



Handling everyday legal problems

Information to help you make good choices



The Law Society
of Upper Canada

Barreau du
Haut-Canada

Welcome

The Law Society of Upper Canada licenses and supports lawyers and paralegals to serve you, the people of Ontario.

We are also committed to providing information and services that improve how you access legal information, advice and services as you deal with a legal question or problem.

This guide starts with helping you to understand if you have a legal problem, specifically a civil, or non-criminal, legal problem. The guide then provides information about legal resources and services that are available to help you.

We hope you find this guide helpful. You can also find it online on the Law Society website — lsuc.on.ca.

After you have read this guide, we would like to hear from you. Please send your comments to equity@lsuc.on.ca. We cannot answer specific questions about legal problems or provide legal advice, but we welcome your comments about the information in this guide and your suggestions for improvements.



“At the Law Society, we are committed to improving access to justice for all Ontarians. The right information can help you make good choices if you are dealing with a legal problem. We have prepared this guide to help you find that information. I hope you find it helpful and encourage you to keep it for use in the future.”

Thomas G. Conway
Treasurer, The Law Society of Upper Canada

This guide is an initiative of the Ontario Civil Legal Needs Project. lsuc.on.ca/OCLNP
For more information and permission to reprint, please email equity@lsuc.on.ca.
For the online version, visit lsuc.on.ca/for-the-public.

Disclaimer – The content of this pamphlet contains legal information that is current to the date it was printed. Legal information is not legal advice. You should seek legal advice about your specific legal situation.

We thank the following individuals for their assistance in reviewing this guide:
Amanda Carling, Avvy Go, Julie Mathews, Jane Withey and Danielle Manton.

You are told that you owe a cancellation fee for your cellphone but the contract is confusing. What are your options?

The contractor for your home renovation calls you demanding payment. You tell him he did not finish the work. He threatens to sue. What now?

You receive a notice from the government. They reviewed your benefits and are reducing your payment. Where do you go to fight it?

Do you have a legal problem?

Canadian laws affect many areas of our daily lives. It can be difficult to know if an issue you have today will become a future legal problem.

You probably have a legal problem if you think you:

- may have to go to court, or
- may get a fine or lose a government benefit or licence.

Here are the most common legal problems that anyone can face

- Family relationship issues
- Wills and powers of attorney
- Tenancy, housing and property issues
- Real estate transactions
- Employment problems
- Personal injury
- Money or debt problems

Is it a civil or a criminal legal problem?

This guide gives information for civil, not criminal, legal problems. One way to understand the difference is to look at who is involved in the issue. If you are charged with a crime, you will defend yourself against a government agency. Civil legal problems can happen between you and other people, companies, or government agencies.

Ignoring the problem will not make it go away

It is important that you take action to resolve all legal problems. Doing nothing will not correct a mistake or recover money you spent for a service you never received. If you take steps to deal with your problem as early as you can, you may be able to prevent your problem from getting worse.

It is very important that you respond if you receive a court or legal document that shows someone has filed a lawsuit or complaint against you. The document will give you a date for when you must respond.

If you do not respond, a judge in a court case might think you agree to the other side's claim. This may also happen if you do not respond to show that you do not agree with charges on a bill or a change to your government benefits.

Legal Information

Below is a list of organizations that provide civil legal information, resources and services in Ontario. You can also find legal information at your local library, community health clinic, settlement organization, community centre, Indigenous friendship centre and courthouse.

The sites and services listed below do not provide emergency services. If you have an emergency where people or property are at immediate risk, dial 9-1-1.

Helping You Understand Ontario's Legal System

You may have general questions about Ontario's legal system and its processes, such as finding out what a legal term means, how to complete a court form, directions to a courthouse or what to expect inside a court.

The **Ministry of the Attorney General** offers information about Ontario's legal system, the court process, self-help guides and a legal glossary through its website and **Justice Ontario**. Justice Ontario offers information in 170 languages.
www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca |
 Tel: 1-866-252-0104

Legal Aid Ontario's LawFacts gives legal information, checklists, links to other sites and a glossary of terms about a range of legal issues, including family, criminal, refugee and mental health law. lawfacts.ca

Understanding Specific Legal Issues

The following websites present legal information in plain language and provide simple explanations about the basics of Ontario and Canadian law.

CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario/Education juridique communautaire Ontario) produces free legal information in print and online, in English and French and other languages, on many topics including housing, family law, refugee law, consumer law and social assistance. You can order printed brochures through the website for free. cleo.on.ca

Your Legal Rights is a website of **CLEO**. This website has practical legal information on a wide range of legal topics produced by hundreds of organizations across Ontario. The website includes answers to common questions, an interactive map of services for Ontario and a news and events section. The "Help" link on the homepage gives information on how to use the site. yourlegallrights.on.ca

Legal Line offers multilingual legal information on its website. When you visit the site, select "Ontario". Legal Line also provides pre-recorded answers to legal questions by telephone. Visit the "Guides" page for information on the telephone service. legalline.ca

Parlez-vous français ?

If you speak French, you are entitled to receive services in French from a lawyer or paralegal.

These services will help you find a French-speaking lawyer or paralegal:

Law Society Referral Service

lsrs.lsuc.on.ca/lsrs | Tel: 416-947-3330 |

Toll Free: 1-800-268-8326

Law Society's Lawyer and Paralegal

Directory [www2.lsuc.on.ca/](http://www2.lsuc.on.ca/LawyerParalegalDirectory)

LawyerParalegalDirectory |

Tel: 416-947-3315 |

Toll Free: 1-800-668-7380 ext. 3315

Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (lawyers only)

ajefo.ca

Cliquez-Justice is a website of the **Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO)**. This site offers simplified legal information to a varied French-Canadian public (children, teenagers, adults and teachers) on many legal topics regarding daily life and life in society. It also contains a glossary of definitions and videos on the Canadian justice system. cliquezjustice.ca

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) provides legal information through its website and toll-free number. Access legal aid help in over 200 languages. French-speaking clients have access to free, confidential advice and referrals by telephone for issues covered by legal clinics. Visit legalaid.on.ca/en/contact and select "Francophone legal advice lines". legalaid.on.ca |

Toll Free: 1-800-668-8258 |

Tel: 416-979-1446

Focus on Family Relationship Problems

LAO's Family Law Information Program (FLIP) is a free, online resource for families and former spouses and partners. legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/flip.asp

LAO provides lawyers at **Family Law Offices** or **Family Law Service Centres**.

You may also qualify for the services of Family Court Duty Counsel. For serious cases, you may qualify for a certificate to cover the costs of a lawyer. legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/typesofhelp.asp | Toll Free: 1-800-668-8258

The **Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG)** has **Family Law Information Centres (FLICs)** in family courts across Ontario. At the FLIC, you can find information about separation and divorce, services, including Advice Lawyers, how to resolve disputes, local community resources and court processes. Visit the website to find the location of your local FLIC office and its telephone number. MAG also offers **family mediation services** at no charge at family court and off-site for a fee based on your income. Mediators work with both people involved in a dispute to help them solve their problem.

www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/infoctr.asp |

www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/mediation.asp

The **Law Society's Your Law: Family Law in Ontario** website links you to existing websites and resources for information and assistance. yourontariolaw.com

The **Cliquez-Justice** website has French-language information on family law. cliquezjustice.ca

Free Legal Services and Assistance

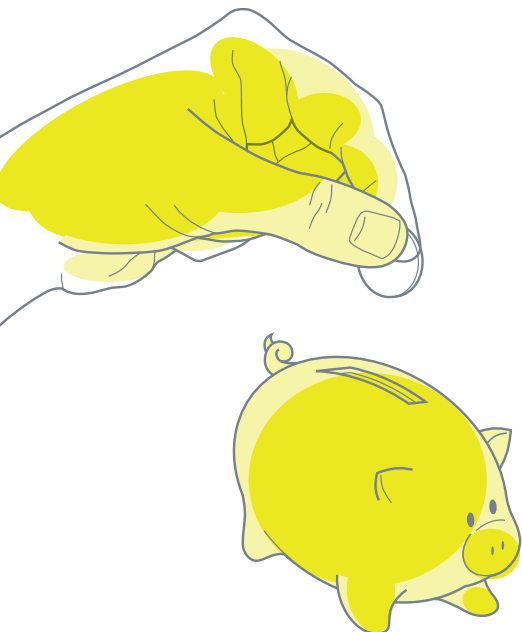
If the organizations listed below are not able to provide you with direct assistance, ask them for a referral to a resource or service near to you.

Free Legal Services

Ontario's **Community Legal Clinics** provide poverty law services to low-income people, including information, advice and free legal services. Service areas include social assistance, housing, refugee and immigration law, employment, human rights, workers' compensation and the Canada Pension Plan. Contact the clinic nearest you directly. **Legal Aid Ontario's** website lists contact information for the clinics. legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl

Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC) helps individuals who have experienced discrimination. Its website is available in English, French and nine other languages. Staff work in Toronto, Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Guelph, Ottawa and Brampton. They can assist in filing applications at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario and give legal representation at mediations and hearings. hrlsc.on.ca | Tel: 416-597-4900 | Toll Free: 1-866-625-5179 | TTY: 416-597-4903 | TTY Toll Free: 1-866-612-8627

Pro Bono Law Ontario (PBLO) runs **Law Help Ontario (LHO)**. LHO serves children and youth, charities and people with lower incomes who are suing or being sued in civil (non-family) court. Services include information, brief advice through volunteer lawyers, legal forms assistance and, in some cases, services of duty counsel. Most services are available on a walk-in basis in 3 court-based locations in Toronto and Ottawa (French and English). PBLO also helps children who are having problems at school and provides free legal services for qualifying patients in 4 children's hospitals. The LHO website lists all PBLO services and other organizations that provide free legal services. If you live more than 40km away from an LHO office in Ottawa or Toronto, you can apply for services through the website or by calling its toll-free number. lawhelpontario.org | pblo.org | Toll Free: 1-855-255-7256 ext. 231



Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) serves qualifying people with low incomes. Its services include duty counsel to help in court, telephone operators to assist with legal aid applications, information and referrals to other agencies, online legal information and, in serious criminal, family and immigration cases, access to legal aid certificates, which cover the cost of a private lawyer. legalaid.on.ca | Toll Free: 1-800-668-8258

Student Legal Aid Services Societies (SLASS) are Legal Aid Ontario-funded legal clinics at Ontario's law schools. Full-time lawyers supervise volunteer law students who provide legal advice and represent clients in minor criminal and civil cases. Select "Student Legal Aid Services Societies" on LAO's Contact Us page. legalaid.on.ca/en/contact

Working on Your Own Case

The **Ministry of the Attorney General** website has a Forms Assistant program to assist you with Small Claims and family court matters. There are Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on a range of legal issues, a directory of court addresses and a legal glossary.

<https://formsassistant.ontariocourtforms.on.ca> | www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/justice-ont

The **Ontario Court of Justice** has guides in French and English to assist self-represented people in family, criminal and provincial offences cases. The guides explain the court process and give definitions of legal terms.

www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/self-represented-parties





Looking for legal help?

Get connected with a lawyer or paralegal for **up to 30 minutes** of **free** consultation to explore your options.

Call us at **416-947-3330** or **1-800-268-8326** or visit **lsrs.lsuc.on.ca** for an online referral.

Finding a Lawyer or Paralegal

The **Law Society Referral Service (LSRS)** will refer you to a lawyer or paralegal who will provide a free, 30-minute consultation. You can ask to be referred to a lawyer who will accept legal aid certificates or who will offer their services at a reduced price.

lsrs.lsuc.on.ca/lsrs (for online forms) |

Tel: 416-947-3330 |

Toll Free: 1-800-268-8326

The Law Society's online **Lawyer and Paralegal Directory** lists the name, telephone number and address for practising Ontario lawyers and paralegals. You can search by name, city or postal code. **www2.lsuc.on.ca/LawyerParalegalDirectory**

Legal Aid Ontario's Lawyer Directory lists panel lawyers – lawyers who accept legal aid certificates. You can search by town or address, area of law, language or name. **legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/findingalawyer.asp**

JusticeNet is a free, online directory of lawyers, licensed paralegals and mediators who provide their services at discounted rates. **justicenet.ca/professions**

What is the difference between a lawyer and a paralegal?

In Ontario, lawyers can help you with any legal matter and in any court.

Paralegals can help you with cases in Small Claims Court (claims of up to \$25,000), traffic and other offences heard in Provincial Offences Court, as well as hearings before tribunals. Paralegals can also help you with minor criminal charges under the Criminal Code.

You can find more information on the **Law Society of Upper Canada's** website and through its **Your Law** online video series. These videos give information about how lawyers and paralegals can help you resolve specific legal issues.

lsuc.on.ca/lawyer-or-paralegal |

lsuc.on.ca/yourlaw

Where in Ontario? Finding Legal and Social Services

211 Ontario is a 3-digit telephone number and website available in multiple languages, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Certified Information and Referral Specialists and the website give information and referrals to more than 56,000 community and social services in Ontario.

211ontario.ca

Your Legal Rights Legal Services Map lets you search for legal and social services throughout Ontario. Many services are listed in Toronto, but they may be able to help people anywhere in Ontario.

yourlegalrights.on.ca/find-services