

Access to Justice Week Oct 22-26, 2018

This October, for the third consecutive year, Ontario will be celebrating Access to Justice Week for the last full week in October. This year's Access to Justice Week runs from [October 22-26](#). The purposes of the week, among others, are to promote access to justice, engage the public in highlighting access to justice issues, and to educate the public about our judicial system.

A local Access to Justice (A2J) committee convened in early August to design an event for this coming week for Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma district. It is comprised of 9 individuals who work in the justice system in different capacities: members of the local Judiciary, lawyers, mediation services and courthouse administration. The committee appeared at City council in September, requesting the Mayor to proclaim Oct 22-26th Access to Justice Week in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Board of Directors of the Algoma District Law Association (ADLA) is a large part of this initiative: A member of our ADLA Board Community Relations committee, is a co-chair of the A2J organizing committee for the Courthouse event. As well, at the committee's request, the ADLA Board approved the sponsorship and financial support for the Youth project (outlined below).

The A2J committee, chaired by Mr. Justice R. Kwolek, Ontario Court of Justice, has designed a one-day event for high school and post-secondary students in Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District to take place during Access to Justice week- specifically on Tuesday, October 23rd at the Sault Ste. Marie courthouse.

On Tuesday, local Justice sector partners will make brief presentations at various stations set up in the courthouse. Afterwards, they will be available for questions from the students about the Justice system and their particular organization or agency's role in providing services or access to this system.

We will have a broad representation of these agencies at the event: The Judiciary, First Nations, Crown Attorney's office, Legal Aid Ontario, Algoma District Law Association, Algoma Community Legal Clinic, Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, municipal, provincial and federal Police services, court staff, Victims' assistance, family and court-related counselling and mediation services and housing shelters.

There will be one program of presentations that will take place from 9:30-11:30 am and then repeated in the afternoon beginning at 1:30 pm. There will be presentations in both English and French.

Another "feature" we will offer that day is an "interactive/ instant surveys" app that the attending students will be able to access with their mobile devices during the event. The surveys will be based specifically on the topics discussed and the issues raised during and as a result of the presentations.

In addition to Tuesday's event, we will introduce an **Access to Justice Youth contest**:

Students will be invited to submit either a photo or video that answers the question "what does access to justice mean to you?" in the present-day context. The photo or video can reflect their understanding of an access to justice issue, or an idea for a solution to an access to justice issue.

All photo and video entries must be accompanied by a short explanation (up to 200 words) of what the photo or video depicts and how it relates to Access to Justice and received prior to Dec 31st. A contest flyer will be distributed at the event and later to all of the High schools and Post-Secondary/ Adult Learner institutions in Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District.

Winners will be chosen by a committee of legal professionals who work in various roles in the justice system. The winning group or individual will be the recipient(s) of the "2018 Access to Justice Youth Engagement Award" and be awarded a prize valued at approximately \$ 500.00.

We believe that this great initiative fits perfectly with ADLA's ideas of positive promotion of the legal profession; specifically, to promote access to justice, engage the public in highlighting access to justice issues, and to educate the public about our judicial system.

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