**PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release:

April 18, 2019

**Proposed cuts to Legal Aid funding may reduce or eliminate legal clinic services**

The Provincial budget of April 11, 2019 calls for 30% cuts to Legal Aid funding in Ontario. Currently, Legal Aid’s budget is used to fund duty counsel, telephone advice, and the certificate program for criminal and family law matters, as well as to fund community legal clinics that help with government benefits, housing, employment, consumer, immigration, and debt issues. We have been told that the cuts could result in the closure of the entire legal clinic system across the province.

Willowdale Community Legal Services has existed since 1987 and provides legal assistance and public education to our communities. This helps our most vulnerable residents, including women fleeing domestic violence, seniors, people with mental health challenges and newcomers, keep food on their tables and a roof over their heads. We work to ensure that people with low incomes are able to protect their rights, which in turn gives them the ability to live with health and dignity as active members of society.

“I’ve been a client of Willowdale Community Legal Services for over 20 years and rely on their services to meet my basic needs” said Damiana Palmieri. “It would be devastating to me and our community if their services were reduced due to the Conservative government’s proposed funding cut to Legal Aid Ontario.”

 “We believe that our clinic provides vital services and we are actively working with our communities to protect the clinic from closure,” states Joe Myers, Executive Director of Willowdale Community Legal Services.

“We are calling on the Attorney General, Caroline Mulroney, to make a commitment to access to justice, and to respect the commitment of her government to not decrease front line services, and to confirm that funding for community clinics will not be decreased,” says Lenny Abramowicz, Executive Director speaking on behalf of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with information about Willowdale Community Legal Services. Should you have any questions, please contact:

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