

Nadia Staniszewski
Resident of Mississauga, East-Cooksville

July 23, 2019

Mr. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, 1 Queen's Park
Room 281
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Re: Funding Cuts to Legal Aid Ontario

Dear Mr. Ford:

I am writing regarding the recent cuts to the Ontario Legal Aid made by your government that have impacted Ontario's most vulnerable people, including people injured at work.

I am one of many injured workers who used the services of legal aid in the most difficult times of my life.

Sixteen years ago I suffered work-related repetitive injury. The number of treatments and the amount of time necessary for proper recovery was too short and I was pushed to resume working just to re-injure myself, again and again. This vicious circle went on and on and for many years I had to deal with the pressures and demands of the WSIB all by myself.

Eventually, I found the Injured Workers Consultants (IWC) community legal clinic located at 815 Danforth Avenue in Toronto. This particular clinic has done so much for me at the times when I struggled with my WSIB case and was not able to find proper legal representation. I was and I am very grateful for the services the clinic provided. I received not only the assistance in a positive resolution of the case to restore my rightful WSIB benefits and my dignity, but also I benefited from attending numerous meetings of the Bright Lights and Women's Support groups at the clinic which kept me updated on injured workers events, issues, and laws. The clinic's staff also provided tremendous emotional and psychological support when I felt alone and isolated in the most difficult times.

I owe a debt of gratitude to legal services and the Ontario government because they provided me with the sound advice and the support I needed moving my life forward in a positive direction. Otherwise, I would have ended up destitute.

After the recent cuts in funding, the IWC community legal clinic faces closure at the current location and significant reduction of its staff and services. As a result, many injured workers will not have access to the proper legal representation, while accessing the justice system, and the social support to which they are entitled.

Please, keep in mind that legal clinics provide legal aid services to Ontario's most vulnerable residents. Their vital work is aimed at ensuring that people with low incomes are able to access the benefits and services they are entitled to. Local clinics serve geographic communities while specialty clinics serve specific groups such as people with disabilities, injured workers, racialized communities, the elderly, children and youth. Client surveys indicate very high satisfaction with the work done by clinics. International research shows that investments in legal clinics reduce costs to the legal system and across multiple government programs. The cuts of your government threaten the welfare of Ontario's most vulnerable residents.

I urge you, Mr. Ford, to reverse all cuts and restore the funding to the Legal Aid Ontario. Without cuts, the community legal aid clinics, as the one I mentioned above, could continue to provide services in accessing the justice system and be a vital outlet to socially support vulnerable Ontarians.

Access to justice is the cornerstone of any democratic society, Mr. Ford. The financial cuts you have imposed on the Ontario Legal Aid services should be reversed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Nadia Staniszewski