



West Toronto Community Legal Services

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ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

Message from the Chair

West Toronto Community Legal Services had another outstanding year in 2016-2017. The legal clinic continued to deliver professional and accessible legal services to our community and our housing help program continued to support people looking for safe and affordable housing.

Immigration Services Up and Running at WTCLS

A major accomplishment for 2016-2017 was the return of immigration law services to WTCLS. In late 2016, we hired Jhoanna Sylio, a paralegal practising immigration law at WTCLS three days a week. Jhoanna quickly found herself working at capacity, helping people reunite with family, apply for permanent residency in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, or address problems with the immigration process. Jhoanna works closely with Kathryn Lynch, an immigration lawyer who is shared with two other clinics (see below). We are thrilled that we have filled this gap in our legal services.

West End Service Enhancement partnership

The other significant development in legal services this year is the implementation of the West End Service Enhancement ("WESE") project. WESE is a partnership between WTCLS and two other west end legal clinics: South Etobicoke Community Legal Services and Rexdale Community Legal Services. New funding from Legal Aid Ontario has allowed the three clinics to have shared staff to deliver services in two key areas: immigration law and employment law. We now have two new permanent lawyers who rotate regularly through our offices. Francesca Allodi-Ross practices in employment law and Kathryn Lynch in immigration law. We also have the benefit of a shared Community Legal Worker. Payam Haghghi is now networking in the community, sharing information about our services, providing access to community legal education sessions, and making connections with other service providers.

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Implementing our Strategic Plan

In 2015, our Board undertook a strategic planning process to focus our efforts on a collective vision for the clinic's future. We developed a new statement of Vision, Mission, and Values, and we identified 5 Strategic Directions for our work over the next three years. We have taken major steps toward advancing these Directions, expanding our areas of legal service, enhancing our housing help program, better connecting with local partners, and responding to community needs. We are now looking forward to the next Strategic Planning process starting in January of 2018. We will reflect back on what we have accomplished to date and refocus our efforts for the upcoming years.

Staffing changes

In addition to new immigration and employment law practitioners, we had some other staffing changes this year. Our Office Manager, Wendy Atkinson, has taken a one year leave to take a contract as Coordinator of Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Services, one of the clinics on our southern border. Wendy will bring to KBCLS her 30 years of experience in financial and human resource management. In her absence, we have hired Lesley Somerville. Hailing from Wasaga Beach, Lesley has years of experience as a bookkeeper and office manager.

Our Housing Help Team lost Iris Humphrey to Jessie's, a community agency where she is pursuing her interest in providing services to pregnant teenagers, young parents, and their children. We were joined by Housing Help Workers Cassine Smith in January and more recently by Zara Magalhaes.

We also welcomed our new articling student, Jessica Hawkins. Jessica will be with us until the summer of 2018. In addition, we have a regular rotation of law students who assist us during their law school year. Lastly, we welcomed Claudio Tapia to the WTCLS support staff.

Board of Directors

In 2016-2017, we also welcomed new members to our Board of Directors. Elka Aranzalez-Reales joined us at the last AGM. Caroline Schultz joined us mid-term. Caroline is a lawyer practicing immigration law in the WTCLS catchment area.

It is now the end of my last term on the Board of Directors. I am happy to be leaving the Board in very good hands with a strong team that includes members with a wide variety of skills and experiences.

Kent Elson, November 2017

Our Board of Directors

Kent Elson (Chair)

Caroline Schultz

Rahim Shamji

Jon Bricker (Vice Chair)

Michelle Coombs

Elka Aranzales Reales

Sharon Anderson (Secretary)

Jacques Descoteaux (Treasurer)

Our Staff

Elisabeth Brückmann, Executive Director

Angelo Giannetta, Staff Lawyer

Kathryn Lynch, Shared Staff Lawyer

Helle Hulgaard, Community Legal Worker

Jessica Hawkins, Articling Student

Nandhini Padmanathan, Law Student

Morena Carranza, Housing Help Supervisor

Yodit Wendim, Housing Help Worker

Justin Pomeroy, Case Manager

Lesley Somerville, Office Manager

Moira Daly, Staff Lawyer

Francesca Allodi-Ross, Shared Staff Lawyer

Payam Haghighi, Shared CLW

Jacky Chiu, Law Student

Elisabeth Valenti-Sorbara, Support Staff

Cassine Smith, Housing Help Worker

Zara Magalhaes, Housing Help Worker

Claudio Tapia, Support Staff

Our Funders

WTCLS is funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Our Housing Help and Case Management programs are funded by the City of Toronto, Shelter, Support & Housing Administration.



WTCLS Immigration Law Team



WTCLS Housing Help Team

Positive Changes Across the Legal Spectrum in 2017

***Rental Fairness Act* to improve protections for tenants in Ontario**

Hailed by tenant advocates as the “biggest positive change to tenants’ rights in over a decade”, the *Rental Fairness Act (RFA)* received Royal Assent in 2017. The *RFA* amends the *Residential Tenancies Act* in a number of ways that will benefit tenants.

Among these changes is the repeal of an exemption that allowed landlords of buildings that were not occupied residentially before 1991 to increase rents dramatically. With a few exceptions, these landlords must now limit rent increases to the annual provincial guidelines.

The *RFA* also toughened the rules for evictions for personal use by a landlord and their family. Landlords must intend to occupy a unit for at least one year. In addition, one month’s rent or acceptable alternative accommodation must be provided to tenants in order to evict. Corporate landlords can no longer evict for their own residential use.

These changes are a valuable step forward in the protection of low income tenants in Ontario.

Changes to asset limits improve the lives of OW and ODSP recipients

There were very positive changes made to OW and ODSP rules in 2017. Among these are the following.

Increased asset limits: There were notable increases to the asset limits for all social assistance recipients. For OW, asset limits increased from \$2,500 to \$10,000 for single people and from \$5,000 to \$15,000 for couples. For ODSP, asset limits increased from \$5,000 to \$40,000 for single people and from \$7,500 to \$50,000 for couples. People can now save more without losing their benefits.

Increased allowable gifts: The income exemption for cash gifts increased from \$6,000 to \$10,000 for both ODSP and OW. In addition, compensation awards received by people on ODSP are fully exempt as income and assets and the exemption limit for OW recipients was increased to \$50,000 from the previous \$25,000.

No more child support clawback: The government ended the regressive clawback of child support from social assistance payments, and is now exempting the full amount of the new Canada Child Benefit for families receiving social assistance support. In addition, the CPP Disabled Contributor’s Child Benefit is now exempt from social assistance. All these payments, intended to benefit children, will now actually do so.

Medical reviews simplified: The ODSP medical review process was simplified with a new form that is easier for recipients and health professionals to complete. Now, if the recipient’s medical condition has not improved and is not expected to improve, the person will continue to receive ODSP.

In addition to the much welcomed changes above, there was a 2% increase to the ODSP and OW basic and shelter benefits as well as to the board and lodging rates, guide dog benefit, personal needs allowance, and temporary care assistance.

Bill 148 to improve workers' wages and working conditions

Bill 148, *The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017* looks set to become law in November 2017. If passed, it would include a number of important changes to employment law in Ontario.

Increased wages: The general minimum hourly wage will increase from \$11.60 to \$14.00 on January 1, 2018 and then \$15.00 on January 1, 2019. It will then be adjusted yearly to reflect cost of living increases. About 1.7 million Ontarians earn less than \$15.00 per hour so this will benefit a huge number of low-paid workers.

Fairer scheduling: On-call employees who do not get called in to work will still get 3 hours' pay. Employees will also get 3 hours' pay if their shift is cancelled with less than 2 days' notice. Workers will also have the right to refuse shifts scheduled with fewer than 4 days' notice, although there will be some exceptions.

Paid leave: Currently employees in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees have no job-protected leave to deal with emergencies like the flu or caring for a sick child. This means there is nothing to prevent an employer from firing them. Bill 148 will extend 10 Personal Emergency Leave days to all employees, and 2 of these will be paid. What's more, employers will not be allowed to request doctor's notes for this leave.

Equal pay: Part-time, temporary, casual, seasonal, and temporary workers would need to be paid the same rate as full-time employees doing the same job. Unfortunately, in its current form, the Bill includes several broad exceptions, so it is unclear how effective this law will be at achieving equal pay.

Bill 148 is the direct result of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, a massive campaign that launched in April of 2015, which WTCLS and many other legal clinics supported.



Francesca Allodi-Ross, Employment Lawyer, WTCLS

WTCLS Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision: We envision a community where there is equal participation and social justice for all.

Mission: West Toronto Community Legal Services provides legal and housing help services and facilitates access to justice through community organizing and advocacy.

Values: ***Respect:*** We respect that individuals and communities have the rights to identify their unique needs and define their goals.

Collaboration: We work in partnership to maximize knowledge, skills, and resources; we act with integrity as leaders in the community to build capacity and take action.

Social Justice: We advocate for justice and equity and our work is grounded in anti-oppressive practice.

Accountability: We use resources responsibly, efficiently, and effectively.

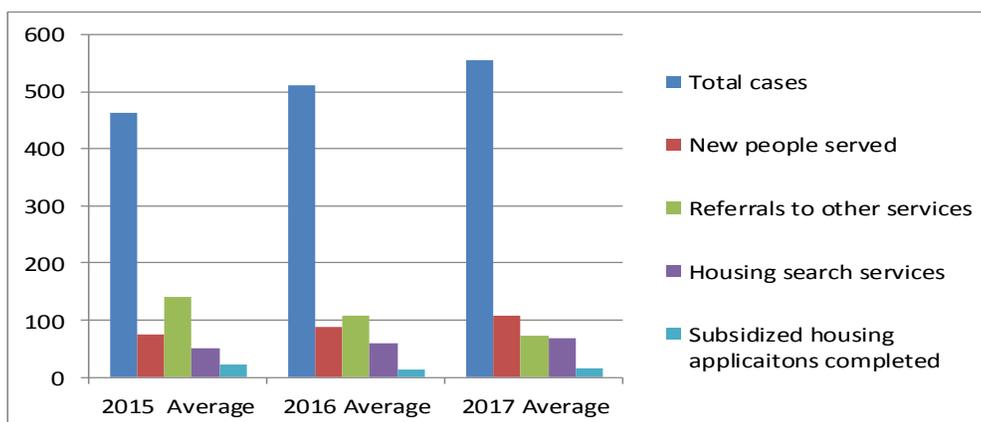
Innovation and Excellence: We foster a culture of reflection and learning and we work to deliver the highest quality services.

Legal Service Statistics

In 2016 and 2017, WTCLS continued to deliver a high volume of legal services, however we migrated our data to a new software program. At the time of printing, we had not yet developed our reporting. We will have statistics to share in next year’s Report.

Housing Help Service Statistics

In 2016 and 2017, the WTCLS Housing Help program recorded increased services across the board, with the exception of referral numbers. We are delighted with these service levels. Note that these numbers do not include the additional work of our case manager who works with approximately 20 to 25 higher needs clients on a longer term basis.



WTCLS housing services '15-'17

Report of the Independent Auditor on the Summarized Financial Statements for 2016-2017

To the Directors of West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc.,

The accompanying summarized financial statements, which comprise the summarized statement of financial position as at March 31, 2017, the summarized statement of operations and fund balances and summarized statement of cash flows for the year then ended, are derived from the complete audited financial statements of West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc. for the year ended March 31, 2017. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on those financial statements in our report dated **June 19, 2017**.

These summarized financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. Reading these summarized financial statements, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements of West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc.

Management's Responsibility

Management is responsible for the preparation of a summary of the audited financial statements on the basis described in Note 1.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the summarized financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Canadian Auditing Standard (CAS) 810, "Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements."

Opinion

In our opinion, the summarized financial statements derived from the audited financial statements of the West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc. for the year ended March 31, 2016 are a fair summary of those financial statements, in accordance with the basis described in Note 1.

Chaplin and Co, Licensed Public Accountant

Note 1 : The information selected by management for presentation in the Summarized Annual Financial Statements has been identified as being the most pertinent and useful financial data for inclusion in the West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc. annual report.

Summarized Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2017	2017	2016
Current assets	\$ 107,743	\$ 98,566
Capital assets	9,116	21,059
Total assets	<u>\$ 116,859</u>	<u>\$ 119,625</u>
Liabilities	\$ 81,972	\$ 87,854
Fund balances	34,887	31,771
Liabilities and Fund balances	<u>\$ 116,859</u>	<u>\$ 119,625</u>

Summarized Statement of Operations and Fund Balances

Year ended March 31, 2017	2017	2016
Total revenues	\$ 1,081,516	\$ 1,061,971
Total expenses	<u>1,073,155</u>	<u>1,064,024</u>
Deficiency of revenues over expenses	8,361	(2,053)
Fund balances, beginning of year	31,771	34,154
Repayment of LAO funds	<u>(5,245)</u>	<u>(330)</u>
Fund balances, end of year	<u>\$ 34,887</u>	<u>\$ 31,771</u>

Summarized Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2017	2017	2016
Cash flows provided by (used in)		
Operating activities	\$ 13,798	\$ 6,490
Investing activities	<u>(7,317)</u>	<u>(20,496)</u>
Increase (decrease) in cash	6,481	(14,006)
Cash, beginning of year	<u>72,889</u>	<u>86,895</u>
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 79,370</u>	<u>\$ 72,889</u>

These summarized financial statements do not reflect the substantial value of services contributed by volunteers.

The full set of Financial Statements for 2016-2017 is available upon request.

Legal Services and Hours

WTCLS provides free legal services to low-income people in the following areas:

- Landlord and Tenant
- Social Assistance, including ODSP, OW, CPP, OAS, and EI
- Immigration Law
- Workers' Rights
- Affidavits, Commissioning and Notarizing documents

Hours:

Monday - Friday 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 5:00

Or call (416) 531-7376 to make an appointment.

Housing Help Services and Hours

WTCLS is home to West Toronto Housing Help Services. We help low-income people to:

- Find safe and affordable housing
- Navigate the rental process
- Apply for subsidized or supportive housing
- Resolve problems with landlords

We also provide intensive one-on-one supports to people with complex needs.

Walk-in clinic hours and locations:

Parkdale Community Health Centre, Mondays 1:00 - 4:00

Housing Connections (176 Elm St), Mondays 1:00 - 4:30

The Stop Community Food Centre, 1st/3rd Tues of each month 9:00 - 12:00

OW office (779 Queensway), 2nd/4th Tues of each month 1:00 - 4:30

OW office (605 Rogers Rd), 2nd/4th Tues of each month 1:00 - 4:30

Four Villages CHC (3446 Dundas St. W.), 2nd/4th Wed of each month 9:00 - 12:00

Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC), 1st/3rd Thurs of each month 9:30 - 12:00

OW office (1900 Dundas St W), 2nd/4th Thurs of each month 1:00 - 4:00

CAMH—Queen (100 Stokes St, Rm 3101), 1st/3rd Thurs of each month 1:00 - 4:00

Or call (416) 531-0841 to make an appointment.

TTC tokens are provided on request for all WTCLS appointments or emergencies.

Interpreters are available. Please call in advance.

After hours appointments are available if necessary.