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2004 - 161 Elgin Street / Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2K1 | 2004 - 161, rue Elgin / Ottawa (Ontario) K2P 2K1

November 14, 2018
Delivered by Electronic Mail

The Hon. Caroline Mulroney
Attorney General of Ontario
Minister of the Attorney General
11th Floor, 720 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Malcolm Mercer
Treasurer
Law Society of Ontario
130 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N6

Dear Attorney General Mulroney and Treasurer Mercer:

Re: Pro Bono Ontario Law Help Centres closures

Greetings on behalf of the County of Carleton Law Association. I am writing in response to the public announcement that Pro Bono Ontario (“PBO”) will be closing its Law Help Centres in Toronto and Ottawa effective December 14, 2018.

The County of Carleton Law Association is Ottawa and Eastern Ontario’s leading association for the professional legal community. We are a not-for-profit association, providing our members with regional law library and reference services, continuing legal education, annual conferences, advocacy, and guidance through the many challenges facing the profession.

The CCLA is proud of our members’ commitment and dedication in giving back to the community that we serve. This is no more evident than in our members’ excellent support of Pro Bono Law. They volunteer their valuable and informed legal knowledge and hands-on help to the Ottawa Law Help Centre in the amount of over 22,000 hours per year province wide.

Thanks to the lawyers who generously devote their time to provide free legal services through PBO, the legal system of Ontario saved \$5.7 million dollars per year. But that is not the only win. We are aware that our current provincial government is concerned with creating more efficiency in the administration of justice. To that end it is essential that PBO continue its existence and presence in Ottawa and Toronto courthouses to maintain the added efficiency it brings to the court system. Access to justice is exemplified in the most meaningful way when experienced counsel shepherd vulnerable unrepresented litigants through the legal process. Their assistance also saves Court resources, such that litigants are educated on what is a tenable cause of action and what is not. It would be a retrograde move and contrary to the mandates of both government and the LSO to allow the Law Help Centres to close.



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We strongly advocate for sustainable funding to maintain PBO offices and administration. This is a cost-effective outlay because of the thousands of free, volunteered lawyer hours the offices support. In fact, it is a bargain for Ontario's justice system! Our legal community donates valuable time and energy to sustain PBO and we only ask that sustainable funding be provided in the same spirit by government and/or the LSO. This proven model of public-private partnership directly benefits the public, and provides access to justice in an extremely efficient way.

Thank you in advance for your attention to what we consider to be a crisis in the administration of access to justice in our province.

Sincerely,

Karen Ann Reid
President