

For Immediate Release

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## NEWS RELEASE

**Hon. Roy McMurtry announces results of pioneering study of civil legal services in Ontario**

**Toronto:** The Honourable R. Roy McMurtry, former Chief Justice of Ontario, today released the results from a study mapping the availability of civil legal services across the province. *The Geography of Civil Legal Services in Ontario* is the second report of the Ontario Civil Legal Needs Project, an initiative undertaken jointly by the Law Society of Upper Canada, Legal Aid Ontario, and Pro Bono Law Ontario. The Project received additional support from the Law Foundation of Ontario.

“The two reports of the Ontario Civil Legal Needs Project break new ground in Canadian legal research,” says Roy McMurtry, Chair of the Project Steering Committee. “We now have access to hard data that can be used to identify the civil legal needs of Ontario’s low- and middle-income communities, as well as the distribution of legal service providers available to meet those needs. We have not had access to this type of data before.”

*The Geography of Civil Legal Services in Ontario* examines and compares the demographic characteristics of the Ontario population and the distribution of legal services to create a detailed picture of the market for civil legal services across Ontario.

“An unexpected, positive finding was the high percentage of lawyers— 46.7 per cent in 2009—who provide some level of *pro bono* or free legal services,” says Lorne Sossin, Dean, Osgoode Hall Law School and former Vice-Chair of Pro Bono Law Ontario. “While there are still questions about the nature of those services, we can use this information to further engage the profession in access to justice solutions.”

“Some of the larger, more rural areas appear underserved at first glance but actually have a good number of lawyers and paralegals compared to the population. This is encouraging news since we may be able to use existing legal service providers to improve access to civil legal services.” says John McCamus, Chair of Legal Aid Ontario.

The first report of the Project, *Listening to Ontarians*, surveyed low- and middle-income Ontarians to better understand their civil legal needs, where they seek help to address those needs and how successful they are in finding that help.

“The success of the project is demonstrated not only in the depth and value of its two reports, but also in the Project partners’ ongoing collaboration in improving access to justice. It is clear from both reports that the issues can only be resolved through the collective work of all players,” says Marion Boyd, former Attorney General and Law Society Bencher. “Thanks to the Ontario Civil Legal Needs Project we now have substantive data that will act as a baseline against which we can measure our progress as we enhance existing programs and develop new initiatives to address access to justice issues.”

More information on the project, including the full report in French and English, is available on the Law Society website at: [www.lsuc.on.ca](http://www.lsuc.on.ca)

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