



## PRESS RELEASE

### Eligibility thresholds for free legal aid increase by 15.3% as of January 1, 2014

**Montreal, December 27 2013** – The increase coming into effect on **January 1, 2014** will bring the eligibility threshold for free legal aid to **\$16,306** and the maximum eligibility threshold for contributory legal aid to **\$26,309** for single individuals. It bears reminding that single individuals represent 73% of the legal aid clientele. A family composed of two spouses and two children, whose annual income is **\$26,737**, will now be eligible for free legal aid.

As of **June 1, 2015**, eligibility thresholds will increase once again, with the minimum wage as a reference point. Thereafter, eligibility thresholds will be kept at this level through an indexation clause linking the thresholds to the minimum wage. Ultimately, the eligibility threshold increase for free legal aid will be **35.8%**, which will facilitate access to justice for the portion of the population that works, but has limited income. The same is true for seniors living alone whose principal source of income is their Old Age Security benefits and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

M<sup>e</sup> Denis Roy, Chairman of the Commission des services juridiques, reminds the public that it is to the advantage of persons who require legal assistance and may be eligible for legal aid to contact the legal aid office closest to their residence in order to confirm such eligibility. “Given the terms and conditions prescribed by the act and the regulations, only legal aid staff can determine your eligibility; it is therefore important to make an appointment with a legal aid lawyer,” stated M<sup>e</sup> Roy.

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

<b>Class of Applicant</b>	<b>Maximum Annual Income</b>
For a single person	\$16,306
For an applicant whose family is comprised of:	
one adult and one child	\$19,948
one adult and 2 children or + spouses without children	\$21,296
spouses with 1 child	\$22,691
spouses with 2 children or +	\$25,389
	\$26,737

M<sup>e</sup> Roy emphasized that the contributory scheme offers a unique formula that allows individuals to be represented by a lawyer before the courts while knowing, in advance, the maximum amount of the legal fees and costs. The contributory scheme allows an individual to receive legal services if his or her income, assets and liquidities match the eligibility scales in effect and if the individual pays a contribution ranging from \$100 to \$800, depending on the person's situation. The eligibility scale for legal aid under the **contributory scheme** is as follows:

<b>Class of Applicant</b>	<b>Maximum Annual Income</b>
For a single person	\$26,309
For an applicant whose family is comprised of:	
one adult and one child	\$32,185
one adult and 2 children or + spouses without children	\$34,360 \$36,616
spouses with 1 child	\$40,965
spouses with 2 children or +	\$43,141

#### **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 will be available in the coming months.

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