

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Cuts will deny legal services to thousands of low-income BC residents**

Victoria, January 14, 2009 – The Legal Services Society of British Columbia announced a massive organizational re-structuring to their Lower Mainland offices, including the layoff of 16% of staff. This announcement came as a surprise to both the employees and clients of the Legal Services Society, and will drastically affect the 80% of BC's low-income families who require their services.

Legal Services Society, a non-profit organization funded primarily by the Ministry of Attorney General, provides legal aid to tens of thousands of families and individuals in British Columbia who otherwise could not afford counsel to resolve their legal issues.

“Demand has increased for emergency family law services,” says Jim Russell, First Vice-President of the Professional Employees Association and a staff lawyer for the Legal Services Society. “The number of client-applications we receive has exceeded our budget allocations for three years straight.”

Russell added that this excess is expected to go up given the current state of our economy. “In a time when so many industries are experiencing mass layoffs, our services are needed more than ever,” Russell explained. “Families affected by cutbacks and layoffs are under extreme financial pressure, which increases the demand for emergency family law advice and representation.”

The Professional Employees Association, an independent Union that represents lawyers employed by the Legal Services Society, is asking why LSS and its funders would deny families the right to legal services. “These cuts are sure to reduce the number of clients that the Legal Services Society can accept. Essentially, thousands of families will not be able to receive legal assistance” says Russell.

Cuts are also being made to criminal and to immigration law services in response to increases in demand. Refugee applicants will find it more difficult to get the help they need.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Barinder Rasode

Labour Relations Officer

Professional Employees Association

604.581.6662 (office)

604.880.1588 (cell)