



PRESS RELEASE

--- UPDATED AND REVISED ---

For Immediate Release

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**Are people living on a low income getting the legal help they need?
Special public forum on access to justice being held November 23**

“Are people living on a low income or in poverty getting access to the legal help they need? Are people who live in rural or remote areas or who are Deaf or hard of hearing or who speak languages other than English or French able to access services funded by Legal Aid Ontario? If they are not - what can we do to change this?” asks Executive Director Michele Leering of the not-for-profit Community Advocacy & Legal Centre.

Leering is a Belleville and area lawyer who believes these are important issues that need to be discussed. “The economic downturn and changes to legal aid are challenging for people who need legal help because they’ve lost their job or their home or apartment, or their family relationships are either suffering or ending,” notes Leering. She notes that a recent study completed by the community legal clinic and others for the Law Foundation of Ontario, *Paths to Justice: Navigating with the Wandering Lost*, identified not just a large number of barriers but also many opportunities to do things differently. The report recommended exploring new ways to make legal information, advice and help available, and how to reach more people, and how to increase legal literacy by, for example, ensuring regular legal information columns in local papers, and innovative partnerships with public libraries and local lawyers.

On November 23, at Quinte Gardens, 30 College Street West, in Belleville from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the legal clinic will be hosting the first of a series of special meetings to talk about access to justice, what it means, and why meeting people’s legal needs can be helpful. The discussion will be enriched by contributions from the Canadian Hearing Society, Legal Aid Ontario, public libraries, clinic clients, and local Women’s Shelters about the challenges arising from poverty law and family law problems, and the difficult legal issues arising from domestic violence, immigration, being a victim of crime, and rural and linguistic (Deaf) barriers to service. “This is a chance for people to learn about some of the clinic’s innovative approaches to tackling these issues and to provide feedback on what else needs to be done to get people the legal information, advice and help they need. We will be interested in hearing about any new challenges, as well as any recent improvements since the *Paths to Justice* report was released in March,” said Leering. American Sign Language will be provided. The presentation will be followed by a free light lunch.

The *Paths to Justice* Report can be found at
www.communitylegalcentre.ca/connectingregions/docs/PathsToJusticeFinalReport.pdf.

Bafflegab, the clinic's newsletter can be found at
www.communitylegalcentre.ca/news/newsletter.htm.

The Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (CALC) is a non-profit community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. The clinic was founded in 1980 and is staffed by lawyers, community legal workers, and other staff. Services are provided to low income residents of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington counties. The clinic's main office is in Belleville, with satellite locations in Trenton, Picton, Napanee, Bancroft and Madoc.

For further information about the contents of this press release, please call Michele Leering, Executive Director, at 613-966-8686, ext 27 or Toll Free at 1-877-966-8686.

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