

LEGAL AID ONTARIO LAWYERS

Campaign to Secure Collective Bargaining Rights

Dear colleagues,

Thank you so much to all of our colleagues who completed the workplace survey! If you did not complete the survey, but would like to do so now, it remains open and you can find a link on our website (laolawyers.ca). 125 LAO lawyers completed the survey between July 27 and Sept 22, 2016.

Where we could identify trends, we tried to sort some of the comments and we have also removed specifics included as part of comments that may compromise the identity of the individual contributor. Other than that, we have left your words untouched so that you can get a feel for the kinds of workplace issues we are hearing from our colleagues as we continue outreach across the province.

As always, please feel free to contact a member of your organizing committee by emailing us at info@laolawyers.ca if you have any questions.

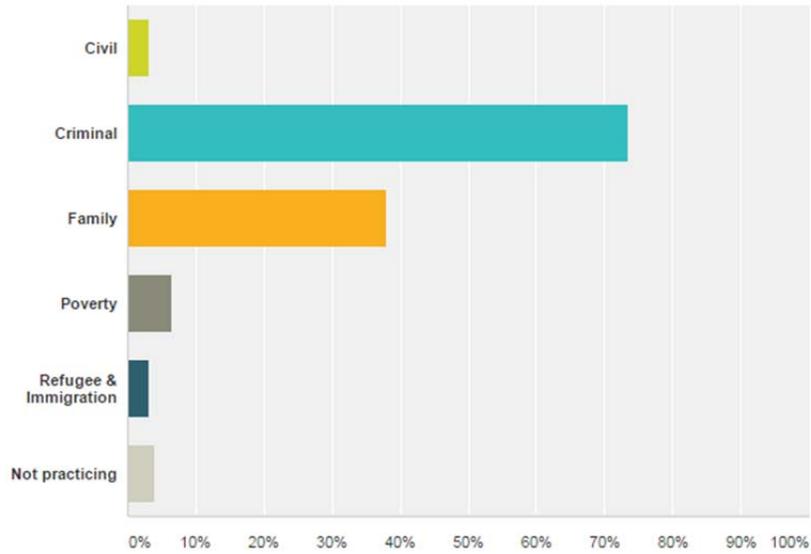
Sincerely,

[LAO Lawyers' Campaign Committee](#)

Question 1: What area(s) of law do you practice?

What area(s) of law do you practice? (check all that apply)

Answered: 124 Skipped: 1

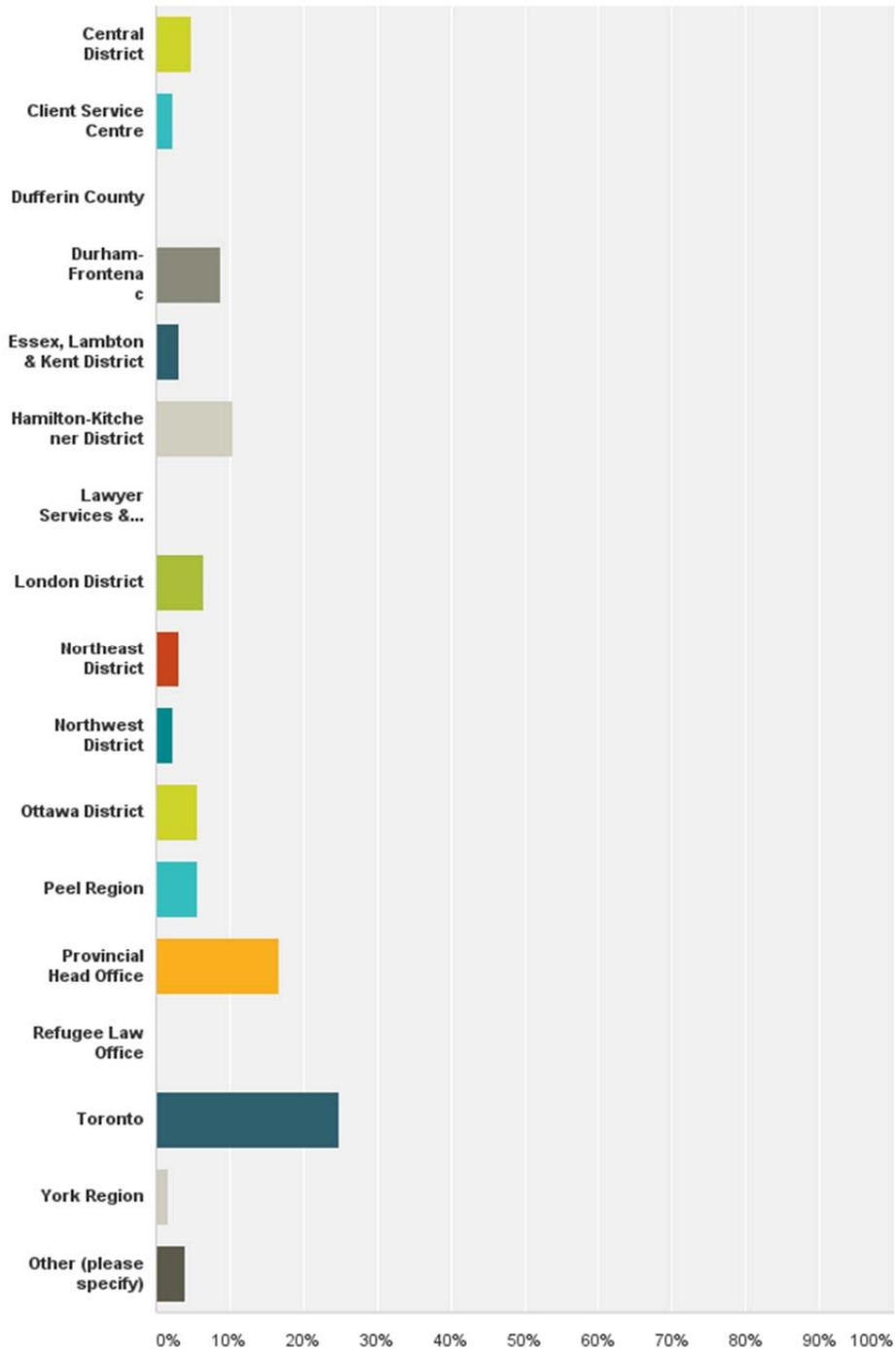


Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Civil	3.23% 4
▼ Criminal	73.39% 91
▼ Family	37.90% 47
▼ Poverty	6.45% 8
▼ Refugee & Immigration	3.23% 4
▼ Not practicing	4.03% 5
Total Respondents: 124	

Question 2:

Q2 What is your primary worksite?

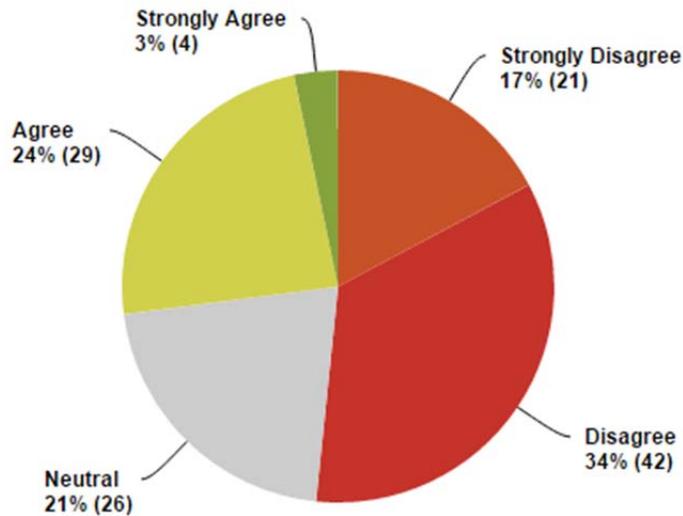
Answered: 125 Skipped: 0



Question 3: I feel that there is open communication between staff lawyers and management – **51% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **27% agreed** or strongly agreed.

I feel that there is open communication between staff lawyers and management.

Answered: 122 Skipped: 3



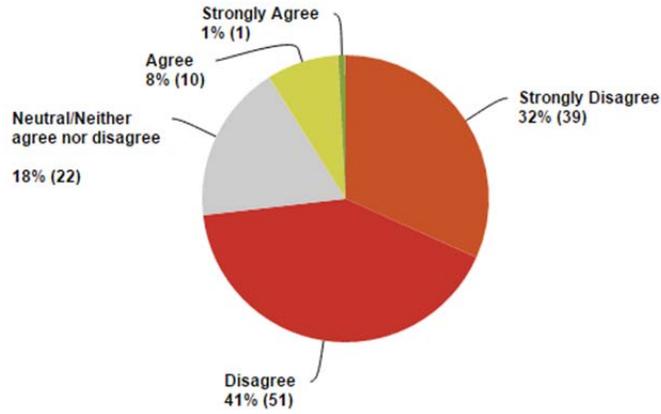
Comments:

- Depends on the manager.
- The only communication between management and staff is during infrequent staff meetings, or the management-appointed LWS committee.
- Excellent communication with my immediate supervisor. Almost none with the rest of LAO management. Just emails that arrive with announcements.
- It depends on the particular member of management.
- There could be better communication with regards to hiring policies.
- I am lucky I have an excellent manager and they know how I feel. Moving on up from there? Of course not.

Question 4: I feel staff lawyers have a say in setting LAO policies and practices – **73% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **9% agreed** or strongly agreed.

I feel staff lawyers have a say in setting LAO policies and practices.

Answered: 123 Skipped: 2



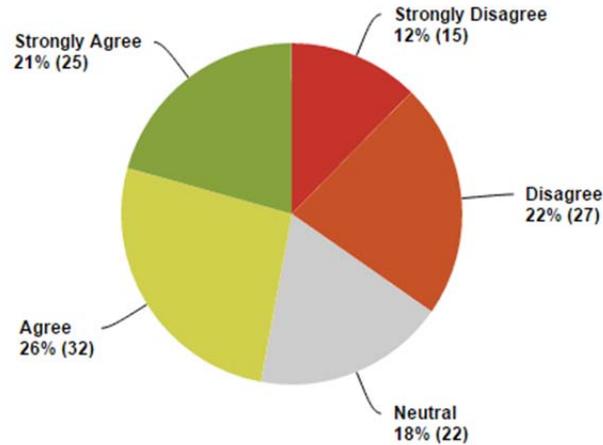
Comments:

NONE

Question 5: I can raise workplace concerns with my supervisor without fear of personal reprisal – **34% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **47% agreed** or strongly agreed.

I can raise workplace concerns with my supervisor without fear of personal reprisal.

Answered: 121 Skipped: 4



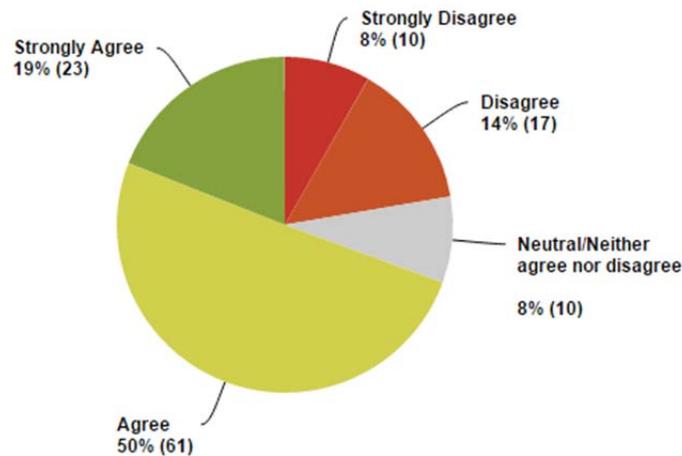
Comments:

- Again, depends on the supervisor.
- My immediate supervisor is motivated to make sure it is a good workplace, however decisions cannot be challenged.
- Unknown. I'd like to believe so, but there is no protection from reprisal if management disagrees with my concern.
- I am lucky that my director is generally wonderful. I do not think this is the norm at LAO though.
- I am lucky to have a good manager. That doesn't mean they will be able to have my concerns alleviated when they escalate them.
- I have an excellent immediate manager. But there is no point raising workplace concerns regarding how LAO runs things.

Question 6: My managers are legal professionals who understand my work and ethical obligations – **22% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **69% agreed** or strongly agreed.

My managers are legal professionals who understand my work and ethical obligations.

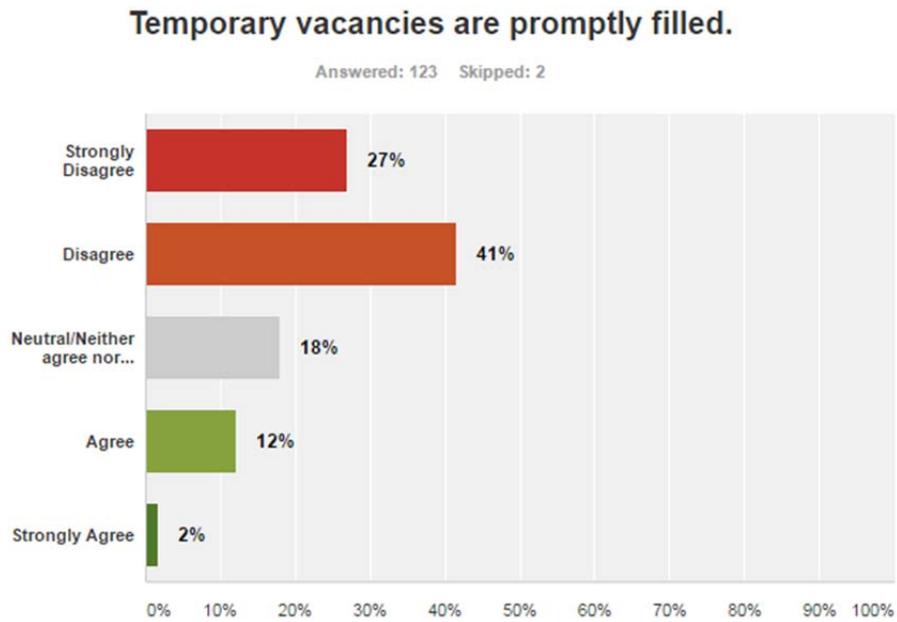
Answered: 121 Skipped: 4



Comments:

- My immediate manager, yes. The VP and others above, absolutely NOT.
- Agree for direct manager; disagree for their superiors at Provincial Office.
- Our manager has NEVER practiced our area of law - it causes frustration and embarrassment by their lack of knowledge.
- Again, my immediate supervisor is, but not the District Managers and certainly not head office. We are continually trying to balance the directives we receive against our ethical obligations.
- This question is a bit problematic. My immediate manager does understand my work because they are intimately involved with our work. The managers above them do not understand our work.
- The manger in my office is indeed a Lawyer. If they are out of the office, my manger is an unlicensed paralegal.
- My immediate manager is a very good, competent lawyer. I am SO lucky this way, particularly in the face of the stuff that trickles down from head office that clearly has never been developed by or looked at by anything resembling a lawyer.

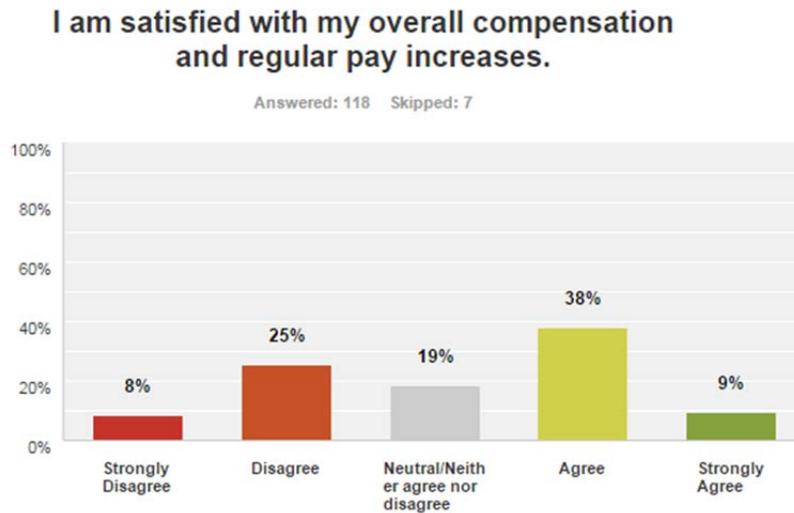
Question 7: Temporary vacancies are promptly filled – **68% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **14% agreed** or strongly agreed.



Comments:

- Temporary vacancies either take a long time to fill, or remain unfilled. Emergency gaps are covered by per diem lawyers.
- In duty counsel offices vacancies are not filled, leading to more pressure on staff lawyers. However, lawyer positions at provincial office are filled promptly and sometimes with no competition. This means that lawyers who are interested do not have a chance to apply.
- We had a vacancy on three months notice, but it still took 4 more months to fill the position.

Question 8: I am satisfied with my overall compensation and regular pay increases – **33% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **47% agreed** or strongly agreed.



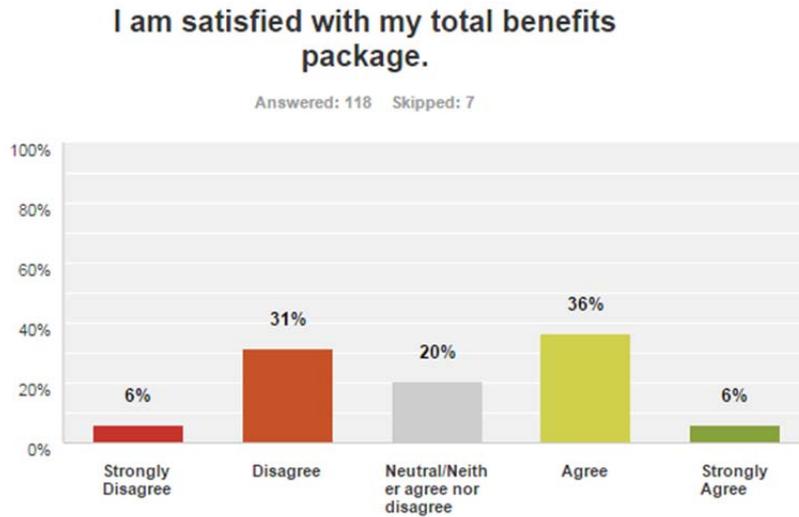
Comments:

- I don't trust it for one minute. The pay has gone up, sure, and will promptly be frozen or clawed back the minute we stop fighting for representation.
- Yes I am happy with where we are today, but it has taken 8 years to catch-up to other provincial lawyers.
- I feel that compensation is now more fair than previously, although it could still be improved (the scale could go up higher for more senior lawyers).
- I'm happy with the recent improvements to lawyer compensation, but have concerns about future deterioration of compensation because of the absence of cost-of-living increases. Also, I would like to see more coverage by LAO of continuing legal education and professional dues (e.g., annual CLA membership fees).
- In constant fear of another pay freeze.
- Once at the highest level, after 10 years, there are no increases for staff lawyers.
- I thought there were no more pay increases.
- I'm comfortable with my pay and this isn't an area of priority for me, but I do think it's not right that I get paid the same rate for dealing with sometimes up to 100 clients in a day in an extremely high-stress and risky environment as someone from the same year of call would in a quieter jurisdiction where maybe they're dealing with 10-15.
- There is a big problem regarding disparity between those living in the GTA where housing costs are astronomical and outside the region. While I can't speak for other regions that may be affected in other ways (ex. the north with gas and food costs), it is very clear that those in the GTA are severely impacted by our relatively low salaries as compared to those in the wider public sector and our difficulties around housing.

Question 8: I am satisfied with my overall compensation and regular pay increases. **Continued...**

- Not happy that once I reach the top of LO2, my increases will become nominal and performance based, and senior management is now dictating the performance rating we can get (limiting the number of people who can be given a top rating) and sending an email to our managers dictating that this requires approval from the board.

Question 9: I am satisfied with my total benefits package – **37% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **42% agreed** or strongly agreed.



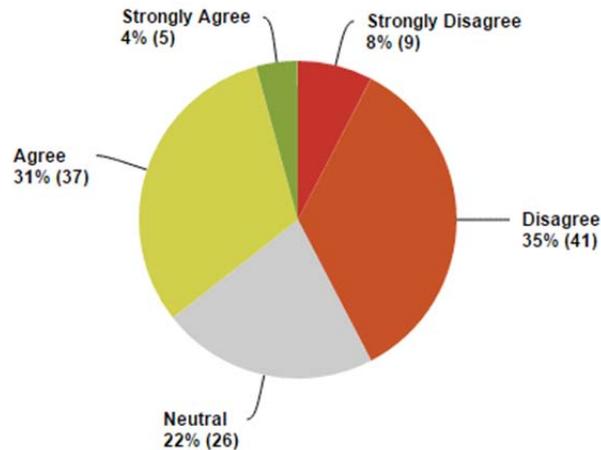
Comments:

- Why are we not in the OPS pension!
- LAO's package covers much less than other government agencies. For example, only \$150 in eye wear is covered every 2 years.
- I would like the option of employee matched RRSP contributions.
- It's adequate, but it could be better.
- I am not happy with our pension or eye care.
- We should have the same package as the crowns we're all government lawyers working for MAG.
- Worst pension of any government lawyers in Ontario.

Question 10: I am satisfied with the amount of paid leave offered by LAO – **43% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **35% agreed** or strongly agreed.

I am satisfied with the amount of paid leave offered by LAO.

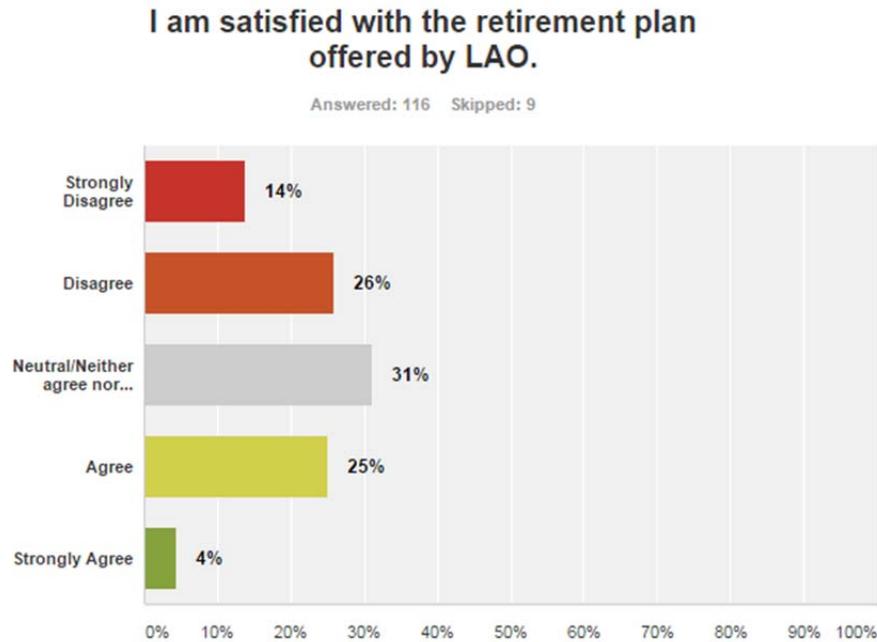
Answered: 118 Skipped: 7



Comments:

- Not enough sick time given the high stress and public facing nature of our work. Who agreed to an extra 15 minutes a day in lieu of one extra day off a year?
- Not enough sick days especially given the stress, pressures and environment.
- In speaking with friends it appears that lawyers at the clinics have considerably more vacation time.
- I would like more vacation time or the opportunity to gain vacation time by working in WASH court.
- Should cover the full 50-52 weeks for maternity leave for closer to 100% salary. The same mortgage payments still need to be covered while on mat leave.
- More would be nice - I had to take a vacation day to attend a funeral.
- My vacation has increased, but my overtime is unpaid and uncompensated.
- Because in court everyday, workday schedule is not flexible and thereby unable to accommodate appointments etc. and have to use vacation time to do this. Not enough discretionary days to help get office work caught up so use a lot of paid leave time. Have to use my own money to take courses and upgrade my skills.
- We should have more sick days.
- Would like more discretion time or use discretion and sick days interchangeably. I have had to use 2 vacation days for medical appointments. I'm out of discretion time but have many sick days left.

Question 11: I am satisfied with the retirement plan offered by LAO – **40% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **29% agreed** or strongly agreed.



Comments:

- I have heard that the retirement plan is problematic (especially from soon to be retirees).
- Although the retirement plan is not bad, it could offer better options, particularly for lawyers who have been with LAO for a lengthy period of time.
- I'm happy with the recent improvements in this regard, but it could be better, especially given the high cost of living in Toronto and surrounding area.
- We should have a defined benefit pension plan.
- I would like the same pension plan as the Crowns. Defined benefit.
- Wish it was defined benefits so I knew what to expect and wasn't taking the risk with the market that stocks could be worth less.
- Again should be on par with the crowns - we're all government lawyers funded by MAG - different roles - but why the discrepancy in pay, benefits and pensions?
- I have a significantly poorer pension than others with less salary and less education.
- Don't really understand it.
- Match 9%.
- Do not know, I know I have a pension, that's it.

Question 12 – Other areas you would like to see improved?**Salary and Benefits**

- More medical coverage (comparable to the Crown and/or other gov't agencies which are at least 90%).
- Better salaries.
- More optical coverage.
- Medical coverage, accommodations.
- Better benefits (mirroring the union benefits as outlined on the Source). Pay on the low end if good. After 8-12 years is insufficient. Top end salary should increase to \$135,000.
- Better medical and dental coverage.
- Medical leave and benefits package.
- Medical - vision, dental.
- Better eye care and dental coverage.
- Pay/Salary increase would be appreciated.
- If LAO structured our disability insurance differently - ie like all the other government departments - it would be worth much more and I could stop paying hundreds a month in supplemental insurance.
- The yearly cost of our medical coverage premiums increases every year but our benefits do not increase at all and have not done so in the 11 years I have been employed at LAO...this despite the fact that practitioners have all increased their fees in that time.
- Salary to match Crowns.
- I want to see salaries continue to rise.
- Medical coverage could be better and a few more sick days would be nice.
- Our disability package could be better. My partner is a tradesman and his plan is WAY better than mine. Mind you, it's a union plan.
- Medical benefits are very expensive.

Leaves, Discretionary Time, Sick Days and Vacation

- More holidays.
- As a 7 year call lawyer, my salary is woefully less than comparable government legal positions. Base salaries for staff counsel are much too low. I also find my job very stressful and I do not have enough leave time. I have to use many vacation days as sick days, and then have no time left over to take meaningful vacations.
- More sick days.
- Better leave to take care of sick family.
- Takes four years for an additional week of vacation but next bump up is 8 years later (12 year mark).
- More sick leave, particularly for front line workers and a pension plan similar to teachers.

Q12 – Other areas you would like to see improved? **Continued...**

- More paid vacation time, more sick leave time allocation, more focus on child care needs in determining approved vacation scheduling.
- Ability to take a couple of hours in a day to go to an appointment would be nice. More vacation time is always appreciated but basically it's fine.
- It would be wonderful to have more discretionary time (particularly mental health days). Duty counsel work is tireless and I think the mental strain this takes on staff needs to be better recognized.
- Earned days off, like Saskatchewan Legal Aid.
- Increased allotment of sick days.
- Leaves, disability coverage and modified duties.
- Need more sick days.
- Educational leave.
- Would like opportunity for flex hours, disability coverage after age 65, better pension and greater health spending account for soft services.
- Would like to see ability to carry over a few sick days per year, with a higher cap on total sick days allowed a year.
- Sick leave.
- Sick and discretionary leave - we always have to dip into vacation time!
- We need more paid sick days, especially when interacting with public every day.
- WASH court coverage particularly, more regular sick leave.

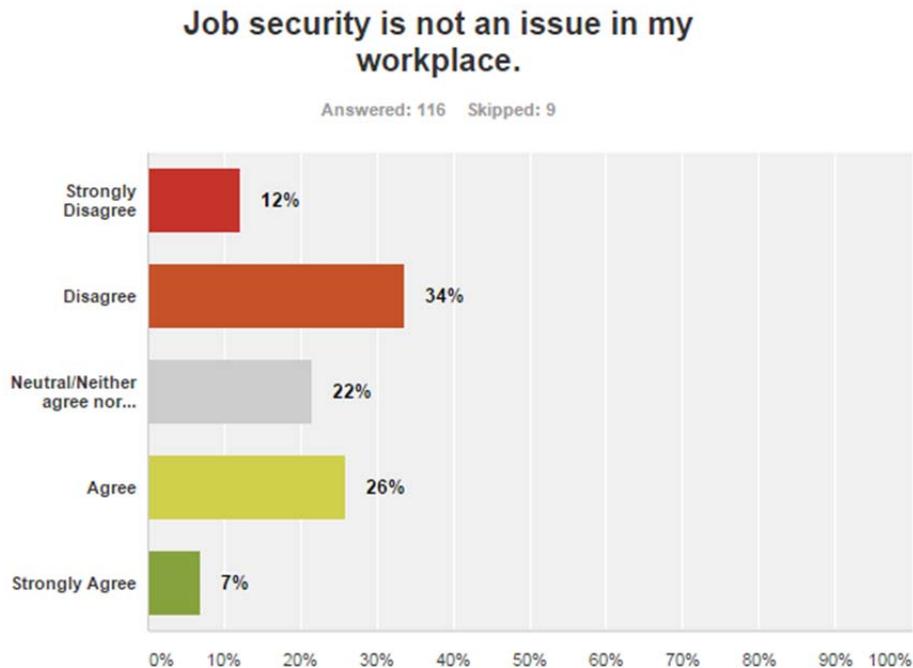
Pension

- Pension. I have worked for LAO for many years and have always made the maximum pension contribution, yet I barely have enough to survive 2 years of retirement.
- Ideally defined benefit pensions.
- Defined benefit plan, like crowns.
- It would be great to be part of the OPS pension.
- Leave, pension, benefits.
- Pensions.
- Pension Benefits.
- Pension is terrible compared to other government lawyers, and the leave policy is left to manager fiat and is applied in a biased way based on family status.
- Amount of vacation time (comparable to clinic lawyers).
- Employees on maternity leave cease to exist to LAO. I wish to have more flexible mat leaves, which allow the employee to remain engaged with LAO and the law.
- More paid leave and better pension plan; paid courthouse parking.
- Yes, pension. I would like defined benefit.
- Leaves and remuneration.
- Pension and vacation time.

Q12 – Other areas you would like to see improved? **Continued...**

- Change to vacation policy, first increase after 4 years next after 12 years!
- Leaves and pension.
- All of them to be improved.
- Pension, sick days.
- Pensions - Get us in the OCAA or ALOC plan.
- Overtime payment. Better pension.
- Pensions, leaves.
- Defined benefit pension, as Ont. government lawyers receive.
- Pension and salary.

Question 13: Job security is not an issue in my workplace – **46% disagree** or strongly disagree, **33% agree** or strongly agree.



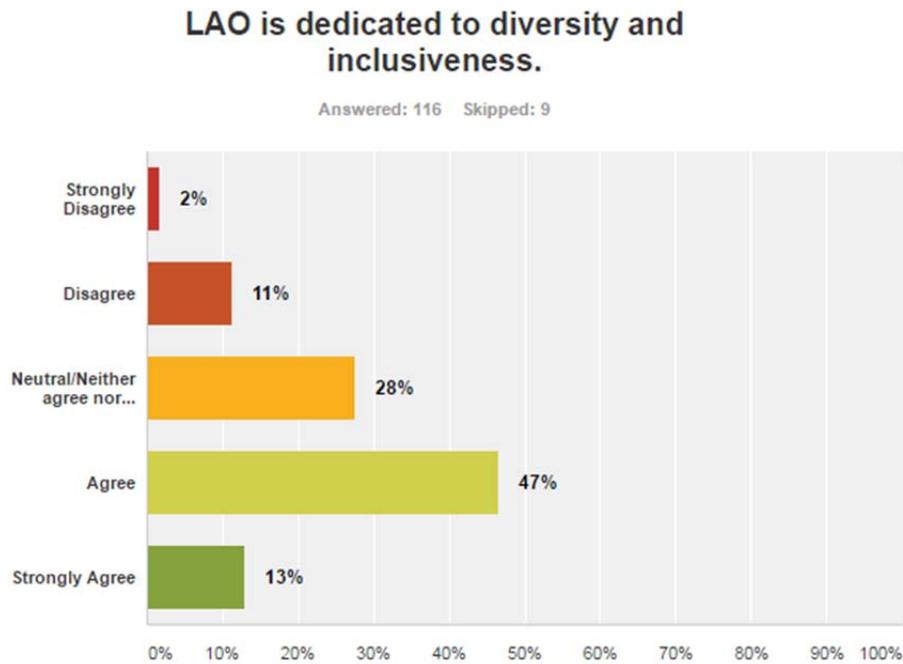
Comments:

- Multiple short-term contracts.
- Most new hires are on contracts. The LAO internal transfer policy states that if you are on a contract, you need to wait until 90% of the contract is complete before applying to a new job, which leaves very little time to apply to jobs. Also, if a contract finishes, there is no way to keep checking the internal job postings.
- I have no concerns about my job security.
- For contract employees, they should be advised at least 6 months prior to the end of the contract whether or not the contract will be extended/they will be offered a permanent position.
- For those on contract, there is no security.
- Management seems loyal to the employees, but there is always a pressure to attract more clients or face a risk of office closure.
- Our current manager plays favourites and is a micro manager.
- We're horrifically understaffed for our volume and workload.
- LWS is a significant concern.
- I am permanent, but I don't think the non-permanent staff feel secure enough in their positions.
- Experienced lawyers who were passed over in the rotation process are now being passed over to less experienced lawyers due to budget constraints, and lawyer manager positions are being filled with non-lawyers. How can a non-lawyer manage lawyers?

Question 13: Job security is not an issue in my workplace. **Continued...**

- Not for me but for an employee on contract.

Question 14: LAO is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness – **13% disagree** or strongly disagree, **60% agreed** or strongly agreed.



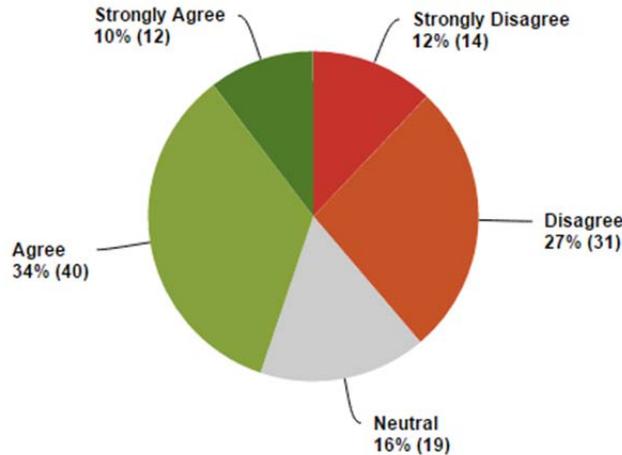
Comments:

- They like to hire based on equity initiatives, but do not truly understand how to accommodate or treat people with disabilities.
- I do think LAO makes an effort to hire diverse lawyers who have worked with diverse communities. They should make more of an effort to ensure those lawyers are retained by LAO.
- This is hard to gauge. I feel there is a lot of lip service, but not necessarily a lot put into practice. For example, at PO, none of the doors is set up to be accessible (automatic door openers).
- We have NO Aboriginal people on staff that I know of in the entire NW region.
- WAY BIG lip service only.

Question 15: I have unaddressed workplace ethical concerns – **39% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **46% agreed** or strongly agreed.

I have unaddressed workplace ethical concerns.

Answered: 116 Skipped: 9



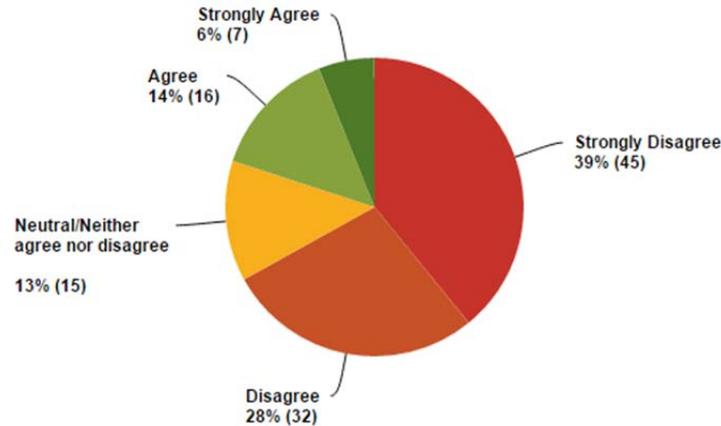
Comments:

- Duty counsel in my region are not given the time, staff resources or access to information about clients we need to properly represent them during bail hearings.
- There are issues regarding confidentiality.
- The inability to protect client confidentiality is a significant issue. Sexism and racism in the workplace are also a problem.
- There is sometimes a conflict between LAO financial priorities and my duties as a lawyer. In order to meet my professional obligations I sometimes have to bend/break with LAO policy as I do not feel I would have support to proceed in a manner consistent with my obligations.
- Conflicts of interest.
- There is absolutely no way to ensure client confidentiality in my courthouse. This has been raised at senior management levels for years.
- The conflict system is a huge mess. Since 2011 I've been told LAO is working on it, I've seen no progress.

Question 16: Office space provided by LAO is adequate for the performance of all the duties of my job – **67% disagreed** or strongly disagreed, **20% agreed** or strongly agreed.

Office space provided by LAO is adequate for the performance of all the duties of my job. (ie. maintaining client confidentiality, conducting meetings, consulting with other LAO lawyers, etc.)

Answered: 115 Skipped: 10



Comments:

- Yes at my current role, but not when I was DC.
- Open concept is difficulty for maintaining client privacy.
- This varies greatly. I feel that a big contributor of stress in the workplace is working in tight spaces.
- Confidentiality is a major issue given the small work space.
- I do not have enough space in my cubicle for all of the resources I need at hand. There is also sometimes an issue with finding a private boardroom or other space for meetings/phone calls.
- We have 5 people working in a 2-person office.
- We have a tiny booth for all of us I don't even have a drawer to put my things in.
- We are luckier than many regions. The major issue is that we cannot interview in-custody clients privately.
- This is a real problem. Open concept is noisy and not conducive to the focus needed for my work. The talk about moving to 'hoteling' is even more concerning.
- The space available is wholly inadequate. Other stakeholders and members of the public have expressed shock by this.
- It is hard to produce high quality legal work in an efficient manner given the poor work environment at head office. Cubicles do not afford the necessary quiet, private space to work effectively as possible, or to have phone conversations with clients on occasions when that is necessary.

Q16: Office space provided by LAO is adequate for the performance of all the duties of my job.

Continued...

- We need more space at our courthouse. LAO is moving closer which will help take care of some of that, but our workspace is not properly ergonomic at the courthouse either.
- DC offices are highly inadequate. We have to interview clients out in the open surrounded by other people.
- I work from home.
- LAO is very flexible with workplace arrangements - I am currently working from home - this flexibility is unmatched elsewhere and a very good thing.
- No space to meet clients.
- However, I do not blame LAO for this. We are in a courthouse where it has been a lengthy, nasty battle to get any space for us at all. I started in 2012 and it took TWO YEARS before I got an 'office'. I had to meet clients in the hallway. Again, I don't blame LAO for this.

Question 17: Are you satisfied with the service LAO provides?

- On the family side - LAO could provide much more certificate services by staff lawyers. Much cheaper to LAO and better service provided to client.
- 6 individuals said – “No.”
- 7 individuals said – “Yes.”
- Yes, for the most part on the front lines.
- We can do better with better staffing levels, resources and more power at stakeholder which would enable us to advocate for better working conditions from those in charge of court infrastructure.
- I am highly dissatisfied with our office space, it violates client confidentiality and does not provide lawyers with adequate space to perform our jobs.
- We do not have the resources we need to do our jobs well. IE, no working printer, no working photocopier accessible to most staff, cumbersome laptops that are inadequate for our needs, no system for retaining client files, no working voicemail and no receptionist to take calls and get messages to staff, etc.
- Somewhat.
- Yes, for the most part.
- We provide the best possible service we can given the restrictions and hurdles presented to us.
- No, due to space constraints.
- There is always room to improve but generally, yes.
- Yes, for the most part.
- Financial eligibility criteria for clients excludes too many people from access to justice.
- At this office, yes.
- Yes, overall LAO as a whole does a good job of meeting its mandate and I think that overall it does a good job.
- Usually.
- I feel that my interests would be better represented if staff lawyers had clear representation in discussion about Legal Aid practises and policies.
- I am satisfied with some of the services, but not all. Staff lawyers would be able to provide significantly better services with more resources, better space, better administrative support, changes made to court expectations/DC procedure (especially bail court) so that more time can be spent with each client before an appearance, etc.
- There is room for improvement on multiple fronts.
- Yes. But where I am we have a good, responsive supervisor who enables our team to perform well.
- No. We need more lawyers on frontline servicing clients. Often we have insufficient time to address client needs adequately.
- Yes, in my department.
- To clients? No.

Question 17: Are you satisfied with the service LAO provides? **Continued...**

- No. I believe that too much money is being spent on things like advice by phone and internal training that could be used to pay for more certificates and increase the tariffs.
- Yes, but way more help is needed for unrepresented clients.
- No. I often feel constrained by LAO policy and must provide service despite my constraints.
- Yes. I think we provide excellent service.
- Yes. But the stats are getting silly.
- If you mean to clients, then no. Our staffing issues coupled with a lack of support from the rest of the organization mean we can do little to mitigate the failures and issues at our court house and clients routinely fall through the cracks despite our best efforts.
- 6 out of 10.
- No - we are risking serious errors in our service.
- I believe that I offer top quality service as do the others on my work team. However this is done at a personal cost. I am frequently fighting colds and am too tired by the end of the week to do anything on Saturday. Truthfully spend the day or a large part of the day in bed resting and then have to do all my shopping and chores on Sunday. Our schedule with no office days results in me taking home work (entering dockets), preparing sentencings, thinking about my files, contacting sureties, most evenings throughout the week and some weekends. Without that effort on my part I would not be able to do my job properly.
- On the whole, I believe LAO staff do the best with what we are given. I do feel that quality is suffering with the increased focus on stats. Numbers seem to be more important than quality service. I am very concerned at the move toward "self-serve" for our clients, who are extremely marginalized. The best service is always face to face, with time taken to explore all aspects of the issues they face. Call centres are not the answer.
- We are unduly constrained by funding and this is unacceptable for low-income Ontarians and as well for our own health (physical & mental) and safety.
- No. should and could be better - we pay lip service to our mandate and do what we can with the resources at our disposal but Crim DC are the ONLY lawyers who EXPECT to not provide privacy and confidentiality to our clients.
- LAO disrespects the private bar and legal clinics.

Question 18: What suggestions do you have for policy or practice changes that would help you better do your job?

- Upper management that is more supportive of the work that DC does.
- More committees and forums allowing all willing lawyers to participate.
- Devote more resources including senior staff and have an LAO rep who will advocate for our needs to the courthouse stakeholders.
- We need clear and concise instructions beforehand when policy changes eg legal aid eligibility. We feel the brunt of private counsel complaints when we are suddenly asked to implement new changes.
- I think LAO should do more consultation with staff prior to making major changes in policy/practice.
- More security for lawyers experiencing abusive and belligerent clients. The ability to refuse service immediately to someone who is being abusive to a lawyer.
- Fire every manager at LAO, hire normal, sensible people with law degrees.
- More office resources, an admin staff, tablets with a client filing system and bring forward system, conflict checking system, voicemail and staff to relay messages to lawyers, adequate training for lawyers starting new areas of law, resources to send staff to mandatory and essential training.
- It would be nice to have a couple days per month out of court to conduct meetings and pretrials.
- Allow us to take our vacation days when we want to.
- The Board and Senior management should include at least one criminal lawyer, one family law lawyer and one immigration who at some point in their career relied upon legal aid certificate work as a significant part of their practice.
- More front line work less management.
- Permanent hires.
- Better communication between human resources and managers and employees. It is very hard to track down the policies. Human resources often is not clear on what the policy is and managers are not clear on what the policies are. Updates on policies should be communicated to employees and managers. In terms of benefits, I forgot to mention that I think the sick leave policy, which is currently 6 days, including children's illnesses, should be extended.
- We have conflict of interest issues. We have various offices that should stay separate so we can take opposing clients but the protections are wholly inadequate.
- Having a support person in bail court (an articling student, LAW, or second staff lawyer), to be able to interview sureties and accused and call potential sureties while other person is in court. It is a detriment to clients when DC run bails with minimal or no prep, or when bails are adjourned because DC didn't have time to prepare.
- Better internal file management so that client files are easily accessible when different DC/staff lawyers assist the same person. A defined and enforced procedure for per diems to record information about clients who were adjourned so that future DC/staff lawyers who assist that client know what happened and what needs to take place at/by next court appearance.

Question 18: What suggestions do you have for policy or practice changes that would help you better do your job? **Continued...**

- More flexible mat leave to ensure women are not disadvantaged by the fact that they are taking time off.
- More engagement with managers as to issues occurring at the workplace - our managers are offsite and from a jurisdiction that operates very differently from the one I am in. Policy that works in their jurisdiction does not translate well to mine.
- More resources should go to direct service, including legal research, fewer resources should go to middle management and random "projects".
- Hire more lawyers to advise and advocate for clients in criminal court; more time allotted for CPD and professional development
- The annual performance reviews are a huge waste of time. Much of the mandatory training is also of no use.
- Allow me to do follow up with clients after work hours, when I can spend more time with them.
- Roles are better defined and staff lawyers have better support services to assist with their busy workload. A better format for lawyers to review new policy initiatives.
- Front-line staff need to have more of a say in determining policies. This cannot be in the form of a token member in a committee that can be easily overruled by management or ignored.
- Union representation!
- Too much \$ spent on management. Stop with all this silly HR bureaucracy. All this \$ wasted on made up jobs. The \$ should be for the clients. Not bureaucracy.
- Individuals from higher in the organization should actually come out to our location and see what we're dealing with before imposing policies or "pilot projects" on us. Most of what they come up with is completely unrealistic for us.
- We need a better policy for conflicts of interest. The waivers are useless because the clients do not have the option of having any other counsel.
- More office space for storage of files and training on how to create conflict lists and keep track of clients' progress from court date to court date. Need a staff trial lawyer available for consultation on different files. Need office meetings during office hours on a regular basis to discuss files, issues, case law to create higher quality service, ease stress, promote team work etc. and opportunity for better communication (share learning experiences, brainstorm, etc.).
- Mgmt is out of touch. More realistic understanding of client volume and available resources. More focus on substantive quality of work.
- More mentorship if available. Senior counsel development
- Transparent hiring practices - ALL posted secondments, no unilateral movement of employees... in fact a complete re-haul of how positions are posted and filled. The recruitment department (and ALL OF HR) needs a serious wake up call.
- Bring up to date fees and descriptions for certificate lawyer services.

Question 18: What suggestions do you have for policy or practice changes that would help you better do your job? **Continued...**

- My primary concern is my working conditions - our space is too small to accommodate the number of staff, as well as our clients. Privilege breaches are a daily occurrence as a result of NO PRIVACY. Further the limited space I am certain violate workplace safety requirements as well as fire safety requirements. Our workplace is not safe.
- Remove pressure to expand into areas in which I don't have expertise.
- Lawyers having to do our dockets and mindlessly and continuously enter the same information. CLICs in the regional locations.
- Management needs training not just in legal aid procedures but in real human resources/talent development. Management needs to listen more to its staff lawyers who are on the ground serving clients. Too often management seems totally disconnected from the realities of our jobs.
- We need a uniform conflict checking system. I have been made to feel like a problem-maker when I bring up that the system is inadequate. We also need a uniform hiring system. ALL vacancies should be posted and hiring should be based on experience and seniority, NOT on budgeting.
- Too many departments, too many projects and overlapping programs. Confusion
- not sure, our department evolves with the needs of workflow and employees and available technology
- Need space to meet clients. A more effective HR and IT department.
- I have too many to list.
- The addition and input of practicing lawyers to senior management, the executive and board of directors.
- Legal Aid should be run by lawyers - lawyers who have practiced law and actually seen the inside of a courtroom.

Question 19: What suggestions do you have for workplace improvements?**Improved Work Space**

- More office space close to bail courts. Photocopiers close to bail and plea courts.
- Need more phones! Working phones! Computers so we can do our stats in an efficient time! We only have two computers in an office of 8 and 5 phones with 3 working lines, that do not hang up properly.
- Better office space - Having all necessary legislation and tools available - Having a manager/supervisor on site for when ethical or difficult issues arise.
- Allow us to take our vacation days when we want to, provide sufficient space, desks, etc.
- Office space at courthouse for client meetings.
- Since a majority of jobs at LAO are "sitting jobs," greater efforts should be made to provide proper ergonomic work areas, including standing desks. As long as the provision of a proper ergonomic work area remains at managers' discretion and is guided by the manager's expense account, this remains a low priority. As the workforce ages, this will become a more critical issue.
- More space so that clients can be interviewed privately. An LAW or receptionist stationed in such a way that they can field basic questions (ex. what court room am I in? Do you know where my lawyer is? etc.) rather than having staff lawyers be interrupted with such questions.
- More space is absolutely required at the courthouse. Our computer systems are grossly out of date and there is not enough equipment available. Overcrowding in the office is an issue which impacts client service.
- More office space for staff lawyers to improve client confidentiality and increase productivity.
- More space - we are in a courthouse with many new empty rooms however duty counsel are cramped into one small office. Perhaps some engagement with LAO and MAG/Courthouse operators to determine if more space could be had for Legal Aid.
- Lawyers need offices - or, at the very least, adequate reasonably-available meeting space.
- More and better workplace space to interview clients safely and confidentially.
- A place to work would be nice. I always go off site to work because our office has one area that can cram in 4 laptops - we have 6 staff who use that office - but the noise of 4 people plus phone and clients at the door makes it impossible to work there.
- Please more space. We are all getting sick...almost always one sick person in office and we share same phone, computer, the germs just spread.
- Ditch the open concept layout. In our department, we need offices. We spend the vast majority of our time at our computers reading, analyzing and writing.
- Lawyers should have offices, or at very least more quiet, more private and less noisy work stations.
- More office space, ergonomic office space at the courthouse, better computer equipment, better software. And we have a terrible budget where we can't even get enough criminal codes, we don't have enough for our own office supplies, etc.
- Bigger office space and wifi.

Question 19: What suggestions do you have for workplace improvements? **Continued...**

Consultation, Respect, and Health & Safety

- There needs to be much consideration of regional differences/needs. What works for Toronto doesn't necessarily work for every other jurisdiction in the province.
- We need more space and the ability to consult with clients in a manner which is safe (i.e. more space) and does not compromise privilege. Further, it is barely accessible for disabled clients - it is unsafe.
- Safety and confidentiality - basic things such as windows for fire exits and double entrance/exit for doors to tiny crowded offices. Basic compliance with Access to Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- Realignment of departments and avoiding frequent changes in policy and practice.
- I have too many. We are micromanaged by many non-lawyers. Not enough respect for legal work and too much importance placed on call centre metrics.
- More respect and autonomy to staff lawyers. We are professionals. Don't treat us like children.
- More front line work, less management.
- Greater transparency.
- More consultation with front line staff.
- Time in lieu for overtime. Currently we technically have it, but can only take it if no court is in session in the building.
- Outlining clearly the roles and expectations of all employees in all levels of the organization and the ability to rate performance of each stakeholder.
- Why I want a union is so people who are experiencing harassment, or alleged to be harassing someone have independent representation. In case I don't have a good relationship with my manager I want to know I have backup. As it stands everything depends on who is directly supervising you and how well you get along with them. If the company tries to fire someone there is no back up besides hiring counsel. We need Union representation for these reasons.
- Better supports for lawyers on the front lines to assist with their busy workloads.

Staffing Levels

- Dealing with understaffing. This would alleviate a lot of the stress duty counsel feel and would enable them to do a better job. Would make the workplace a better place to work.
- APPROPRIATE STAFFING. With the volume here, there should be at minimum two lawyers per active bail court, two lawyers to provide advice for set date appearances, plus staff floating to assist with particularly vulnerable clients that need more time (i.e. mental health issues). There is no way one lawyer should be handling 30-40 bail cases by themselves, or 60 advice clients with 20 resolution meetings in a day.

Question 20: Do you have any suggestions for improving the level of input staff lawyers are given in LAO policy making?

Representation, Consultation and Collaboration

- Having our chosen representatives in discussion with management.
- Policies that directly effect staff should be rolled out with openness for suggestions. More bottom up ideas (ideas from staff) not always from VP.
- Need to be consulted on what we think the improvements in that jurisdiction should be and those suggestions need to be followed up.
- More consultation - More surveys.
- Ask for anonymous input by the people affected by policy / changes.
- Yes, suggestions for improvement should be canvassed and considered.
- Less silos, better information-sharing.
- Online questionnaires and surveys when policy amendments are contemplated.
- Have opportunity for consultation before policies get implemented.
- We need a clear representative at the table for these types of discussions.
- More town halls with follow ups.
- When a policy is being developed that affects staff lawyers perhaps consultation should occur in some manner.
- It would be helpful to see LAO's staff lawyers take a unified position / communicate with a unified voice on certain issues.
- Any policy change that will affect the quality of legal services offered by LAO should be vetted by staff lawyers who directly serve clients in that area of law before others make the decision based on cost alone and start pushing it down everyone's throat.
- We need more, regular chances to give input; we need to know our voices are being heard.
- Allow for direct involvement in policy that impacts on individual offices.
- Staff lawyers should be given a chance to review draft policy initiatives prior to implementation.
- Front-line staff must have an equal voice to management in policy-level decision making. A token member can be ignored or overruled, while giving the false impression of input. This has been management's practice in the past.
- Maybe those of us in the trenches should be deciding how to implement changes to help the clients.
- Decision makers should do a week to two week shift at whatever location will be impacted by their decision. The disconnect between decision-makers and on-the-ground staff that are actually expected to enact these policies is a big problem.
- Real consultations. Not just mandatory meetings where we are told the new policy. The ability to comment without reprisals.
- Hate PEP... have to word it a special way... more effort than benefit.
- More open consultation with high-level management without fear of reprisal.

Question 20: Do you have any suggestions for improving the level of input staff lawyers are given in LAO policy making? **Continued...**

Representation, Consultation and Collaboration

- I can wholeheartedly state that front-line staff are simply not engaged or spoken to when decisions are made. There needs to be a representative - many in fact - at the table when policy is being created (let alone implemented!!). The LWS committee is a sham that isn't rooted in any real substance and deals with surface issues - they are not informed about any new policies or strategies in their infancy, they are only told about projects that are already almost complete and then "asked for input". It's a joke. Head office is comprised of lawyers who have never practised and have no idea how things actually run on the ground - it is impossible and implausible for them to create something sound without staff input, and yet that's how LAO runs. This needs to change.
- Suggestion box on the Source.
- Perhaps LAO would take our concerns into consideration via consultations PRIOR to making policy decisions instead if the other way around.
- Collective bargaining.
- We would need more time to be involved - more communication for meetings; and time to read anything that's sent out.
- LAO policy makers need to get out in the field more and understand the conditions we actually operate in.
- Give us more input. I've not been included in or consulted on any policy making.
- We don't get input except via management controlled committees. We just had one of those popped on us with no real notice. I was in court and could not attend.

Question 21: Are there other workplace issues not addressed in the survey?

Performance Reviews and Training

- Performance reviews. If there are negative reviews an employee should be given a chance to respond to any negative points.
- Insufficient training. Except for virtual lunch and learns, there are surprisingly few opportunities for professional development during work hours. Because workplaces are understaffed, it would be hard for managers to allow several lawyers to be away for several days for training.
- Training sessions and other discussions should not take as their starting point that "all lawyers are a-holes" out to screw their clients and LAO.

Management, Hiring and HR

- Contract employees for more than 2yrs should be granted full-time contracts
- Manager not supporting the needs of the staff.
- The intersection of management and law are inequitable. For example business analysis and administration are given greater value than front line service delivery unlike the crown system.
- Again as the older generation at LAO reaches retirement, the communication between HR and pending retirees is very poor. When an employee provides the manager with a retirement date, HR should step in and walk the employee through the process and what should arrangements should be made and when.
- Transparency regarding hiring process. Many legal aid lawyers complain about applying for jobs, never hearing back about an interview, only to hear that someone was pre-selected. Or, worse, never having a job posted, but hearing that someone was now in that new role that they would have liked to have the opportunity to apply for. I think this creates a lot of frustration in the work place - people are unhappy with their jobs, try to switch to a new position, only to be confronted by an opaque hiring process.
- When issues arise between employees perhaps management could refer the individuals to a third party or independent party - Management sometimes appears to be worried more about budgets rather than the workings in the office!
- Not just how fast vacancies are filled but criteria for choosing successful candidates. It should be clear there is an incumbent on job postings.
- Transparency and ethics are paramount with regard to lawyer positions and pay. All positions need to be advertised properly and candidates need to be interviewed fairly without a presumption on who will get the job.

Question 21: Are there other workplace issues not addressed in the survey? **Continued...**

Resourcing, Support and Health & Safety

- Electronic worksheet system needs improvement. Safety is an issue. One of the interview rooms doesn't have a safety button, and we need to walk past the client to exit.
- In some case, PTSD should be recognized. Criminal lawyers deal with very, very difficult clients sometimes and are exposed to fairly disturbing allegations. The amount of sessions paid by the insurance company is simply not enough.
- Hoteling is not specifically addressed and I think needs to be considered as an issue.
- The issues which are relevant to our own occupational health & safety directly undermine LAO's mandate to providing service to low income Ontarians.
- That's all I can think of at the moment, but northern issues aren't really addressed - we need more advocacy up here for FN populations, we need a court addressing MH and Gladue issues because it's terrible up here, we need better rules about travel and support at satellite courts.
- My workspace is not handicap accessible.