

NEWS RELEASE

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Slave Lake Fire Legal Hotline and Information Sessions

First partnership of its kind offers free legal information for residents affected by wildfire

Calgary – Key players in the provision of access to justice in Alberta have responded to a natural disaster by partnering to provide direct legal relief services to those affected by the Slave Lake wildfire. Pro Bono Law Alberta, Legal Aid Alberta, and The Canadian Bar Association – Alberta have formed a partnership to respond to the emerging legal needs of Slave Lake residents. This collaboration is supported by the Law Society of Alberta and Alberta Lawyers Assistance Society (Assist) and Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association (ACTLA).

“The agencies which are partnering in this relief effort have very common goals when it comes to providing relevant legal services and access to justice,” said Gillian Marriott, QC, and Executive Director of Pro Bono Law Alberta. “Simply by the nature of the business we are in, we also have a shared interest in helping people. We realized that the consequences of the fire would have legal implications for the community and we wanted to help as much as we could.”

In addition to a toll free hotline which was launched on June 22, legal information sessions, frequently asked questions and other public legal education materials are being developed as additional resources for those trying to put the pieces back together.

“We are providing support from all angles; by phone, in-person and the internet. We are trying to make the public’s access to legal assistance as easy as possible” said Marriott. The relief team has arranged for lawyers to go to Slave Lake on July 26 and 27 to answer questions in person, but is also encouraging residents to call the hotline now with any questions they have as staff are ready to help.

The hotline itself will be a key legal resource for Slave Lake and area residents. Open Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the Slave Lake Fire Legal Hotline will offer free legal information particularly concerning insurance claims, tenancy, employment, credit/debt and family law matters. **The hotline is being operated by Legal Aid Alberta and can be reached toll free at 1-888-644-8950.** Legal information is available for all hotline callers and legal advice is available to hotline callers who meet Legal Aid’s financial eligibility guidelines. **Public information sessions on Insurance, Tenancy and other legal issues will be held on July 26 and 27, 2011 in Slave Lake at the Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre with question and answer periods to follow each session.** Additional information can be found at www.pbla.ca/slavelake or www.legalaid.ab.ca/slavelake.

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