



Québec

Gouvernement du Québec
Le Cabinet de la ministre de la Justice,
Procureure générale
et ministre responsable de la Condition
féminine

Press release

Increase in Eligibility Thresholds: A Historical Catch-up

Montréal, December 29, 2015 – M^e Denis Roy, Chairman of the Commission des services juridiques, and Ms. Stéphanie Vallée, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Quebec, are very pleased to announce a **17.75%** increase in the eligibility thresholds for free legal aid as of **January 1, 2016**. Among other things, the increase will allow a person who is single and works a 35-hour week at minimum wage to be eligible for legal aid at no cost.

“This second increase in two years is the culmination of a historical catch-up process to match access to free legal aid to the minimum wage,” stated M^e Denis Roy, Chairman of the Commission des services juridiques.

As a result, a person with an annual income of **\$19,201** will have access to a lawyer, at no cost, within the framework of the legal aid system. For other categories of applicants, the thresholds will be increased by the same percentage, based on the composition of their family. For example, legal aid services will be free to a family of two adults and two children whose income is less than **\$31,485**.

“This is a major step forward for access to justice. The increase, together with the coming into force of the new Code of Civil Procedure on January 1, 2016, will provide low-income earners with better access to our justice system. Via this concrete measure thousands more will be able to avail themselves of legal services at no cost or for a lower contribution,” stated Minister Stéphanie Vallée.

The Québec legal aid plan includes a component for individuals whose income falls between the eligibility thresholds for free legal aid and the maximum thresholds requiring a contribution (contributory legal aid). In the majority of cases, the increase in the eligibility thresholds for free legal aid will reduce the amount of the contribution required to have access to the services of a lawyer. For example, before the increase, a mother with two dependent children and employment income of **\$25,000** would have been required to pay \$300 in order to be entitled to legal aid. As of January 1, 2016, she will be entitled to free legal aid.

The changes to the eligibility criteria for legal aid will affect working people with modest incomes as well as seniors whose principal source of income is their Old Age Security benefits and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

The new eligibility scale for services at **no cost** is as follows:

Class of Applicant	Maximum Annual Income
For a single person	\$19,201
For an applicant whose family is comprised of :	
✓ one adult and one child	\$23,490
✓ one adult and 2 children or +	\$25,077
✓ spouses without children	\$26,720
✓ spouses with 1 child	\$29,897
✓ spouses with 2 children or +	\$31,484

The new eligibility scale for legal aid under the **contributory scheme** is as follows:

Class of Applicant	Maximum Annual Income
For a single person.....	\$26,818
For an applicant whose family is comprised of :	
✓ one adult and one child	\$32,807
✓ one adult and 2 children or +	\$35,024
✓ spouses without children	\$37,324
✓ spouses with 1 child	\$41,757
✓ spouses with 2 children or +	\$43,975

For a complete list of the legal aid eligibility thresholds, please visit the website of the Ministère de la Justice at: http://www.justice.gouv.qc.ca/english/ministere/dossiers/aide/seuils_aide-a.htm

About the Commission des services juridiques

The Commission des services juridiques is the agency charged with applying the *Act respecting legal aid and the provision of certain other legal services* in Québec. Legal aid may be granted to anyone who is financially eligible, in order to cover various legal services involving civil, family, administrative, criminal, health, immigration or youth law matters. It is also the agency charged with offering the services provided for in the *Act to promote access to justice in family matters*, namely, the Homologation Assistance Service (HAS), which has been in effect since October, 10, 2013, and the Service administratif de rajustement des pensions alimentaires pour enfants (SARPA), a child support recalculation service which has been in effect since April, 1st, 2014.

For more information, please visit the Web site of the Commission des services juridiques at: <http://www.csj.qc.ca>.

Source:

M^c Richard La Charité
Director, Communications Department
Commission des services juridiques
514-873-3562, ext. 261
rlacharite@csj.qc.ca

Information:

Jolyane Pronovost, Press attaché
Le Cabinet de la ministre de la Justice, Procureure générale
et ministre responsable de la Condition féminine[
418-643-4210

Paul-Jean Charest, Media relations
Ministère de la Justice du Québec
418-644-3947, ext. 20932