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Research Institution at Osgoode Hall to Study Long-Term Impacts of Access to Legal Help

The [Canadian Forum on Civil Justice](#) (CFCJ), a not-for-profit organization at Osgoode Hall Law School and a recognized leader in civil and family justice research in Canada, has received a grant from the [Law Foundation of Ontario](#) to begin a study of the long-term impacts of access to legal help to resolve disputes.

Access to civil and family justice is one of the most significant, yet overlooked, issues affecting the quality of life of adults in Canada. Every year, millions of individuals in Canada experience one or more serious civil and/or family justice problems that they find difficult to resolve in cost-effective, expeditious and satisfactory ways. These legal problems, many of which occur during the transactions and transitions of daily life, often result in additional monetary, social, personal, mental health and physical health problems. In the short-term, increased demands on public services caused by everyday legal problems are estimated to cost governments more than \$800 million annually, while individuals spend an estimated \$7.7 billion annually on out-of-pocket legal expenses.

In recent years, CFCJ research has focused on increasing public consciousness of the [cost of justice](#) in Canada. With this new \$25,000 Law Foundation of Ontario research grant, the national research institution will be making a shift from an examination of short-term costs to an assessment of the long-term impacts of access (and lack of access) to justice.

The “Measuring the Impact of Legal Service Interventions” project will be the first stage of a longitudinal impact study that aims to determine the effects of access to different types of legal services on the outcome of legal disputes, on social, economic and personal costs, and on environmental scenarios over time. While this type of study is common in fields such as health and education, it is very new to the legal sector.

The evidence to understand and assess the effectiveness of legal services delivery in improving access to justice in Canada is sparse. This makes it difficult for governments, policy makers, funders, legal service providers and the public to know which justice pathways and tools show the most promise in particular scenarios. Moreover, a lack of empirical evidence of the impacts and benefits of access to justice services makes it challenging to build a business case for investing in and scaling justice services. This project represents an important opportunity to produce verifiable data that can help to inform legislative, policy, funding and personal legal services decisions. According to Principal Investigator, Professor Trevor Farrow, “We see this grant as helping to provide an important opportunity for much needed empirical research about the impact of legal services on the lives of Canadians.”

The Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (CFCJ) is a national non-profit organization based at [Osgoode Hall Law School](#) at York University that aims to advance civil justice reform through research and advocacy. The CFCJ



Canadian Forum on Civil Justice 
Forum canadien sur la justice civile

strives to make the civil justice system more accessible, effective, and sustainable through projects and initiatives that are people-centered.

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