

Free legal advice offered on Law Day

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Calgary Herald

Wednesday, April 03, 2013

The legal system can be intimidating for anyone but when you're a new Canadian, can't speak English or can't afford a lawyer, it seems even more complex.

The Canadian Bar Association hopes to break down some of the barriers by providing free legal advice on annual Law Day April 13.

Thirty volunteer lawyers will man the phones at Legal Aid Alberta's Calgary office that day answering questions on a wide range of legal issues, including family law, criminal law, immigration law, landlord-tenant issues, creditor-debtor law and civil law.

"This is an opportunity for anyone across the province to call a toll-free number and speak to one of our lawyers," says municipal lawyer Ola Malik, chairman of the bar association's Access to Justice Committee's pilot project.

"Hopefully, they'll get the legal advice they need and will be referred to our compiled list of resources across the province that provide free legal education and advice."

Malik says the bar association wanted to introduce the initiative in Calgary this year, then expand it to Edmonton and eventually provincewide.

"The legal system can be very frightening to navigate," said Malik. "People don't realize the amount of free resources out there."

"Hopefully, it will be a success and people take advantage of it. It's a drop in the bucket, but it's a good start."

The toll-free number for advice is 1-888-644-8950 and lawyers will answer questions from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. that day.

The Access to Justice Committee has teamed up on the project with Legal Aid Alberta, Calgary Legal Guidance, Pro Bono Law Alberta, Edmonton Community Legal Clinic and the Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta. Law Day events run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Calgary Courts Centre, 601 5th St. S.W.

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