

Legal Aid Ontario

Legal Aid Online 2013
billing page
enhancements



LEGAL AID ONTARIO

AIDE JURIDIQUE ONTARIO

Prepared by: Lawyer Services & Payments (LSP)

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Legal Aid Online 2013 billing page enhancements

1. Overview

Legal Aid Ontario is enhancing *Legal Aid Online's* billing pages to support more accurate account submission. While it is recognized that most lawyers bill correctly, the goal is reduce inadvertent errors or misinterpretations of the Tariff. The primary objectives of the enhancements are to:

- Support accurate billing of accounts for faster payment
- Reduce inadvertent billing errors that cause accounts to go into exceptions creating delays in payment
- Provide messages and enhanced help text to support lawyers with accurate billing
- Not create barriers to online account submission
- Reduce work efforts for LSP to manage inadvertent billing errors so attention can be focused on other account processing matters

This is the first phase in LAO's goal to develop billing enhancements to support lawyers with speedier and more accurate account payment and make the use of *Legal Aid Online* more efficient.

Key enhancements include:

- Messages and help text to support correct billing of pre-trial/settlement and case conferences in FLA/CFSA matters
- An overview of disbursements billed to date.
- A new document type to attach invoices to accounts
- Reminders to attach invoices when disbursements start to accumulate to support speedier payment and reviews by the Audit & Compliance Unit.
- Reminders on the portal to submit disbursements excluding HST
- Built in logic for court days and court hours to reduce data entry errors
- Built in logic to support the selection of less than or more than 10 court days with the days
- Message to confirm if a single minor charge proceeds by way of indictment
- Reminders regarding supplementary accounts

- Built in logic for the number of criminal enhancers per matter (excludes BCM cases)
- Date validation for block fee accounts

2. Summary of disbursements billed

Disbursement accounts can be submitted without the lawyer being aware that the cumulative total exceeds the threshold for a disbursement that does not need pre-approval. The account goes into Exceptions and LSP requires copies of invoices to process the account. This creates delays in payment for costs already incurred by the lawyer.

Enhancement

- A new disbursements chart is now available, listing all past billed disbursements including totals

NOTE: If you are reviewing an account after it is submitted, the disbursements in the account have been added into the summary.

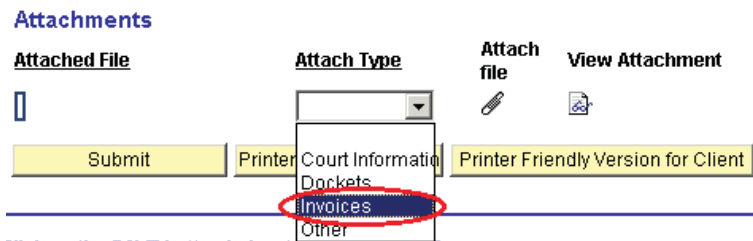
Regular Disbursements

Prior Regular Disbursements		Customize Find	First	1-3 of 3	Last
Select	Description	Total Disbursements			
Item Details	Courier	25.00			
Item Details	Postage	5.00			
Item Details	Telephone	8.00			

- Depending on the amount of disbursements previously paid, you may receive a reminder to attach the invoice when submitting the next account



- A new document type "Invoices" is now available to clearly identify if an invoice is attached to the account.



3. Regular disbursements & HST

Sometimes disbursement amounts are billed including HST. LAO pays HST on top of the amount billed, which may result in double HST payment.

Enhancement

- Changes on screen reflect that disbursements are to be entered without HST
- The help text has been updated

Regular Disbursements

Most disbursements have limits. Check the Disbursement Handbook to be sure that the type of disbursement is allowed for the type of case you are billing and that receipts submitted comply with policies.

- Click on "Add Disbursements" to bring up a list of disbursements.
- Enter all disbursements without HST. The program automatically adds HST to all disbursements. Please ensure that HST is being properly calculated by LAO on all *online* disbursements.

Do not enter disbursements which require pre-authorization as regular disbursements.

Block fees and disbursements:

The block fee has been calculated to include payments for the following disbursements:

- fax charges
- photocopying
- service and filing of documents within Ontario

All other disbursements will be paid in accordance with the regulation and Disbursements Handbook.

Done

4. More than 10 days at trial - NEW

Lawyers may inadvertently select the wrong option for court dates/outcomes from the pick list, which may under or overinflate the tariff. This is most common with the outcome of trial days less than or greater than 10 days.

Enhancement

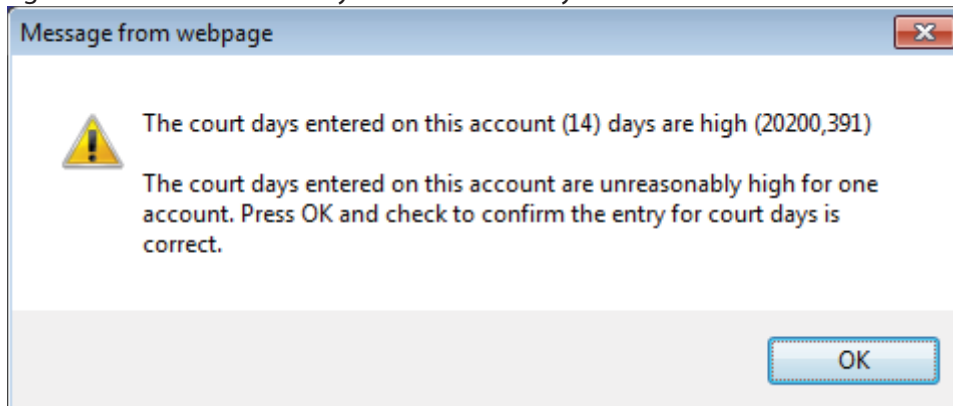
Wording of the outcomes has been changed from symbols to words
e.g. "> than 10 days" is now "Greater than 10 days"

Select Charges	Election or Type of Offence	Plea/Outcome	Extra days of proceedings	Hours in Court	Other Cert
1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Possession Substance Schedule 1 for the Purpose	Indictment II				
2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement Fee					

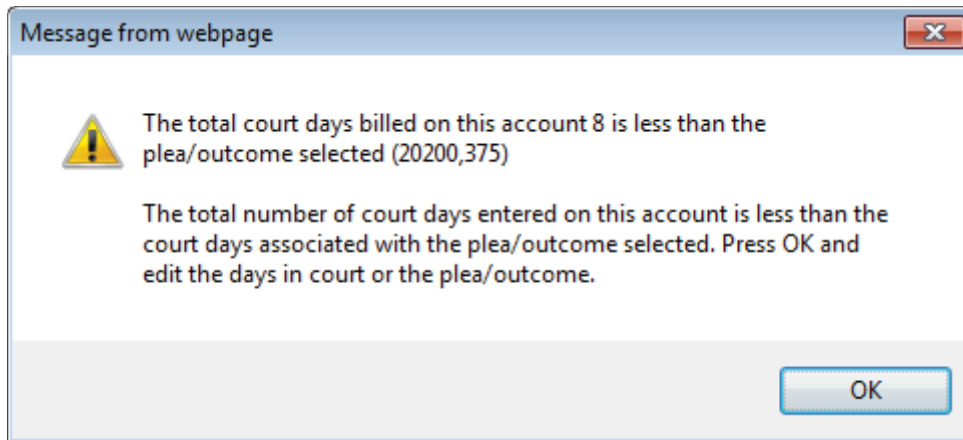
The number of these tariff items cannot be higher than the number of charges entered above. For each separate trial, one is allowed by the tariff, and only one is allowed by the tariff.

Contested 10 trial days or less
Contested over 10 trial days
Guilty plea
No Plea Entered
Withdrawal of one/more charges

A pop up message appears if the number of court days is inconsistent with the option selected.
e.g. if select Less than 10 days and enter 14 days



e.g. if select Greater than 10 days but the cumulative total court days is 8 days



5. Minor charge by indictment

Lawyers may inadvertently select that a minor charge (Crown Elect) proceeded by indictment, when it proceeded summarily. This overinflates the tariff, results in overpayment and ultimately recovery by LAO. The likelihood of the error is greatest with a single hybrid charge. LAO does recognize that single minor charges may proceed by indictment and the goal is to ensure inadvertent errors are not made and that correct accounts are easily submitted and paid.

Enhancement

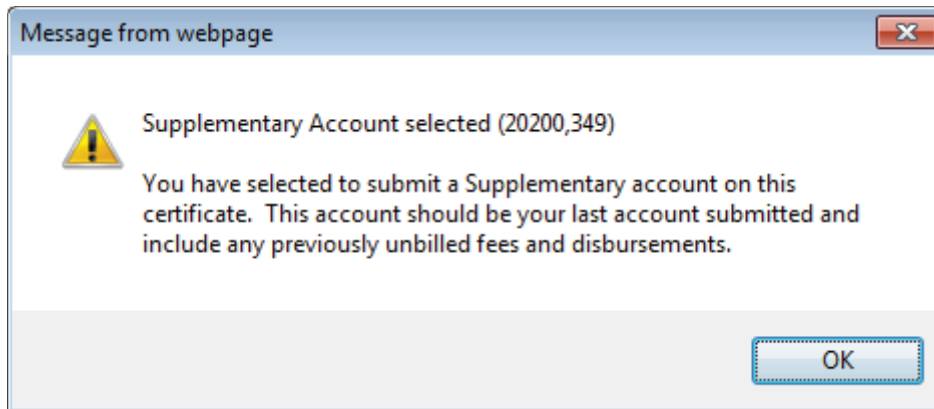
- If there is only one hybrid offence being billed, and if “Indictable” is selected, a notice is displayed asking the lawyer to confirm that the “Election” or “Type of Offence” proceeded by way of indictment.
- If it is an error, the account can be corrected and submitted.
- If it is correct and confirmed, the account is submitted

6. Supplementary accounts

Supplementary accounts are intended to be the last account submitted on a certificate and should include all previously unbilled fees and disbursements. Lawyers are encouraged to only submit one final account to close out a matter and not to have lingering unbilled fees and disbursements outstanding.

Enhancement

- When submitting a supplementary account, a pop up message will remind the lawyer that this should be the last account and to include all unbilled fees and disbursements



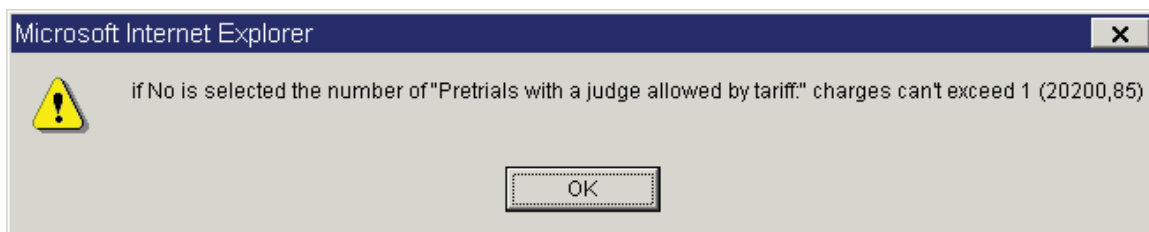
NOTE: It is noted that more than one supplementary account may be necessary, but it should be in rare circumstances and not normal practice.

7. Criminal enhancers (excluding BCM)


On tariff accounts, multiple enhancers can be selected and billed for charges heard separately. Incorrect billing can overinflate the tariff resulting in overpayment and ultimately recovery by LAO. Enhancers include: bail hearing, pre-trial with judge, pre-trial in SCJ, charter motion and DNA application.

Enhancement

- Only one enhancer per type and per group of charges that proceed separately can be billed
 - e.g. if there are two sets of charges being heard separately, the maximum available enhancers are 2 per type (2 bail hearings, 2 pre-trials with judge, etc)
- If more enhancers are entered, a pop up message displays advising that only one item per set of charges is billable.



- To assist with billing, a view has been added to show a summary of previously billed enhancers for a particular certificate:

The number of these tariff items cannot be higher than the number of separate trials or proceedings entered above. For each separate trial, one is allowed by the tariff, and only once it has been completed. 

	Number of Bail Hearings held	Number of Bail Hearings held:
Bail hearings allowed by tariff:	0	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Pretrials with a judge allowed by tariff:	0	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Pretrials before a Superior Court Judge:	0	<input type="text"/>
Charter motions allowed by tariff:	0	<input type="text"/>
DNA applications allowed by tariff:	0	<input type="text"/>

- Enhancers for pre-trial in SCJ will not be available to select for non-indictable charges.

8. Date validation for block fees

LAO has introduced several block fee enhancements to support more accurate and faster payment of accounts. Incorrect dates in a block fee account can cause the account to go into exceptions for review instead of being matched for payment.

Enhancement

- Date validation will identify if there are date inconsistencies, which can be corrected prior to the account being submitted.
- Date validation includes:
 - The bail hearing cannot be after the resolution date
 - The resolution date cannot be before a JPT
 - The resolution date cannot be after the last service date in the account

9. Pre-trial/settlement and case conferences

The system automatically calculates tariff based on the days/hours entered for the first and each subsequent hearing date. Incorrect entry of days and hours can overinflate the tariff resulting in incorrect accounts.

Enhancement

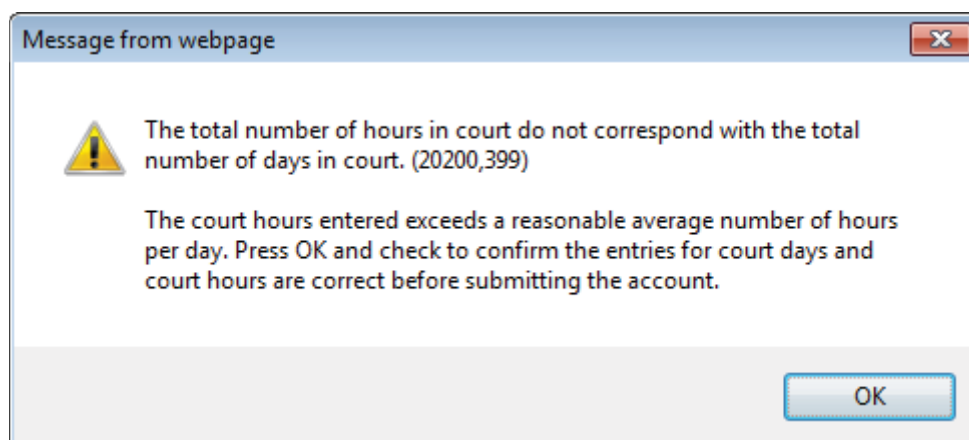
- The help text has been updated to provide correct information on how to bill the first and subsequent conferences
- A pop up message appears if an incorrect entry is made and there is an opportunity to correct the error before submitting the account

10. Court days and court hours validation - NEW

The tariff is calculated by the system based on the number of court days and the number of court hours. Inadvertent data entry may result in under or overinflating the tariff which may result in under or overpayment, delays in processing accounts and/or recovery of overpayments.

Enhancement

- Updated help text and messages reminding lawyers on how to enter the correct number of court days
- The system has logic to relate the number of court days with the number of court hours
- A message will pop up if the total hours exceeds a reasonable amount of court days and provide an opportunity to review and confirm that the entry is correct



- The account may still be submitted and will either be matched and paid, or sent to Exceptions; depending on how much the total hours exceed the logic.