

## **Private Bar Billing & Payments Modernization Project STATUS UPDATE October 2023**

The Private Bar Billing and Payments Modernization Project began in October 2022, and much has been accomplished since then. The Project timelines have been extended to 2024, to account for delays in advancing project deliverables related to technology and process changes – namely, the development of an online billing and payments platform.

Below is a list of accomplishments to date:

### **Organization Structure:**

LAS created a Private Bar Services Department with a Director and Private Bar Clerks that are focused on this very important program that ensures client access to legal services. The private bar receives the LAS services it needs to carry out its work, including billing and payment support.

### **Policies:**

LAS has made great progress with regard to its private bar policies.

- LAS drafted a Private Bar Billing and Payments Handbook. The Handbook consolidates all policies related to billing and payments. The Handbook is being reviewed by LAS staff and management, following which it will be shared with some members of the private bar for comment.
- LAS drafted new policies
  - Exceptional Circumstances Payments Policy, for criminal and family law, will replace the “additional hours” policy.
  - Case Management Policy for costly criminal law cases.
- LAS launched two private bar pilots, one in criminal law focused on exceptional circumstances and case management, and another in family law focused on exceptional circumstances. The pilots will run for a few months and will inform changes to these new policies.

### **Technology and Process:**

LAS is about to post a Request for Services for a Phase 1 assessment of functional requirements and technology review. Phase 1 will inform changes to how the private bar bills accounts and is paid. Phase II will see the development of an online billing and payments platform in 2024 that will modernize, simplify and streamline interactions between the private bar and LAS, and make

billing and payment processes more efficient and effective. LAS continues to work with the Government of Saskatchewan, SaskBuilds and Procurement on this deliverable.

**Private Bar Satisfaction:**

LAS will survey the private bar in 2024 to determine their satisfaction with LAS billing and payments services. The survey results will lead to improvements in the way LAS serves the private bar.

**Accountability:**

LAS continues to clarify “who is responsible for what” with regard to private bar billing and payments. In addition to the Private Bar Services Department, other Departments at LAS play a role in private bar services, including area directors and finance. Greater clarity will lead to improved services and consistency of decision-making.

**Performance Measurement:**

LAS is developing standards for service delivery, including measures such as “time to process private bar requests” and “time to pay”. LAS will consult with the private bar on these measures in early 2024.

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For more information on the Modernization Project , please see LAS’ website:

<https://legalaid.sk.ca/lawyer/private-bar-process-review/>

Should you have any comments or questions, please contact the Private Bar Services Director Cameron Schmunk, [central@legalaid.sk.ca](mailto:central@legalaid.sk.ca)