

# *The Advocates' Society*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **THE ADVOCATES' SOCIETY SUPPORTS INCREASED FUNDING FOR LEGAL AID**

**June 11, 2009**

**Toronto.)** In the wake of the stand being taken by senior members of the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the President of The Advocates' Society, Peter Cronyn, today expressed the Society's continuing concern over the need for a properly-funded and sustainable system of legal aid in Ontario.

"Ontarians have had the good fortune to live in the first province to establish an organized legal aid program. However, numerous studies have confirmed the system that exists today is in dire need of additional funding to allow it to function adequately and to truly serve the interests of those citizens who are most vulnerable amongst us. Access to legal representation is an essential component of the administration of justice in a free and democratic society," stated Peter Cronyn.

"The Code/LeSage, Goudge, and Trebilcock Reports have amply demonstrated where improvements and infusions of funding are required," said Marie Henein, Vice President of The Advocates' Society. "This is not just an access to justice issue. The current system of funding results in significant inefficiencies and therefore more cost to the citizens of Ontario. Increasing the legal aid tariff is a critical aspect of the overall efficiency of the criminal justice system and in the end, will serve to work well with other initiatives introduced by the AG such as the Justice on Target initiative."

Ms Henein noted specifically a statement from the Code/LeSage Report that "[s]enior members of the judiciary, senior Crown counsel and senior police officials forcefully submitted that it is much better to conduct a long complex trial with one of the leading members of the bar because they will generally focus on the real issues in the case, they will consistently prepare in advance and they will have no reason to unduly prolong the case...."

In short, there is a broad consensus that it is worthwhile to invest in a strong and capable defence."

*The Advocates' Society is a professional association for advocates who practise in the Courts of Ontario and who are committed to ensuring access to justice for all Ontarians.*

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