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Pro Bono Ontario issues urgent call for volunteers.

Call comes amid efforts to meet rising demand for legal help in 2022.

Toronto, ON: Pro Bono Ontario (PBO) is issuing an urgent call for new volunteers to meet the growing demand for assistance on its Free Legal Advice Hotline. In 2021, the Hotline answered **26,455** calls from low-income Ontarians with unmet civil legal needs, but this was less than half the number of calls that came in. Effective today, the Hotline's hours are expanding to operate Monday to Friday from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (an increase of 45%) to respond to the needs of people with inflexible work schedules who could not previously get through. The access to justice charity will need 1,000 new volunteers to help staff the lines.

“We need the help of the legal profession more than ever,” says Board Chair, Gordon Currie.

The Hotline serves the entire province and provides summary legal advice and legal drafting services for people with civil, non-family law matters. Each year **89%** of callers report it was the first place they could speak to a lawyer about their legal problems. In a January 2022 survey, 92% of volunteers indicated their time on the Hotline improved their awareness of access to justice issues and 76% said their shifts helped them build their substantive skills.

PBO offers multiple supports to lawyers to make volunteering as easy and rewarding as possible:

- ✓ 4 hour shifts that can be taken at home or at the office, with no follow-up work required.
- ✓ The ability for lawyers to provide advice based on their own areas of expertise (civil procedure, corporate law (for non-profits and small businesses), employment, housing, consumer debt and protection and POAs.
- ✓ More than 500 fully cited and hyperlinked FAQs to guide lawyers through common fact scenarios.
- ✓ Real-time staff support.
- ✓ Extended malpractice coverage through LawPRO

“During the pandemic, we saw first-hand how the inequities in everything from jobs to housing to education have risen to a boiling point,” says Executive Director, Lynn Burns. “All Ontarians deserve meaningful access to justice and together we can meet this challenge.”

About Pro Bono Ontario

PBO was created in 2001. Its mission is to harness the skills and dedication of volunteer lawyers to help Ontarians address their unmet legal needs so that they may lead secure, healthy and productive lives. To learn more, visit www.probonoontario.org/volunteer. PBO receives core funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario.