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Municipal POA Courts Cost Recovery – Ministry of the Attorney General Announces 50% Increases

The Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) has announced that it will increase costs for municipal government *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) Courts administration to offset increased Ministry costs for Justices of the Peace (JP) services and oversight of transfer agreements. AMO understands that these increases will be effective January 1, 2016 and represent significant increases. The changes were announced in letters to municipal courts administrators and to their Heads of Council on August 13, 2015.

AMO understands that the increased costs for municipal governments will come from two areas:

- A 50% increase in the costs per hour for JP services, from \$200/hr to \$300/hr to reflect salary and benefit increases for JPs; and
- A 50% increase in the cost of monitoring the agreements with municipalities that transfer POA courts to local governments to reflect 100 % of the cost for this activity (MAG has not been recovering all costs previously).

Compensation for members of the judiciary is set by an independent panel and is not subject to approval by the Province or municipal governments. JP costs increases represented in this announcement are well above inflation.

Municipal governments use the POA fine revenue to help with their budget bottom line. This fiscal hit will impact 2016 budgets. AMO believes these changes could be better timed or phased-in to coincide with anticipated enhancements to the collection of POA fines that will allow license plate denial and pursuit of fines on out of province vehicles. These system changes are anticipated within the next two years. POA fines help to support other municipal services and cost increases will have an impact on service provision at the local level.

Municipal governments operating POA courts are advised to examine potential budget impacts for 2016.

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