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PROBONO  
LAW OF BC

RESPECT

**PRO BONO RISING**

# PRO BONO RISING

All across BC, lawyers are providing pro bono legal services because they believe in helping the people and organizations who need it most. Many see pro bono as a reflection of their professional duty to promote equal access to justice.

Pro bono also makes good business sense. Law firms that make a formal commitment to pro bono enhance their reputations as good corporate citizens in the eyes of the lawyers they wish to recruit, the lawyers they wish to retain and the clients they wish to attract.

The universal benefits of providing pro bono legal services are clear. As BC lawyers provide more pro bono and as more BC law firms develop comprehensive pro bono policies, Pro Bono Law of BC (PBLBC) is here to ensure that serving the public good is as easy and rewarding as it ought to be.

***Lawyers who participate in pro bono work know that it provides a sense of personal satisfaction. It enables lawyers to fulfill their professional and ethical obligations. It also gives them experience in a variety of areas of the law. It allows lawyers and law firms to develop a strong reputation for service to the community. It breaks down barriers that prevent full access to justice.***

The Honourable Lance Finch  
Chief Justice of British Columbia  
Pro Bono Forum 2001





## **PRO BONO LAW OF BC**

PBLBC is an independent, non-profit society established in 2002 by the Law Society of BC and the BC Branch of the Canadian Bar Association to coordinate, promote and facilitate the delivery of pro bono legal services throughout the province. We are funded by the Law Society of BC and the Law Foundation of BC.

Our vision is of an innovative, collaborative pro bono system advancing access to justice and serving the legal needs of people and non-profit organizations of limited means throughout BC.

We believe that pro bono legal services:

- are those legal services that are provided to people and non-profit organizations of limited means without expectation of a fee;
- should be designed and provided according to the changing social and legal needs of the people and non-profit organizations of limited means for whom they are intended;
- should be provided to people and organizations of limited means according to the same standards of dedication, excellence, and professional ethics as paid legal services; and
- should serve to complement and not replace government-funded programs advancing access to justice; a collaborative pro bono system should not substitute for a properly funded legal aid system.

# DO YOU SEEK TO PROVIDE PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES?

BC is remarkably organized in the variety and scope of pro bono opportunities that it provides to its lawyers and non-lawyer legal professionals. Whether you seek to assist individuals or organizations, there are several options from which to choose—ranging from opportunities that can be served directly from your office, to opportunities to staff clinics on the front lines of pro bono.

## THE PBLBC ROSTER PROGRAMS

The PBLBC Roster Programs provide pro bono assistance and representation to individuals and non-profit organizations of limited means in specific areas of the law (e.g. judicial review, solicitors' work, family law). For each Roster Program, we receive screened client referrals from lawyers, advocates and pro bono clinics, and then present those opportunities to roster lawyers according to their location, stated interest and capacity.

The PBLBC Roster Programs provide the following benefits to lawyers:

**Pre-Screened Referrals:** Each referral is screened for legal merit. Roster lawyers choose how and when they are able to provide pro bono assistance—from basic help on single, discrete issues to full-service representation.

**Insurance Coverage:** Through the Lawyers Insurance Fund, we provide full insurance coverage for sanctioned services with waived deductibles and surcharges to members in good standing with the Law Society of BC. Thus, in-house counsel, government counsel, retired and non-practising lawyers receive insurance coverage for pro bono services rendered to individuals.

**Disbursement Coverage:** Through a grant from the Law Foundation of BC, we provide coverage for disbursements incurred in pro bono cases administered through the Roster Programs and relating to poverty law issues.

For more information and to register for the PBLBC Roster Programs, access our website at:

[www.probononet.bc.ca](http://www.probononet.bc.ca).



## LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

In legal advice clinics, volunteer lawyers meet with low-income individuals to provide summary legal advice in such areas as criminal, family, immigration, small claims, bankruptcy and residential tenancy law. Volunteer lawyers typically commit two to four hours per month and need not assume responsibility for the underlying administrative arrangements.

## LEGAL ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

Some community organizations offer legal advice and advocacy programs to the individuals whom they serve, such as men and women who need family law advice and persons with disabilities who need help with human rights issues.

## PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND LAW FIRMS

Some law firms partner with charities or community organizations to offer a variety of legal services. A one-on-one relationship between a firm and a community group often means that more than one lawyer in the firm can do pro bono for the client, inspiring all to pull together for a common cause. We provide the Community Partnership Manual as a free guide for community organizations seeking to create a pro bono program in partnership with a law firm. We also help law firms to develop policies that support their lawyers in doing pro bono.

# DO YOU REQUIRE PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES?

## PRO BONO FOR INDIVIDUALS

In your search for free legal advice and assistance, we encourage you to first determine whether you qualify for legal aid. In BC, legal aid services range from legal information and legal advice to legal representation. If your legal problem involves criminal charges, mental health or prison issues, serious family problems or serious immigration problems, you may qualify for legal representation through legal aid. Consult the Legal Services Society website at [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca) or call LawLINE at 1-866-577-2525 and press 7.

If you do not qualify for legal aid, you may still qualify for free legal advice and assistance from a legal advice program. There are several programs that may be able to assist you, including:

**The Law Students' Legal Advice Program**

604-822-5791 (Lower Mainland only)

**The Salvation Army BC Pro Bono Program**

604-694-6647

**The University of Victoria Law Centre**

250-385-1221 (Victoria area only)

**The Western Canada Society to Access Justice**

1-877-762-6664

Consult our website at [www.probononet.bc.ca](http://www.probononet.bc.ca) to see if your legal problem fits into the categories of the PBLBC Roster Programs. If so, you may qualify for a referral from a lawyer or student through one of the above legal advice programs.

## PRO BONO FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Through our Solicitors' Program, we take requests from non-profit and charitable organizations throughout BC, and then endeavour to match each request to a roster lawyer within workable reach. Our roster lawyers provide legal advice and assistance in many areas of the law, including incorporation and by-laws, registrations for charitable status, employment matters, contracts and lease agreements. Our roster lawyers also conduct seminars on such topics as directors' liability, privacy legislation and board governance. To post a request for legal assistance, register as a community group at [www.probononet.bc.ca](http://www.probononet.bc.ca).

# RESOURCES

## ONLINE POVERTY LAW TRAINING COURSE

The PBLBC Online Poverty Law Training Course is a free online training course designed for lawyers and of benefit to some non-lawyer legal professionals (such as paralegals and advocates working in areas of poverty law). The course provides an overview of welfare law, income assistance and disability assistance, effective skills for interviewing poverty law clients, reconsideration applications, tribunal proceedings and judicial review applications. Each self-paced module includes quick links to resources, a case study and quiz. The Law Foundation of BC provided funding for this project.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

The PBLBC Community Partnership Manual outlines the steps for creating and sustaining a pro bono partnership between a community organization and a law firm, modeled on the partnership between the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, BC Division and the law firm of Davis & Company. Taken from the perspective of a community organization that wishes to establish a pro bono law program, the guide outlines how a successful program can be launched and administered, and offers advice for law firms that would like to provide support through pro bono services. The Law Foundation of BC also provided funding for this project.

## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For details on these and other initiatives, access the PBLBC website at [www.probononet.bc.ca](http://www.probononet.bc.ca) or contact our office.

The PBLBC website provides information and resources for lawyers and law firms, non-lawyer legal professionals, the public and community groups. For members of the public, the website provides information about the law and how to find legal assistance, with links to news, resources, events and more. For the legal profession, the website provides links to news, resources and a listing of user-specific pro bono opportunities posted through the PBLBC Roster Programs.

COMMIT

DREAM

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DIGNITY