while transferring positions from Saskatoon to Regina – all without meaningful consultation.

Staff morale has declined significantly in recent years under an Employer that doesn't appear to respect the day-to-day work of Legal Aid staff and that appears motivated to contract out work and privatize Legal Aid Saskatchewan. The worst part of this is the negative impact on legal aid clients.

● OUR NEXT STEPS:

As a union local, we are exploring all options – including legal action – to preserve the integrity of Legal Aid Saskatchewan on behalf of the clients we serve. Throughout July 2018, we are traveling to each legal aid office in the province to meet with our members, get feedback and direction, speak with local media outlets, and coordinate future actions.

● WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Contact Minister of Justice Don Morgan to express concerns that Legal Aid Saskatchewan is being systemically undermined.

Phone: **306.787-5353**

Email: **jus.minister@gov.sk.ca**

CUPE Legal Aid
Saskatchewan
LOCAL 1949