



The Law Foundation of Ontario
Building a better foundation for justice in Ontario

THE CONNECTING REPORT:

Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project

**Presentation for the AGM of the
Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario**

May 8, 2009



1. THE LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

- For over thirty years, The Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) has been making grants to support community participation in the justice system, promote excellence in the legal profession, and enhance access to justice
- The LFO funds a wide variety of projects and programs related to its statutory objects: legal education and legal research; legal aid; and the establishment and maintenance of law libraries
- The LFO's revenue comes from the interest on lawyers' and paralegals' mixed trust accounts (75% of this income goes to Legal Aid Ontario)



THE LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

- In 2006, the LFO launched the one-time Law and Innovation Fund which identified under-served communities and invited applications for grants that could make a significant impact
- The response to the Law and Innovation Fund identified two pervasive issues relating to access to justice: the challenges faced by those who do not speak French or English and the challenges faced by those who live in rural and remote areas of the province



2. CONNECTING REPORT

- In response, LFO launched the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project
- LFO hired experts to conduct extensive literature review and consultations on these issues, and make recommendations for further action
- resulted in the Connecting Report, released in January, 2009, which identified significant barriers to access to justice for linguistic minorities and rural residents and made recommendations for improving linguistic and rural access to justice



CONNECTING REPORT

Foundational Ideas of Connecting Report

- Law Foundation should act as a catalyst, bring organizations together, and through strategic funding generate innovative solutions
- Although promising initiatives in area of linguistic and rural access to justice exist, service deliverers should participate in an integrated system to improve services
- Law Foundation should not create a new entity but support the creation of networks or consortiums of existing organizations with the strength and expertise to work on these issues



CONNECTING REPORT

Specific Recommendations for Strategic Investments in Six Areas

- improving capacity of non-legal community organizations to provide legal information and referrals
 - regional planning model
 - network of legal interpreters
 - videoconferencing
 - articling fellowships
 - clearinghouse and research
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- Law Foundation is considering the report's recommendations
 - has hired a Project Director, Tanya Lee, to assist it in this process
 - has already moved forward on some recommendations



3. ARTICLING FELLOWSHIPS

- Law Foundation immediately announced the creation of ten Connecting Articling Fellowships beginning in the 2010 articling year
- funding articling positions for community legal clinics and/or Legal Aid Ontario to provide legal services to linguistic minorities and residents of rural and remote communities
- Law Foundation received 28 applications from organizations interested in hosting these Fellowships and was greatly impressed by the quality of all the applications



ARTICLING FELLOWSHIPS

- Law Foundation, with the help of a Selection Committee, chose 11 successful applications
- Articling Fellowships chosen seek to serve diverse linguistic communities, including Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin or Cantonese and Tamil speakers
- also seek to serve residents of rural and remote communities, including members of aboriginal communities located in the North



4. CONNECTING CONSORTIUM

- Connecting Report recommended improving capacity of non-legal community organizations to provide basic legal information and referral for their clients
- recommended creation of consortium of legal and non-legal organizations to improve capacity of non-legal community organizations by
 - drawing on strengths of existing organizations
 - identifying priorities
 - creating more integrated system



CONNECTING CONSORTIUM

- Consortium would develop proposals in areas of
 - legal information and referral training for front-line workers
 - real-time legal help for front-line workers
 - increasing availability of legal information available in minority languages



CONNECTING CONSORTIUM

- LFO has developed principles for guiding the formation of a Connecting Consortium focused on improving the capacity of non-legal community organizations
- based on these principles, LFO has asked CLEO to consult and work with the community to develop organizational model for Consortium
- the CLEO consultation will build on, and not duplicate, the wide consultations held during the development of the Connecting Report
- if organizational model is approved, LFO will subsequently consider any integrated funding proposal package developed by the Consortium



5. VIDEOCONFERENCING PILOT PROJECTS

- Connecting Report recommended testing use of videoconferencing to increase linguistic and rural access to legal information and services
- LFO working with MAG and other organizations to determine whether the Ontario Justice Video Network might be an appropriate platform for some pilot projects in this area



6. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

•Regional Planning Model

- Connecting Report recommended doing pilot to test regional planning model for linguistic and rural access to justice

•Ontario Interpretation Network

Connecting Report recommended

- developing standards and practices for language interpretation to help clients communicate with legal services providers
- work in three areas: interpreters, quality assurance, developing an interpreter community

•Learning from Experience

Connecting Report recommended

- evaluating each Connecting Report initiative
- approaching LCO to develop framework for defining access to justice
- establishing a clearinghouse of materials on access to justice



ANY QUESTIONS?

Please direct any questions on this project to

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