

# Investment Fund Evaluation Report: Client Satisfaction Project

Prepared for:  
Jane L. Lancaster, Q.C.  
Chief Executive Officer  
#502 – 201 21<sup>st</sup> Street East  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7K 2H6

Submitted by:

Yelland Research & Evaluation Services  
2610 – 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Lloydminster, Alberta  
T9V 2C8

August, 2006



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# SECTION ONE: OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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Modeled after similar Legal Aid initiatives in other Canadian provinces, in particular Ontario and Alberta, the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission contracted Yelland Research and Evaluation Services (YRES) to implement a Client Satisfaction survey. The Saskatchewan Legal Aid Client Satisfaction survey tool was based on client satisfaction tools used in other jurisdictions as well as “The Common Measurements Tool” available from The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service & The Canadian Centre for Management Development. The Client Satisfaction survey project consisted of the design, development, implementation, and analysis of data from Saskatchewan Legal Aid’s clients regarding their level of satisfaction. Yelland Research and Evaluation Services developed the survey tool in the fall of 2005, collected client data in January 2006, and submitted the report in April 2006.

## **Project Objectives**

The objectives of the Client Satisfaction survey were to:

1. Develop a Client Satisfaction survey instrument based on the principles of the Common Measurement Tool (CMT) in order to maximize the potential for comparison of data with other jurisdictions;
2. Provide paper and electronic (web-based) versions of the survey instrument;
3. Collect client data from each Legal Aid office using the paper version of the survey during January 2006;
4. Collect data from the web-based version of the survey during February 2006.
5. Combine and analyze the data collected through the web-based survey tool and the paper based data.
6. Report the findings of the analysis to the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission.

## **Project Methodology**

The Client Satisfaction survey used two data collection methods:

- 1) A self-report paper form of the Client Satisfaction survey was made available to all clients in each Legal Aid office in Saskatchewan during January 2006, and
- 2) A self-report web-based version of the survey was made available on the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission's website during February and March of 2006.

## **Analytic Approach**

The numeric client satisfaction data was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics. The text data was analyzed by combining responses with similar themes into response categories. The frequency of these response categories is reported below. Anonymity of client responses was ensured by combining data from the eleven Legal Aid offices into six (6) location categories (see Q1 below).

## **Limitations of the Client Satisfaction Findings**

While the Client Satisfaction survey tool design was based on the principles of the CMT, it was designed to collect and report on Saskatchewan Legal Aid client data and may not be generalizable beyond this specific project. Care must be taken when comparing these data with that from other jurisdictions and, more importantly, it would be inappropriate to apply the lessons learned in this Client Satisfaction survey project to other Legal Aid jurisdictions.

## SECTION TWO: DATA AND ANALYSIS

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### Response Rate

As shown in Table 1 below, a total of two hundred and ninety (290) respondents completed the Client Satisfaction survey. All of these surveys were completed by respondents using the paper forms. It is important to note that the respondents could be at many different stages in their relationships with Legal Aid, ranging from new cases to cases in progress to clients who were concluding their cases; no attempt was made to determine or differentiate responses based on the client's status.

According to 2004/2005 statistics, a total of 23,306 clients appeared in all Saskatchewan Legal Aid offices. Based on an average of 1942 clients per month 1960 forms were prepared and made available to all offices in proportion to each office's monthly average number of clients. The additional 18 forms (difference between 1942 and 1960) was the result of rounding to even numbers for each office. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of the statistics by office. The response rates ranges from 2.0% to 53.3% with an overall response rate of 14.8% for the project

**Table 1: Response Rate**

	<b>2004-05 Annual Numbers Received</b>	<b>Ave. Number per Month</b>	<b>Number for Survey Jan 2006</b>	<b>Completed Surveys returned</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Regina City	3581	298	300	74	24.67%
Saskatoon City Criminal	3361	280	280	18	6.43%
Saskatoon Rural	876	73	70	12	17.14%
Meadow Lake	1735	145	150	3	2.00%
Battlefords	1833	153	150	11	7.33%
Prince Albert	3537	295	300	47	15.67%
Melfort	813	68	70	18	25.71%
Northern	1864	155	160	28	17.50%
Moose Jaw	875	73	70	11	15.71%
South East	584	49	50	7	14.00%
Yorkton	1214	101	100	23	23.00%
Swift Current	363	30	30	16	53.33%
Regna Rural	1750	146	150	15	10.00%
Saskatoon City Family	920	77	80	7	8.75%
	23306	1942	1960	290	14.80%

## Survey Data

### Q1: What is your location?

From which legal aid office did you get legal services?			
	Counts	Percents	Percents
			0 100
North East and Central (Melfort/ Northern/Prince Albert)	93	32.1%	
Regina (Regina City/ Regina Rural)	89	30.7%	
Saskatoon (Saskatoon City Criminal & Family/ Saskatoon Rural)	37	12.8%	
South East (South East/ Yorkton)	30	10.3%	
South West (Moose Jaw/ Swift Current)	27	9.3%	
North West (Battlefords/ Meadow Lake)	14	4.8%	
Totals	290	100.0%	

As illustrated above, the bulk of the responses came from clients in the North East and Central region offices (Prince Albert, Melfort and Northern) and Regina (City and Rural).

### Q2: Overall, how satisfied are you with the Saskatchewan Legal Aid services you received?

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Saskatchewan Legal Aid services you received?			
	Counts	Percents	Percents
			0 100
Satisfied	120	42.3%	
Strongly Satisfied	118	41.5%	
Neutral	28	9.9%	
Strongly Dissatisfied	4	1.4%	
Dissatisfied	1	0.4%	
Not Applicable	13	4.6%	
Totals	284	100.0%	

It appears from this data that *overall*, people are satisfied (83.8% reported that they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied and only 1.8% reported they were Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied) with the services they received from Legal Aid.

**Table 2: Satisfaction Ratings**

	Satisfaction Questions					
	The staff who served me did an excellent job.		I am satisfied with how long it took to get service.		When I needed the service, I knew where to go.	
Frequencies:						
Strongly Agree	51.9%	150.0	45.0%	130.0	48.1%	139.0
Agree	37.4%	108.0	37.7%	109.0	40.1%	116.0
Neutral	7.3%	21.0	11.1%	32.0	6.6%	19.0
Disagree	0.3%	1.0	2.1%	6.0	2.1%	6.0
Strongly Disagree	1.0%	3.0	1.7%	5.0	0.7%	2.0
Not Applicable	2.1%	6.0	2.4%	7.0	2.4%	7.0
Totals	100.0%	289.0	100.0%	289.0	100.0%	289.0

Questions 3, 4 & 5, asked the respondents to rate their agreement with the statements identified in Table 2. As shown above, respondents rated high levels of agreement with all statements. The highest level of agreement (responses for Strongly Agree and Agree ratings) reported by the respondents was in reference to their perceptions of Legal Aid staff. The second highest level of agreement was in relation to knowing where to go when they needed services. Finally, the least strongly supported statement concerned the respondent’s satisfaction with how long it took to get service. This correlates with the comments in the questions below, regarding changes the respondents suggested for improving Legal Aid service in Saskatchewan.

## Q6: What is the MOST important improvement we could make?

What is the most important improvement we could make?			
	Counts	Percents	Percents
			0 <span style="float: right;">100</span>
No improvement necessary	69	23.8%	
Helping people with court, enforcement, getting released, taxes, etc.	30	10.3%	
Need more staff (lawyers & front area)	15	5.2%	
Reduce waiting time to see a lawyer	12	4.1%	
Need to connect with clients better	9	3.1%	
Appointments & phoning clients	8	2.8%	
Miscellaneous	7	2.4%	
Office hours, Availability & Range of Service	6	2.1%	
Coffee and books in waiting area	3	1.0%	
No Answer	131	45.2%	
Totals	290	100.0%	

Not including the “No Answer” responses, many respondents (23.8%) did not offer suggestions for improvement. The next most frequent set of responses identified additional services the clients would like, such as help with their taxes, or were actually suggestions of how the clients could improve themselves, such as seeking help with their addictions, etc. The remaining 20.7% of the responses answered the question directly. These responses included comments such as: the need to reduce the waiting time to see a lawyer (although no specific suggestions were made as to how), the need to connect better with clients, suggestions for this include phoning clients about appointments, etc. Some respondents felt the office hours should be extended or that the office should be moved to a more accessible location. Finally, some clients provided practical suggestions such as providing coffee and books to read in the waiting rooms.

## Q7: What is the Second most important improvement we could make?

What is the second most important improvement we could make?			
	Counts	Percents	Percents
			0 <span style="float: right;">100</span>
No suggestions for improvement	246	84.8%	<div style="width: 84.8%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Better connections with clients	17	5.9%	<div style="width: 5.9%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Reduce waiting time	7	2.4%	<div style="width: 2.4%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Increase range of services	6	2.1%	<div style="width: 2.1%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Suggestions regarding personal changes necessary to better life	6	2.1%	<div style="width: 2.1%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Increase pay to get more & better service	3	1.0%	<div style="width: 1.0%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Front area improvements (writing desk & coffee)	2	0.7%	<div style="width: 0.7%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Stop making deals to keep families apart	1	0.3%	<div style="width: 0.3%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
No Answer	2	0.7%	<div style="width: 0.7%; height: 15px; background-color: red;"></div>
Totals	290	100.0%	

Most respondents (84.8%) did not have any suggestions for improvement in question 7.

The bulk of the suggestions provided are similar to those provided above: connect with clients better, reduce waiting time, and increase the range of service (new services such as those identified above as well as office hours, etc), and improve the front areas (by providing writing desks and coffee). New comments raised in response to question 7 were related to the clients feeling service would be improved by Legal Aid lawyers being better paid. This comment included both the notion that higher pay would attract more lawyers, which would reduce the waiting time to see a lawyer, and that higher pay would result in increased motivation to work on the client's behalf. Seven respondents (2.4%) reported suggestions about how to improve their own lives or commented on the result of perceived "deal-making" regarding their matters.

## Q8: What is the Third most important improvement we could make?

What is the third most important improvement we could make?			
	Counts	Percents	Percents
			0 100
Connect with clients better	8	2.8%	
No suggestions for improvement	8	2.8%	
Miscellaneous	6	2.1%	
Suggestions for personal changes	3	1.0%	
Front area suggestions - coffee & phone	3	1.0%	
Faster more efficient service	3	1.0%	
Cut pay for cases lost cases	1	0.3%	
Make sure clients are satisfied	1	0.3%	
Reduce the financial limit	1	0.3%	
No Answer	256	88.3%	
Totals	290	100.0%	

Not surprisingly, given the similarity to the previous two questions, most respondents (88.3%) did not respond to this question. The remaining responses included: connect with clients better, no suggestions for improvement, suggestions for personal (client's) changes, front area changes (phone and coffee), and comments rather than suggestions about the desire for Legal Aid to provide faster service. New suggestions in response to this question include: cutting lawyers' pay for lost cases (this may reflect a particular client's dissatisfaction with previous service), and having a process to check and see if clients are satisfied with their service (this comment supports the need for having an ongoing Client Satisfaction survey process). One respondent commented that the financial limit was set too high and it should be reduced to a more reasonable level.

# SECTION THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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This section includes the suggestions for improvement offered by the respondents as well as recommendations that arise out of the analysis. The improvement suggestions and recommendations are presented here as a starting point for The Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission. The Commission will need to review these suggestions further in order to prioritize them in light of the consistent demands for service and ongoing changes in the resources available. In addition to developing a plan for implementing these suggestions and recommendations, it would be very useful for The Commission to determine, and very clearly define, criteria for judging the success or failure of the implementation.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

### **I. Reduce waiting time to see a lawyer**

- Evidence concerning the Duty Counsel, Eligibility Officer, and Early Case Resolution projects, suggests that a number of changes made recently by Legal Aid have reduced the waiting time for clients to get approved for service and to see lawyers. However, it is impossible to know what stage of concluding their matter the respondent was in. For example, if the bulk of the client's interaction with Legal Aid was prior to the recent changes, this comment may no longer apply. YRES suggests The Commission monitor the results of the recent changes before modifying the process further.

### **II: Connect with clients better**

- This suggestion was mentioned in response to all three improvement questions and, as such, can be deemed to have fair significance to the respondents. As with reducing the waiting time, some of the recent changes should help clients to feel more connection with their lawyers. In particular, increasing the number of lawyers on the Duty Counsel teams, as well as the changes made to the Eligibility Officer positions in both Saskatoon and Regina, can enable lawyers to devote more time to their clients.
- A related suggestion is for Legal Aid lawyers to phone their clients to remind them about upcoming appointments and to make sure the clients bring the necessary information. Some lawyers report currently doing this, however, given the workload, it may be unreasonable to expect this task always be assigned to the lawyer involved. It is likely that better communication with the clients, perhaps in the form of a check list they take

home after each meeting that identifies their lawyer and an assistant who may contact them, would help to meet the clients' perceived need for more contact.

### **III: Front Area Improvements**

- A number of respondents suggested the Legal Aid office provide coffee, desks to write on, books, and phones for clients to use. Observation of the office in Saskatoon and Regina suggest many of these accommodations exist currently. Given the low long-term cost, it would likely be useful for The Commission to ensure that all offices have these components available as clients appear to perceive them as necessary for the proper functioning of a Legal Aid office.

### **General Recommendations**

- Given the lack of responses by respondents to the web-based Client Satisfaction survey, it would be useful to assess the prominence of the link to this survey on the website. This assessment would include both the placement of the link on the web page as well as any highlighting used to draw the respondents to the survey link.
- The data discussed in this report is a snap-shot of the clients' level of satisfaction with the services they've received from Legal Aid. It would be useful to collect more client satisfaction data in order to be able to see if any particular trends develop over time. Not only will this provide The Commission with more data (greater breadth and depth), but recurrence of suggestions (trends) can help The Commission prioritize changes.
  - The Commission should explore the possibility of implementing a consistent Client Satisfaction survey process utilizing both paper and web-based data collection.
  - The Commission would likely derive the most benefit from a process designed to collect data continuously and report quarterly.
  - The reports should include analysis of the current data set as well comparison to trending data (preferably based on a rolling 12 month basis).

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