

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **ACCESS TO JUSTICE CRUCIAL CONSIDERATION FOR ALL ALBERTANS**

## **SPRING ELECTION PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE**

**CALGARY, ALBERTA (MAY 1, 2023)** – Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG) is urging our next government to make Accessible Justice for Albertans experiencing poverty a key component of their platform and provincial leadership. “When considering legal help for low and no-income Albertans, it doesn’t matter who forms Alberta’s next government,” says **CLG’s Executive Director Marina Giacomini**. “The barriers to accessible justice aren’t new, and with this election we have an opportunity for everyone in this province to get the help they need when facing a legal concern.”

There are several areas within the legal system where improvements could be made, including changes to the financial eligibility requirements of Legal Aid Alberta to make it more accessible for working Albertans who still can’t afford a private lawyer. Additionally, the expansion of specialized courts across Alberta would help ensure that people with mental health challenges, substance abuse disorders, and other social issues contributing to criminal activity are addressed appropriately and effectively. Lastly, “The research and our experience also shows that when people self-represent on a legal matter, it can increase the cost to the government and taxpayer as these matters end up in court when they may have been mediated outside the court room with the help of a lawyer,” says Giacomini. “It’s important to recognize that Albertans are calling for increased safety across our cities and towns. A proven way to make this happen, is to ensure that people who are experiencing various social issues related to trauma and poverty, are receiving treatment in addition to being held accountable for any criminal behaviour they may have participated in. This is a significant way to fall back into criminal behaviour.” says Giacomini. “In the absence of help to address social or personal issues, many people will return to negative situations and behaviour after they complete a sentence or court requirement. “

For more information, or media interviews, please contact Paula Arnold, Communications Advisor at [arnoldp@clg.ab.ca](mailto:arnoldp@clg.ab.ca) or call (587) 215-5504.

### **About Calgary Legal Guidance**

Calgary Legal Guidance Society is recognized as a leading pro bono organization since 1972. Providing legal guidance and support for thousands of Albertans each year, Calgary Legal Guidance offers a wide range of free legal services for people who don’t qualify for, or can’t be helped by, Legal Aid Alberta. Calgary Legal Guidance offers a variety of programs, education, training and support. Visit [www.clg.ab.ca](http://www.clg.ab.ca)