



PRESS RELEASE

GREATER ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH INDEXATION OF LEGAL AID ELIGIBILITY THRESHOLDS

Montreal, May 31, 2020 – As of **today**, the legal aid eligibility thresholds increased by **4.8%**, which is equal to the percentage by which the minimum wage increased on May 1, 2020.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Québec, Sonia LeBel, and the Chairman of the Commission des services juridiques, M^e Yvan Niquette, made the announcement today.

M^e Niquette recalled that, on **January 1, 2016**, the eligibility thresholds for no-cost legal aid were increased, with the minimum wage as a reference point. The current indexation therefore maintains the eligibility thresholds at this level.

As a result, a person who is single and works a 35-hour week at minimum wage, which is **\$23,842** per year, has access to a lawyer, at no cost, within the framework of the legal aid system. Moreover, legal aid services are free to a family of two adults and two children whose income is less than **\$39,098**.

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). According to M^e Niquette, the contributory scheme offers a unique formula that allows individuals to be represented in court by a lawyer while knowing, in advance, the maximum amount of their legal fees and the costs that may be claimed from them. The contributory scheme allows an individual to receive legal services if his or her income, assets and liquidities match the eligibility scale in effect and if the individual pays a contribution ranging from \$100 to \$800, depending on the composition of the person's family and the person's financial situation. The eligibility scale for legal aid under the **contributory scheme** also increased by **4.8%**.

The Commission des services juridiques developed tools to evaluate the number of applicants who, were it not for the increase in the financial eligibility thresholds for legal aid since January 1, 2014, would not have qualified for legal aid. For the **2019-2020** year, the number of applicants amounted to **22,651**.

"The services provided by the Commission des services juridiques and by the lawyers who carry out these mandates are essential to promote access to justice for the most vulnerable citizens. The increase in the thresholds we are announcing today will help Quebecers assert their rights before the courts," stated Minister LeBel.

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

Class of Applicant	Maximum Annual Income
For a single person	\$23,842
For an applicant whose family is comprised of:	
one adult and one child	\$29,171
one adult and 2 children or +	\$31,141
spouses without children	\$33,181
spouses with 1 child	\$37,125
spouses with 2 children or +	\$39,097

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

Class of Applicant	Maximum Annual Income
For a single person	\$33,304
For an applicant whose family is comprised of:	
one adult and one child	\$40,738
one adult and 2 children or +	\$43,490
spouses without children	\$46,347
spouses with 1 child	\$51,853
spouses with 2 children or +	\$54,608

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 Homologation Assistance Service (HAS) and the Service administratif de rajustement des pensions alimentaires pour enfants (SARPA), a child support recalculation service.

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

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