

**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION  
September 22, 2022**

*Sent on behalf of the Criminal Defence Lawyers Association (Calgary) ("CDLA"), the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association (Edmonton) ("CTLA"), the Southern Alberta Defence Lawyers' Association ("SADL"), and the Red Deer Criminal Lawyers Association ("RDCDLA"):*

**Justice Minister Chooses Chaos for Alberta's Courts**

On September 21, 2022, Alberta's four criminal lawyer associations in response to government inaction passed motions with the overwhelming support of their members to stop accepting all new work from Legal Aid Alberta effective September 26, 2022. The criminal justice system cannot function and access to justice in Alberta cannot occur without our participation, as all stakeholders already recognize.

Unfortunately, Justice Minister Tyler Shandro has decided to ignore the fact that Alberta's courts cannot properly function when his government cuts off help for our most vulnerable citizens and refuses to offer fair compensation to skilled professionals for their services.

Millions of Albertans who are teachers, care providers, nurses, doctors, police officers, firefighters, Crown Prosecutors, judges and other professionals, or know someone who works in that capacity, understand this situation is the predictable result of a shameful pattern of neglect by this government.

Despite claims of Legal Aid Alberta 'being ok', the reality is current economic changes have created a situation where Alberta's legal aid system can no longer meet the needs of justice without immediate changes. Only the Minister of Justice can authorize the necessary changes. We are just the latest professional workers being targeted in Alberta. All of it unnecessary.

Our members are small business owners who employ many Albertans and support a vital segment of our economy. We are trained to deliver a service that the Canadian Constitution requires government to fund. We have worked hard like other such Albertans to gain the experience necessary to provide superior services to our clients. As your representative, Minister Shandro could choose stability, sustainability, and a fair system. Instead, he chooses chaos. Sadly, it is a choice that will cost Albertans far more in the end.

The associations will publicly announce this decision at events held outside the Calgary Courts Centre, the Edmonton Law Courts and the Red Deer Court House on Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m. This will include remarks delivered by members of the province-wide committee coordinating this job action.

When Minister Shandro is interested in speaking to us in good faith to allow the justice system to get back to serving taxpayers effectively and efficiently, we are available. Until then, Legal Aid Alberta has lost overnight a large, diverse and irreplaceable workforce. We will no longer silently support this government's dysfunctional idea of justice.

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