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**NEWS RELEASE      NEWS RELEASE      NEWS RELEASE**

**\$37.5 MILLION USED TO COMPENSATE DUTY COUNSELS IN 2003-04**

The Legal Aid Council, in spite of the financial challenges it faced during fiscal year 2003-04, made payments to attorneys totalling some \$37.5 million, during that period.

This figure included some \$6 million which was disbursed in March 2004 to compensated attorneys who participated in the scheme across the island.

The Executive Director of the Council, Mr. Glen Cruickshank, while acknowledging that the rate of payments is not as it ought to be, stressed that both he and the Minister of Justice, the Hon. A.J. Nicholson, Q.C., remain committed to meeting this financial obligation. Mr. Cruickshank said that he was “well aware that lawyers work best when they are paid, and so we are now seeing to the clearing of the outstanding balance owed to all the attorneys.” Mr. Cruickshank added that the over \$37 million that was paid during the last financial year was distributed among those attorneys who serve the legal aid system both in the Corporate Area, as well as rural Jamaica.

(more)

## **\$37.5 MILLION USED TO COMPENSATE DUTY COUNSELS IN 2003-04...2**

Close to 270 attorneys-at-law currently provide legal service, a figure which has held steady for the last four years, Mr. Cruickshank asserted. These attorneys become a part of the formal legal aid scheme through a written application to the Council expressing their willingness to do legal aid work. Each applicant/attorney indicates his or her preference to provide this service in a particular geographical area and at the Court in the parish where the applicant practises.

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