



# Annual Report 2021-22

September 2022<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some Statistics Canada data updated 2023 January.





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## Farewell to David Craig

David Craig was Executive Director of Halton Community Legal Services, having been in private practice before that. He left his position in Halton to become the founding Executive Director of what was then Brampton Community Legal Services in 1990, shifting to a staff lawyer position in 2001 until his retirement in April 2022. David was the consummate community legal clinic lawyer.

David was a published author in the field of workers' compensation law and widely respected in the community legal clinic system.

David has a brilliant intellect, extensive legal expertise, and wide ranging knowledge on a variety of topics. A wonderful advocate, he has a gift for presenting arguments which are easy to understand while also being concise. For his colleagues, he was always the calm at the centre of any storm, with clear-headed and insightful words of guidance.

But for all those talents, what we will remember David for the most is his ability to make connections with his clients. He is a truly compassionate person who connected in a very honest way with his clients, while always providing superb professional guidance.

As one client put it: "I feel my legal representative, David Craig, was very professional, thorough and most importantly, I believe he sincerely cared for me and my situation." With every client, David was always thoroughly professional and also sincerely caring.

It is difficult to think of our community legal clinic without David. He will be deeply missed. All of us on the staff and board thank him for his many years of dedicated service and wish him the very best in his retirement. He will still be with us in the legacy that he has left: his colleagues will continue to aspire to the example that he provided of who a community legal clinic lawyer should be.

# 1. Who We Are

## 1.1 Executive Director's Notes

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted and shifted to new methods of service delivery. We continued all of our services for clients, but delivered them virtually. As the pandemic has evolved, so has our service delivery. We are now using a mix of virtual and in person services – whatever works best for the particular client.

Our successful adaptation to the pandemic required extensive use of technology. This included our video conferencing rooms for virtual hearings, powerful and portable laptops, soft phones which kept our staff connected to our phone system wherever they were, secure cloud based storage, electronic signature software, scanning capabilities, *etc.* The use of technology was important and we were already well situated in that respect before the onset of the pandemic.

While the technology was important, it was not the most important factor in adapting to our suddenly changed world. The most important part was our staff. They did not miss a beat in meeting the new challenges brought by the pandemic.



We are fortunate to have fantastic staff who work hard and work creatively. On all fronts – direct client service, outreach, public legal education, law reform and administration – our staff have worked hard to meet the challenges that face us and always with the goal of exemplary client service held first and foremost. That

primary goal is something that has not changed during the pandemic.

Of particular note is the dedication of our Client Service Representatives (CSRs). These staff (who hold social service worker degrees) are our front line staff. When the rest of the staff were told to work from home at the start of the pandemic, our CSRs kept the office open (with extremely limited, controlled entry at the door). Their dedication to our clients allowed us to continue providing service through the pandemic years and they continue to be the smiling, compassionate, public face of our community legal clinic.

The dedication of our staff is reflected in the reviews left on our Google business profile. A few samples are provided here:

*Thank you so much for all you do. I'm so appreciative for people like you who help and can understand the struggles. Your legal team from David Craig, Christa, Madeleine and the social worker I met with on my first appointment were exceptional. Thank you for your kindness, support, efficiency, knowledge and basically caring for those who are at a dead end and needing help.*

*Amazing service provided. Case Intake process was great. NPDCLS has an amazing team. Teri Muszak, Lawyer, is simply great and very supportive at every stage of advice. Resolved issues with Service Canada and provided guidance in dealing with key issues of the case. Keep up the great work your organization is doing for the community. Truly Commendable.*

*I just got my immigration visa a few days ago thanks to excellent service in North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services, especially Ms. Jennifer who took care of my application from the first days until it was approved by IRCC. I do not know how to express my feeling right now because of the quality of the service, they did so much better than my expectations. Three words I would like to describe about this office are professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication.*

*With the support of David facilitating our ODSP appeal, we were able to clearly state our case history courageously, which would've been very difficult without David's presence and support. David was an expert at identifying our barriers and went above and beyond to seek to understand our history to support us in building a strong case. Additionally, the service from David Craig was professional, non-judgmental, and compassionate. We are extremely grateful for the services from North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services and specifically, David Craig. Thank you for everything you have done to help move our family member in the right direction. I highly recommend anyone needing legal support to reach out to North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services for support or advice regarding any legal matters.*

*Specially thanks to Miss Jennifer and Mr. Parush for their untiring help from my work permit till I got my permanent residency done. All the staff are kind too. Thank you.*

*After having some issues with ODSP, Teri was very understanding and professional and treated us with respect. The advice that we received was top notch and was easy to understand. Teri was an amazing help and managed to conclude our problems with a positive outcome in a timely manner. I don't know what we would have done without your help. Thank you so very much!*

*I highly recommend North Peel & Dufferin community legal services! I feel my legal representative, David Craig, was very professional, thorough and most importantly, I believe he sincerely cared for me and my situation. He was truly helpful and I am grateful for all his hard work.*

*Thank you very much to Jennifer Goodfellow. You are such a good person you never give up on my application until I get it. I recommend North Peel & Dufferin Community for those people who are looking for someone in the community to help them for legal problem.*

*HAPPY WITH THEIR SERVICE.....NEVER A DOUBT, I HAVE DEALT WITH DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS, THE EXPERIENCE WAS AMAZING ON ALL OCCASIONS.*

Every client is sent a link to a short client satisfaction survey after we assist them. One of the questions is “what could we do to provide better service?” A typical response is “Nothing needed. You guys are the best!” With various wording, we see that response over and over.

We will continue to make use of technology and constantly review and revise our procedures, to better serve our clients, but we will never lose sight of the fact that the beating heart of our community legal clinic is the dedicated, brilliant, compassionate and creative staff.

Jack Fleming  
Executive Director

## 1.2 Vision, Mission & Values Statements

As always, our work is guided by our Vision, Mission and Values statements.

**Vision:** Equitable access to justice for everyone in North Peel & Dufferin

**Mission:** Improve the quality of life for persons with low income through outstanding legal services that advocate, educate, and empower

**Values:**

- ✓ **Client-centered** – The client is our first priority, and the focus of our efforts. We respect our clients’ dignity as we work in non-judgmental, holistic ways to provide high quality customer service.
- ✓ **Excellence** – We go the extra mile to provide exceptional legal services.
- ✓ **Innovation** – We embrace change and are willing to try new technology and methods. We actively look for better ways to serve our clients’ needs, knowing that diversity of experience, expertise, culture, and perspective is a strength that sparks our creativity.
- ✓ **Collaboration** – We believe more is possible when we work together, and intentionally foster meaningful connections with clients, partner organizations, the community, our peers, and one another.

## 1.3 Staff

Jack Fleming	Executive Director	
Norma English	Director of Legal Services	Housing & Income Maintenance
Mandeep Gill	Lawyer	Housing
Fintan Lee	Lawyer	Housing
Akina Tamang	Lawyer	Housing
Jennifer Goodfellow	Lawyer	Immigration
Parush Mann	Lawyer	Immigration
Ritu Gupta	Lawyer	Employment & Immigration
Daniel Gordon	Lawyer	Employment & Income Maintenance
Teri Muszak	Lawyer	Income Maintenance
Michael Daoud	Lawyer	Income Maintenance
Jesse Gerva	Paralegal	ODSP Disability
Gail Buckley	ODSP Caseworker	ODSP Disability
Christa Merlin	ODSP Case Manager	ODSP Disability
Alison Blackman	Office Manager	
Maria Deray	Client Service Representative	
Akanksha Tripathi	Client Service Representative	

*David Craig (lawyer), Madelene Reed (paralegal) and Simarroop Dhillon (lawyer) were all part of our team in 2021-22 but have moved on. We wish them all the very best and thank them for their service.*

Our legal staff are specialized, as we find that this provides the highest quality, and most efficient, service. They are organized in teams (as shown in the above chart):

- Housing Team
- DAU Team (referring to the Disability Adjudication Unit): applications and appeals from disability denial of ODSP benefits, as well as medical reviews
- Income Maintenance Team: Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP other than disability denials), Ontario Works, Canada Pension Plan and OAS/GAINS
- Immigration Team
- Employment Law Team (including Employment Insurance and CERB)

### 1.4 Board of Directors

Name	Start	Position	Position Start
Kayla Stephenson	June 26, 2018	President	Sept. 22, 2020
Nayan Thaker	Dec. 10, 2019	Treasurer	January 28, 2020
Shaimaa Abousidou	May 27, 2014	Secretary	June 26, 2018
Sukhbir Kaur	Sept. 26, 2017		
Nana Amponsah	October 27, 2020		
Marjorie Rasquina	Sept. 22, 2020		
Shaneil Stewart	Sept. 22, 2020		
Monty Laskin	Sept. 22, 2020		
Kate Paisley	January 25, 2022		
Veronica Fazio	January 25, 2022		

We have a dynamic and effective board of directors drawn from our community. The board is very much a governance and policy board, with operational issues being the responsibility of the Executive Director. The board of directors has a fiduciary responsibility for our non-profit corporation, they set the strategic directions, they ensure compliance with our funding agreement and they established the Vision, Mission and Values statements that guide us. The board sets the policy objectives and the Executive Director is responsible for the policies and procedures to achieve those objectives.

Over the past number of years, the board has become increasingly well organized, with an overhaul of our bylaw, clear roles for the Executive and a Board Recruitment Committee with a targeted recruitment and interview process. The board has been very active in major issues within the community legal clinic system.

## 2. The Communities We Serve

### 2.1 Statistical Overview

We serve the populations of Brampton, Caledon and Dufferin County. Six percent of that total population is low income. We serve a low income population of about 50,000, spread over almost 2,500 square kilometres.

2021 Census Data	Brampton	Caledon	Dufferin	TOTAL
<b>Population</b>				
Total Population 2021	656,480	76,581	66,257	799,318
Population 2001	325,428	50,605	51,003	427,036
% Change 2001 – 2021	101.7%	51.3%	29.9%	87.2%
Land Area (sq. km.)	266	689	1,487	2441
Pop. Density per sq. km.	2,469	111	45	
<b>Low Income Population</b>				
Low Income Pop. <sup>2</sup>	41,750	3,430	4,115	49,295
Low Inc. % of population	6.4%	4.5%	6.3%	6.2%
<b>Household Data</b>				
Average Household Size	3.6	3.2	2.8	-
One Parent Households	9.1%	7.3%	8.7%	8.9%
Multi-Generational Households	14.3%	9.1%	5.4%	12.8%
Age 65+	12.5%	14.9%	15.9%	13.0%

The population growth in the area that we serve has been explosive. Over 20 years (2001-2021) the population in the area that we serve has increased 87% (over 100% in Brampton).

<sup>2</sup> This is the “Low Income Measure – After Tax” (LIM-AT) data from Census 2021 (based on 2020 income). There are several different low income measures. There is a similar measure before tax (LIM-BT) and there are LIM-BT and LIM-AT measures from tax filer data rather than census data, as well as the LICO and other low income measures. The different measures produce different results.

## Citizenship, Immigration & Language

A larger percentage of the general population are citizens, as opposed to the low income population. There is little difference in the percentage of immigrants between the low income population and the general population.

Citizenship & Immigration	Brampton	Caledon	Dufferin	TOTAL
Citizens: % of low income pop.	70%	88%	94%	73%
Citizens: % of entire pop.	79%	93%	96%	82%
Immigrants: % of low inc. pop.	48%	34%	19%	45%
Immigrants: % of entire pop.	53%	29%	16%	48%

Language Knowledge for Low Inc. Pop.	Brampton	Caledon	Dufferin	TOTAL
Neither English nor French	6%	4%	1%	5%
French Only	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
English Only	90%	92%	94%	91%
Both English and French	4%	4%	6%	4%
Mother Tongue not English	48%	36%	14%	45%

Although 45% of the low income population in Brampton, Caledon and Dufferin has a mother tongue other than English, only 5% do not understand either English or French.

## 2.2 Our Clients

### Families Assisted

The number of clients associated with cases created or re-opened in 2021-22 was 1,480 and the total number of family members was 3,519. The average household size was 2.4 people.

## Racial Data

This chart compares Statistics Canada 2021 census data<sup>3</sup> for the low income population in the area that we serve to our data on clients served by our community legal clinic in 2021-22.<sup>4</sup>

	STATCAN	NPD-CLS
Racialized Individuals	72%	64%
Indigenous	1%	1.5%
South Asian	44%	22%
Black	13%	24%
Latin American	3%	3%
Middle Eastern	2%	3%
West Asian	1%	2%
Chinese	1%	0%
Filipino	1%	1%
Other Southeast Asian	2%	5%
Other or Mixed	5%	3%
White	28%	36%

Comparisons must be treated with caution. For our data, we failed to collect this information for 3% of clients and 22% of clients declined to provide it. Thus, for a full quarter of the clients we served, we do not have ethno-racial data (the percentages shown are percentages of the clients for whom we do have data).

The only large deviations between our clients and the 2021 Census data for the low income population are for the South Asian and Black communities. We do not know to what extent this is impacted by the number of clients who declined to self-identify.

The overall number of racialized clients, at 64%, also deviates from the Statistics Canada figure of 72%. This is a result of the lower number of South Asian clients (compared to Census data) served by the legal clinic; for all other categories, the percentage of racialized clients served is comparable to or exceeds the Statistics Canada data.

<sup>3</sup> Some adjustments were needed to line up our data with StatCan data. StatCan lists SouthEast Asian, Korean and Japanese; these categories are collapsed into “Other Southeast Asian” in this chart to line up with categories in our case management database. StatCan lists Indigenous data separately from its “visible minority” data. Our database has 9 different categories for “African Ancestry”, which are collapsed into “Black” here to match the StatCan data. For “Middle Eastern,” Statcan’s data for “Arab” is compared to our data for “Arab” and “Other Middle Eastern” combined.

<sup>4</sup> Ethno-racial data is for clients in cases created or re-opened in 2021-22. Of clients assisted in 2021-22, 22.2% chose “Unknown/Choose Not to Identify”. As well, for 2.9% of clients, we failed to collect ethno-racial data (for the most part, those are likely Tenant Duty Counsel clients, where a more rapid intake process does not allow for this data collection). The percentages shown above exclude both of those categories.

Persons of South Asian descent make up 44% of the low income population but were only 22% of our clients in 2021-22. A likely explanation is that some of the South Asian population will have received services from the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO). Based on SALCO’s 2022 statistics, they are serving more South Asian clients in Brampton than we are. Had those clients been served by NPD-CLS instead, our percentage of South Asian clients would likely exceed the StatCan figure.

Those identifying as Black are 13% of the low income population and 24% of our clients in 2021-22. A possible explanation is that the Black community is disproportionately impacted with respect to poverty law issues, and therefore more in need of our services than other groups.<sup>5</sup>

### Gender & Sexuality

Gender Identity		Sexual Orientation	
Agender	0%	Bi-Sexual	1%
Female	61.4%	Gay/Lesbian	0.9%
Male	37%	Hetero-Sexual	85.1%
Not Specified	1.4%	Other/ Not Specified	5.1%
Other	0.2%	Prefer Not to Respond	8%
Trans Female	0%	Queer	0%
Trans Male	0%	Questioning/ Unknown	0.1%
Two-Spirit	0%	Two-Spirit	0%

One difficulty with data on gender and sexual orientation is the lack of base data to compare our clients to (as contrasted with racial data, which we can compare to Statistics Canada data). This data is for clients served in 2021-22.

### Location<sup>6</sup>

Distribution of low income population across Brampton, Caledon and Dufferin.

Location	2021-22 Clients	2021 Census Low Income Pop.
Brampton	85%	85%
Caledon	4%	7%
Dufferin	11%	8%

<sup>5</sup> This percentage is also, to some extent, a knock-on effect of the South Asian clients being so much less than what would be expected: as only the South Asian and Black categories have high numbers, such a large reduction in the expected number of South Asian clients will have a significant impact on the percentage value of the number of Black clients.

<sup>6</sup> This data excludes out of area clients. This is based on clients in both new cases and re-opened cases during 2021-22, compared to the low income population from the 2021 Census.

## 3. Our Services

### 3.1 Statistical Overview

These statistics represent new (or previously closed and now re-opened) legal matters dealt with by our lawyers and paralegals. The amount of assistance provided varies considerably for each client. Many of these cases will have just received some advice; some received limited services, such as completion of legal forms or a phone call to a landlord or OW worker; and some received full representation at a tribunal or court.

These statistics can show changes in the services provided by a legal clinic over time but are not useful for comparing clinic to clinic. Legal clinics vary considerably in how they record these statistics.

The total number of cases is a measure of the number of people contacting the legal clinic for assistance; it is not a measure of the amount of service delivered. These statistics show requests for legal services but that is different from the full need for legal services. If a service is not offered by an agency then people stop requesting it. As well, a legal clinic may open a case for a type of service offered (for example, a housing law case) but the amount of service provided may be limited by the clinic's resources (for example, advice provided but not representation). Service statistics should not be confused with a needs assessment.

#### New & Re-Opened Cases

	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	% Change 2018-19 2021-22	% Change 2020-21 2021-22
ODSP Disability	246	332	249	258	4.9%	3.6%
Other ODSP	74	85	112	119	60.8%	6.3%
Ontario Works	174	176	65	118	-32.2%	81.5%
CPP/OAS	27	50	41	14	-48.1%	-65.9%
Total Income Maintenance	521	643	467	509	-2.3%	9.0%
Housing	1152	1282	902	996	-13.5%	10.4%
Immigration	283	343	203	256	-9.5%	26.1%
Employment	112	150	135	109	-2.7%	-19.3%
Other	24	8	4	0	-100.0%	-100.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2092</b>	<b>2426</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>-10.6%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>

The number of cases created or re-opened is up 9% over the previous year. This is still 11% below our pre-pandemic level in 2018-19, but that is not surprising. At that time we still had funding for an additional position to provide services at the Safe Centre of Peel and that position generated a number of cases. The overall picture is that our caseload (just as with other legal clinics and LAO) dropped when the pandemic hit and has bounced back now.

There are also other factors affecting the total caseload. For example, Ontario Works cases in 2020-21 dropped precipitously. That was probably as a result of the various pandemic income support programs which were brought in, resulting in some clients relying on those rather than dealing with Ontario Works. Even in 2021-22, OW cases were about one-third less than pre-pandemic. This is likely a temporary reduction due to pandemic related supports. Indeed, we are starting to see a surge now in cases related to how receipt of pandemic support, such as CERB, affects OW.

### 3.2 Social Work

Social work is inevitably part of what we do. Our staff need to be skilled at working with clients with mental health issues and clients in desperate circumstances. They need to be able to de-escalate situations and build rapport with clients. They also need to be able to link clients with needed services. There is often a lot of non-legal work to be done before a client is in a place where they can work with us on the legal work. Without a dedicated social worker position, we have looked for other ways to meet this need.

Our approach has been to have Client Service Representatives (CSRs) with Social Service Worker degrees and to have job requirements for our legal staff which include working with all of our clients with empathy and respect, de-escalating difficult situations and building rapport with clients.

Our Client Service Representatives (CSRs) are a key element in our services. They are most often the public face of the legal clinic. This position involves reception, intake and support for legal staff; it also involves provision of social work support for clients. This can include linking clients to various services, providing tools for hunting for housing, or de-escalating a mental health situation. The social work skills of our CSRs are engaged from the moment of initial intake through ongoing assistance for our clients.

### 3.3 No Wrong Door

We provide many ways for clients to contact us: by telephone, walk-ins, email, the contact form on our website, an online intake form, and intake forms used by our community partners. We have multiple points of entry and a “no wrong door” policy. In addition, we craft particular points of entry for particular communities.

Our standard process involves our CSRs taking down the client’s information and passing the matter on to the appropriate legal staff, who will call the client back. However, sometimes a different approach is needed. If a client has a true emergency,

or does not have a telephone for us to call back, or some other circumstances dictate urgency, the CSR will find someone to speak with the client right away.

For clients in Dufferin County, pre-pandemic we met them there rather than expecting clients to travel to Brampton and we had begun doing some meetings by video. Through a partnership with CMHA in Orangeville, we could meet clients at their office, in person or by video. Since the pandemic started, we have been meeting virtually with our Dufferin clients.

We collaborate with IAVGO (a specialty clinic focused on workers' compensation law) to save injured workers the difficulties of travelling to Toronto. Injured workers come to our legal clinic and we connect them to staff at IAVGO for video interviews.

We are always open to exploring different service methodologies for different types of clients.

Many clients find us because they are referred by another community agency. However, many also come to us now through Google searches and our website. Our Google business profile is viewed by roughly 3,000 people per month.<sup>7</sup> Around 800 searches for other topics (such as “free legal services”) show our legal clinic in the results each month and almost 100 people per month phone us from our Google business profile.

### 3.4 Referrals

Many people contact us for issues that we cannot assist them with, such as family law problems. We provide a valuable service for these people: our Client Service Representatives direct them to where they can get assistance. For some clients in particularly difficult circumstances, we will provide a “warm referral”, connecting them directly to another service.



Referrals by our CSRs, without any legal advice being provided, are referred to as “straight referrals”. We recorded 365 straight referrals by CSRs in 2021-22. Many more will have self-referred through the information on our website or our telephone messaging.

### 3.5 Housing Law

Housing law has consistently been the area of highest demand (as is the case for most community legal clinics apart from the far North). In recent years, the number of housing cases had been increasing each year, until the pandemic hit. The temporary moratorium on evictions and the slow-down in Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) hearings naturally

<sup>7</sup> Usually about 55% searching on their cell phones; 45% on other devices.

led to a slowdown in our housing law work in 2020-21. Once the LTB resumed hearings (now virtually) our housing law work steadily increased. We had a 10% increase in cases in 2021-22 over 2020-21. Although still below pre-pandemic levels we are steadily climbing back, but our capacity is limited by how difficult the cases coming in now are and by TDC workload.



We provide tenant duty counsel (TDC) services for LTB hearings for Dufferin tenants. However, providing duty counsel services has become very difficult (for all legal clinics). The way in which the LTB is managing the virtual hearings means that TDC now consumes an inordinate amount of time. This affects the number of cases that we can take on.

Most housing clients just receive advice. The demand is far too high to provide full representation to everyone. As well, there is great variance in the importance of the cases. Many clients do get full representation. We particularly focus on evictions and rent subsidies.

Apart from representation of individual clients, our housing team has meetings with staff at the Region of Peel to work out systemic issues, including Service Manager appeals and eviction practices. This work has the potential to assist many more tenants.

### 3.6 ODSP Disability Denials

Persons denied ODSP benefits as they allegedly do not meet the disability definition continue to be a major area of law for us. We have worked hard over the years to develop efficient systems to handle the high volume of ODSP cases. When these denials were appealed to the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT), pre-pandemic we did most of the hearings by video, which is less stressful for clients and saves time for our staff. Now all SBT hearings are by telephone or video. Several years ago, we also started assisting clients with ODSP applications, rather than waiting for applications to be denied and then appealing the denials.

We take on every ODSP disability denial case and provide full representation, unless the case has no merit at all.



### 3.7 Income Maintenance Cases

One of our legal teams deals with Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP apart from disability denial cases), Canada Pension Plan and OAS cases. As with housing cases, these were increasing each year until the pandemic.

*We successfully assisted many clients with overpayment decisions – cases where Ontario Works or ODSP alleges that the client received benefits when not entitled to them or in an amount they were not entitled to. One client had an overpayment of about \$62,000 (due to having received Survivor’s Benefits in addition to ODSP for several years). We managed to have almost \$40,000 of the overpayment written off, with an ongoing re-payment plan of \$30 per month.*



Apart from helping many individual clients, our Social Assistance Team works on systemic issues. One of our

lawyers is a member of the Provincial Steering Committee on Social Assistance. On behalf of all legal clinics, this Committee lobbies the provincial government for changes to OW and ODSP legislation, through meetings with Ministry staff and SBT staff. Locally, our team meets with Region of Peel staff to sort out difficult systemic issues.

### 3.8 Immigration

There was large and consistent growth in the immigration case load until the pandemic hit. We are bouncing back from the pandemic reduction, with an astounding 26%



increase in cases in 2021-22 over the previous year.

We have had successful appeals at the Immigration Appeal Division and successful judicial reviews at the Federal Court.

*A client was barred from sponsoring her son because she had failed to declare him on her application for permanent residence as a result of domestic violence. A temporary policy was implemented, allowing such sponsorships for a time limited period. We assisted the client with the sponsorship application but the visa office wrongly denied it. We requested a reconsideration and also filed a judicial review application. We settled with the Department of Justice, the application was reopened and approved! The client’s son will be arriving in Canada soon as a permanent resident. There is no way the client would have been able to do this on her own.*

### 3.9 Employment Law

We have obtained many significant settlements for clients in wrongful dismissal cases. Throughout the pandemic, we have provided a lot of advice on the CERB and other pandemic related employment law questions.



### 3.10 Other Areas of Law

The areas of law selected by our board of directors over the years have excluded those covered by other service providers. There may still be unmet needs in some such areas of law but the availability of assistance elsewhere makes this less of a priority for us relative to other legal issues, given our limited resources.

For example, our legal clinic does not do workers' compensation cases, as there are specialty clinics which focus on that area, plus the Office of the Workers' Advisors, plus private lawyers who take WSIB cases with a contingency fee. That area of law would not be the most effective use of our limited resources, even though those who practice in that field fairly point out that the available resources are not sufficient to meet the demand. Similarly, our legal clinic does not do refugee law as that is covered by LAO.

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC) is similar to the Office of the Workers' Advisors as it is government funded and provides free services in a specific area of law. As that service is available, our legal clinic does not take on human rights cases, although we deal with human rights law regularly in the context of the areas of law where we do provide service (particularly housing and employment law) and we have co-counseled with the HRLSC.

The most consistent demand for increased services is in the area of family law. As LAO provides family law services we (like most legal clinics) do not do so (the *Legal Aid Services Act* states that the primary provider of family and criminal law services will be the private bar through legal aid certificates and the primary provider of poverty law services will be legal clinics). There is undoubtedly a need for more family law services but (as with WSIB and refugee law) the field is occupied by other providers and our clinic's position has been that it would not be the most effective use of our limited resources to augment the existing services.

Based on our needs assessments, when increased funding was available, we started providing immigration law services; following that, we started providing employment law services.

If we receive any future increase in funding, areas for expansion would likely include child tax benefit cases, child care subsidies and seniors' law with an emphasis on health law. These are all important legal issues that we do not currently provide assistance for. However, with our rapidly increasing population, we need to ensure that we are providing sufficient service in our existing areas of law before embarking on any expansion in areas of service.

### 3.11 Public Legal Education & Outreach

We continue to provide many public legal education sessions every year. Many of these are aimed at our client group directly. For example, our talks to newcomers at ESL classes and presentations at shelters.

However, we also target a lot of outreach/education work at other community agencies. When our potential clients have a problem they will turn to a community agency. We make sure that we keep strong formal and informal links with various community agencies. Our presentations to staff of other agencies are aimed at training them to recognize potential legal issues. The staff at our community partners can act as trusted intermediaries. It is not necessary for them to learn the law so much as to recognize that a problem may have a legal solution and therefore connect the client to the legal clinic.

Our outreach has continued during the pandemic, with virtual presentations. We have also begun producing YouTube videos on legal issues.

### 3.12 Community Legal Clinic System

Our community legal clinic is extensively involved in working with community legal clinics across Ontario – together we are stronger and can accomplish more. The Chair of our board of directors is a member of the Executive of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO) and co-chairs the ACLCO's Race Equity and Advisory Committee. We also have membership on the Social Assistance Steering Committee, the LAO-Clinics' IT Advisory Committee, the CIMS Working Group (dealing with the client management software used by legal clinics), the Justice Health Partnerships Community of Practice, the Inter-Clinic Immigration Working Group and more.

### 3.13 Other Connections

We also have involvement outside of the clinic system, in our communities and within the legal community, including on the Law Society of Ontario's Access to Innovation Roundtable, the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee, and more.