

Willowdale Community Legal Services

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday October 28, 2025 – 6:30 p.m. In Person and via Zoom

A G E N D A

1. Welcome – Joe Myers, Executive Director, WCLS
2. Land Acknowledgment – Lynn Wheatley, Chair, WCLS Board of Directors
3. Guest Speaker: Gaps in Disability Benefits

Adrian Merdzan - Staff Lawyer with the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC)

Business Meeting

4. Approval of Agenda
5. Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting & Business Arising (**pages 2 - 6**)
6. Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2025 & Appointment of Auditor – Gemma Coppins, Treasurer, WCLS Board of Directors (**pages 7- 18**)
7. Appointment of Auditor for 2025-2026
8. Annual Report – Joe Myers, Executive Director, WCLS (**pages 19 - 42**)
9. Election to Board of Directors (**pages 43 - 45**)
10. Other Business
11. Adjournment (There will be a brief meeting of the Board of Directors following the Meeting)

Please note that only those who have been WCLS members for 30 days or more may vote at this meeting.

Willowdale Community Legal Services

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday October 8, 2024 – 7:00 p.m. In Person (Parkway Forest Community Centre) and via Zoom

AGENDA

1. Welcome – Joe Myers, Executive Director, WCLS
2. Land Acknowledgment – Lynn Wheatley, Chair, WCLS Board of Directors
3. Guest Speaker: The Continuing Housing Affordability Crisis and Renovictions

Laura Anonen - Community Development Worker with Don Valley Community Legal Services

Laura Anonen

- Renovictions: when a landlord renovates a unit/building and evicts tenants to complete the renovations
- In Ontario there is vacancy decontrol; this means when tenants move out, landlords are allowed to increase rent by any amount they want; this means there is a great incentive for landlords to evict tenants and move in new tenants
- 28-30 Langley Avenue: rooming house where landlord renovicted 24 residents; this led to municipal advocacy, the creation of a subcommittee at City Council that is now working to implement a Toronto renovictions bylaw
- It is the work of legal clinics and tenant advocates which had pushed the creation of a Toronto bylaw regarding renovictions
- Hamilton implemented a renovictions bylaw that among other things: requires landlords to apply for a renovation licence, proving the work will be adequately extensive; requires landlords to explain to tenants their rights; requires landlords to pay for difference in rent for a tenant to live elsewhere while the landlord is doing renovations
- June 13, 2024: a report went to the City's Planning and Housing Committee
- October 30, 2024: the City's Planning and Housing Committee will be providing a report back regarding the draft bylaw and implementation plan
- Laura is feeling confident that the bylaw will be similar to Hamilton in its contents
- Initially it was proposed that the bylaw would come into effect in November 2025 but advocates are pushing for it to come into effect earlier
- Advocacy is also happening in Ottawa, London, Kitchener, Guelph on municipal renovictions bylaws
- Send letters to council to show your support for the bylaw!! Email laura.anenon@dvcls.clcj.ca if further questions

Sara Ageorlo: Build a Better Fairview

- BaBF: Fairview Mall is owned by Cadillac Fairview, which is looking to get an approval for a development of 14 condo buildings in the area
- BaBF is made up of community agencies in the area seeking to advocate for benefits for the local community
- WCLS's top priority is to secure affordable housing units; other groups were advocating for things like adequate green space, affordable commercial rent spaces, local economic benefits including employing local residents
- BaBF has been working with Shelley Carroll's office (city councillor for the area)
- Initial proposal from CF was rejected by the City and they entered into a period of negotiation
- CF recently resubmitted its newest proposal; they have committed to 3% of all the building units across all 14 towers being new affordable units; BaBF is expecting the City to approve this proposal
- BaBF was hoping for 20% affordable units; aimed high, expected low, but acknowledge they would have received nothing if not for the advocacy work that BaBF has done

Business Meeting

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved: PJ Dawda

Seconded: Misha Hossein

5. Minutes of 2023 Annual General Meeting & Business Arising (pages 2 – 6)

Moved: Mike Cowan

Seconded: Susy Guadron

6. Ordinary Resolution: New WCLS By Laws

- Lynn Wheatley, Chair, WCLS Board of Directors reported
- Amendments to bylaws required by the *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010*
- WCLS Board of Directors hired a lawyer with experience in corporate bylaws and drafted new WCLS bylaws; the Board approved this bylaw, now need approval at membership level

WHEREAS A Board and Management Committee of Willowdale Community Legal Services (WCLS) was formed in 2023 and entrusted with reviewing the WCLS By-Laws, providing the Board of Directors with recommendations on any necessary amendments required by the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, and consulting with a lawyer to update the WCLS By-Laws;

WHEREAS the Board and Management Committee reviewed WCLS's current By-Laws, attended trainings held by the CLEO Non-Profit project on transitioning to the Ontario Not-for-

Profit Corporations Act, 2010, conducted research and consulted with a lawyer;

WHEREAS the changes as written in WCLS By-Law 2024-01 were recommended to the Board of Directors to ensure compliance with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, as well as to update the By-Law to reflect current practices and to do some housekeeping;

WHEREAS on June 25, 2024 the WCLS Board of Directors approved the changes recommended by the Committee as written in WCLS By-Law 2024-01;

BIRT the WCLS By-Law 2024-01 be approved

Moved: PJ Dawda

Seconded: Susy Guadron

7. Special Resolution: Articles of amendment for the purpose of establishing a minimum (8) and maximum (10) number of directors

- Lynn Wheatley, Chair, WCLS Board of Directors reported

WHEREAS the Corporation was incorporated pursuant to the Corporations Act (Ontario) by letters patent dated July 8, 1988 (the Letters Patent);

AND WHEREAS the Corporation is now subject to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (Ontario) (the Act).

AND WHEREAS to facilitate the Corporation's compliance with the Act, the Corporation has made certain amendments to the Letters Patent.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED as a special resolution of the members of the Corporation:

1. The Corporation is hereby authorized to:

- a) apply to the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery or, if applicable, any successor ministry or agency of the government of the Province of Ontario with jurisdiction (the Ministry) for the purpose of establishing that the range of the permissible number of directors of the Corporation shall be a minimum of eight and a maximum of ten as set out in the attached draft of the Application for Articles of Amendment, as Appendix "A" (the Articles of Amendment).
- b) execute and file the Articles of Amendment upon such terms and conditions and additional provisions as may be required by the Director appointed under the Act, each of which said changes are hereby approved, authorized and confirmed.
- c) appoint any two of the directors or officers of the Corporation (each an Authorized Signing Officer and together the Authorized Signing Officers) to sign the Articles of Amendment and all related documents on behalf of the Corporation, notwithstanding any change in any of the persons holding such offices between the time of the actual signing and the delivery of the application for the Articles of Amendment to the Director appointed under the Act (or such other authority with jurisdiction), and to treat any application for Articles of Amendment so signed as valid.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED as a special resolution of the members of the Corporation:

2. The Authorized Signing Officers are hereby authorized and directed for and on behalf of and in the name of the Corporation

- a) to do, sign and execute, under the corporate seal of the Corporation or otherwise, all such other agreements, documents, certificates, directions (the Additional Documents) and things as in their opinion may be provided for, or which may be advisable, necessary, or useful, or which may be requested by the Director appointed under the Act in connection with the foregoing resolutions or in connection with the execution and delivery of the application for the Articles of Amendment; and
- b) to execute and deliver any replacements, amendments or supplements to any of the foregoing as they may deem necessary or advisable at any time or from time to time.

3. The directors of the Corporation may abandon the application for the Articles of Amendment without the further approval of the members of the Corporation if the directors determine that doing so is in the best interest of the Corporation.

4. Any act or acts of any officer or director of the Corporation or other person, which act, or acts would have been authorized by the foregoing resolutions except that such acts were taken prior to the adoption of such resolutions, are hereby ratified and sanctioned as the act of the Corporation, and binding upon the Corporation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED as a special resolution of the members of the Corporation that:

- a) The change to the number of directors of the Corporation to range with a minimum of eight and a maximum of ten as set out in the Articles of Amendment are hereby approved.
- b) Upon issuance of the Articles of Amendment by the Ministry, the number of directors of the Corporation shall be fixed at eight.
- c) Thereafter, the directors of the Corporation are authorized to fix, by ordinary resolution of the board passed from time to time, the number of directors of the Corporation within the range of the minimum and maximum number of directors set out in the Articles of Amendment.

5. Any two directors or officers of the Corporation are authorized to execute an application for articles of amendment to be submitted to the Approval Authority, and to take any additional and ancillary action necessary to give effect to this resolution, including signing other documents and instruments, and approving such amendments to the application for articles of amendment as required by the Approval Authority in order for the articles of amendment to be issued.

Moved: Sarah Modesta Sepillo

Seconded: Misha Hossein

8. Treasurer's Report & Appointment of Auditor – Gemma Coppins, Treasurer, WCLS Board of Directors (pages 7 – 18)

- Gemma Coppins, WCLS Treasurer reported
- Auditor (Truster Zweig Raithatha) provided a clean audit report

BIRT 2023-2024 Treasurer's Report be approved

Moved: Gemma Coppins

Seconded: Mike Cowan

9. Appointment of Auditor for 2024-2025

BIRT Truster Zweig Raithatha LLP Chartered Professional Accountants be appointed as WCLS's auditor for 2024-2025

Moved: Gemma Coppins

Seconded: Susy Guadron

10. Annual Report – Joe Myers, Executive Director, WCLS (pages 19 – 41)

- Joe Myers, WCLS Executive Director reported
- Joe thanked WCLS staff for their incredible work and dedication to the clinic
- There has been turnover of staff this year: Lorena Zelaya, Jessica Fletcher, and Shoghig Bedros have moved on to other positions; Jane Reducto and Rebecca Ward have joined WCLS this year
- Joe thanked board members for the work they're doing behind the scenes and how essential it is for the work WCLS does
- Joe thanked LAO; acknowledged that question of whether level of funding provided will be able to cover costs is always top of mind however without LAO, WCLS would not exist

11. Election of Board of Directors (pages 42 – 43) – Misha Hossain

- Board members elected for 2 year terms
- Board members running for election: Lynn Wheatley, Irma Spahiu, PJ Dawda, Kelsey Miki

BIRT Lynn Wheatley, PJ Dawda, Irma Spahiu, and Kelsey Miki be acclaimed as Directors to the WCLS Board of Directors

Moved: Mike Cowan

Seconded: Sarah Modesta Sepillo

12. Other Business

- No other business

13. Adjournment (There will be a brief meeting of the Board of Directors following the Meeting)

Moved: Misha Hossain

Seconded: Gemma Coppins

Please note that only those who have been WCLS members
for 30 days or more may vote at this meeting.

WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2025



WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Index to Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2025

	Page
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT	1 - 2
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Operations	4
Statement of Changes in Fund Balances	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Notes to Financial Statements	7 - 10



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors of Willowdale Community Legal Services

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Willowdale Community Legal Services (the "organization"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2025, and the statements of operations, changes in fund balances and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at March 31, 2025, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the organization's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

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Independent Auditor's Report to the Board of Directors of Willowdale Community Legal Services
(continued)

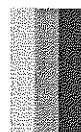
As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Richmond Hill, Ontario
July 22, 2025

Truster Zweig Raithatha LLP
Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants



WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2025

	General Fund	Legal Disbursements Fund	Capital Fund	2025 Total	2024 Total
ASSETS					
CURRENT					
Cash	\$ 1,515	\$ 6,742	\$ -	\$ 8,257	\$ 44,048
Government remittances	6,422	22	-	6,444	6,688
Prepaid expenses	15,549	-	-	15,549	14,168
Interfund receivable (Note 3)	-	1,170	-	1,170	220
CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 4)					
	23,486	7,934	-	31,420	65,124
	-	-	764	764	7,434
	\$ 23,486	\$ 7,934	\$ 764	\$ 32,184	\$ 72,558
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES					
CURRENT					
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 14,730	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,730	\$ 52,501
Interfund payable (Note 3)	1,170	-	-	1,170	220
	15,900	-	-	15,900	52,721
FUND BALANCES					
	7,586	7,934	764	16,284	19,837
	\$ 23,486	\$ 7,934	\$ 764	\$ 32,184	\$ 72,558

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD



Director

Director



WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Statement of Operations
Year Ended March 31, 2025

	General Fund	Legal Disbursements Fund	Capital Fund	2025 Total	2024 Total
REVENUES					
Legal Aid Ontario - Direct receipts	\$ 1,015,031	\$ 7,300	\$ -	\$ 1,022,331	\$ 969,415
Legal Aid Ontario - Indirect receipts	84,530	-	-	84,530	72,231
Other	31	-	-	31	9
	1,099,592	7,300	-	1,106,892	1,041,655
EXPENSES					
Accommodations	80,156	-	-	80,156	76,269
Amortization	-	-	6,670	6,670	7,747
Communications	9,850	-	-	9,850	12,481
Equipment	4,059	-	-	4,059	4,375
Indirect payments	84,530	-	-	84,530	72,231
Legal disbursements	-	12,889	-	12,889	8,923
Library	188	-	-	188	1,269
Professional dues	11,211	-	-	11,211	10,623
Professional fees	4,521	-	-	4,521	4,365
Salaries and benefits	868,749	-	-	868,749	813,257
Supplies and services	17,589	-	-	17,589	17,579
Travel	1,103	-	-	1,103	2,429
	1,081,956	12,889	6,670	1,101,515	1,031,548
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$ 17,636	\$ (5,589)	\$ (6,670)	\$ 5,377	\$ 10,107

See notes to financial statements

WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Statement of Changes in Fund Balances
Year Ended March 31, 2025

	General Fund	Legal Disbursements Fund	Capital Fund	2025 Total	2024 Total
FUND BALANCES - BEGINNING OF YEAR					
Excess (Deficiency) of revenues over expenses	\$ 3,880	\$ 8,523	\$ 7,434	\$ 19,837	\$ 18,552
Transfer to Legal Disbursements Fund	17,636	(5,589)	(6,670)	5,377	10,107
Repayment of prior year surplus	(5,000)	5,000	-	-	-
	(8,930)	-	-	(8,930)	(8,822)
FUND BALANCES - END OF YEAR	\$ 7,586	\$ 7,934	\$ 764	\$ 16,284	\$ 19,837

See notes to financial statements

WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended March 31, 2025

	2025	2024
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 5,377	\$ 10,107
Item not affecting cash:		
Amortization	6,670	7,747
	12,047	17,854
Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Government remittances	244	(507)
Prepaid expenses	(1,381)	(74)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(37,770)	25,207
	(38,907)	24,626
Cash flow from (used by) operating activities	(26,860)	42,480
FINANCING ACTIVITY		
Repayment of prior year surplus	(8,931)	(8,822)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH FLOW	(35,791)	33,658
Cash - beginning of year	44,048	10,390
CASH - END OF YEAR	\$ 8,257	\$ 44,048



WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2025

1. PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Willowdale Community Legal Services (the "organization"), is incorporated without share capital under the laws of the Province of Ontario. The organization was formed to provide equal access to quality legal services for the low-income citizens in the Willowdale community and is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario.

The organization qualifies as a not-for-profit organization under the Income Tax Act and is exempt from corporate income tax.

2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. These standards are in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles and include the following significant accounting policies:

Financial instruments

The organization initially measures its financial assets and liabilities at fair value, except for certain non-arm's length transactions, which are recorded at the carrying or exchange amount depending on the circumstances. The organization subsequently measures all financial assets and financial liabilities at cost or amortized cost.

Financial assets measured at cost consist of cash, government remittances and interfund receivable.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable and accrued liabilities and interfund payable.

Fund accounting

The organization follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions. The funds described below, except as noted, are restricted under various agreements between the organization and Legal Aid Ontario ("LAO") and title to the organization assets vests with the funder.

General Fund

These funds are used to provide a range of legal and paralegal services, including information, advice and representation, to low-income individuals and families.

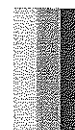
Legal Disbursements Fund

These funds are used to provide certain direct expenses incurred in representing the organization's clients in legal proceedings.

Capital Fund

This fund holds the capital assets of the organization that have been funded by Legal Aid Ontario.

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WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
Notes to Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2025

2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

Revenue recognition

Restricted contributions, consisting of LAO direct receipts, are recognized as revenue of the appropriate fund and deferred until expended for its intended purpose. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which they are received or receivable and collection is reasonably assured.

Disbursements recovered from clients are recorded in revenue when received.

Capital assets

Capital assets are recorded at cost. Amortization is provided for over the assets' estimated useful lives as follows:

Computer equipment	3 years	straight-line method
Office equipment	5 years	straight-line method
Leasehold improvements	term of the lease	straight-line method

The organization regularly reviews its capital assets to eliminate obsolete items. Government grants are treated as a reduction of capital assets cost.

Capital assets acquired during the year but not placed into use are not amortized until they are placed into use.

Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses for the reporting period. Significant areas requiring the use of estimates include the measurement of revenue recognition and accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

These estimates are reviewed periodically, and, as adjustments become necessary, they are reported in the period in which they become known.

Interfund transfers

Transfers between funds are made when resources of one fund have been authorized by the Board of Directors to finance activities and acquisitions in another fund.

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WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2025

2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

Employee benefit plan

The organization offers a defined contribution plan with OPSEU Pension Trust, where it is required to fund up to a maximum of 3% of employees' annual earnings which is matched by deductions from employee salaries for a total of 6%. The organization's total expense under this plan during the year was \$22,964 (2024 - \$21,630) and is included in salaries and benefits.

3. INTERFUND RECEIVABLE AND INTERFUND PAYABLE

The amounts owing between funds are non-interest bearing, unsecured and have no fixed terms of repayment.

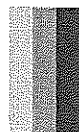
4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Cost	Accumulated amortization	2025 Net book value	2024 Net book value
Office equipment	\$ 8,687	\$ 8,686	\$ 1	\$ 1
Computer equipment	59,078	59,078	-	4,798
Leasehold improvements	13,297	12,534	763	2,635
	\$ 81,062	\$ 80,298	\$ 764	\$ 7,434

5. INDIRECT RECEIPTS AND INDIRECT PAYMENTS

LAO administered and made payments on behalf of the organization for the following expenses and computer equipment:

	2025	2024
Supplies and services	\$ 84,425	\$ 72,130
Library	4	-
Salaries and benefits	101	101
	\$ 84,530	\$ 72,231



WILLOWDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2025

6. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

- a) The organization has indemnified its past, present and future directors, officers, employees and volunteers against expenses (including legal expenses), judgments and any amount actually or reasonably incurred by them in connection with any action, suit or proceeding in which the directors and officers are sued as a result of their service, if they acted honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the organization.

The nature of the indemnity prevents the organization from reasonably estimating the maximum exposure. The organization has purchased directors' and officers' liability insurance with respect to this indemnification. Historically, the organization has not made any payments under such or similar indemnification agreements. At this time, the organization is not aware of any claims under these guarantees and, therefore, no amount has been accrued in the financial statements with respect to these guarantees.

- b) The organization is committed under an operating lease expiring March 31, 2030 for the rental of its office space. The annual commitment for base rent (exclusive of other occupancy costs) for the next five years is as follows:

2026	\$	44,980
2027		44,980
2028		44,980
2029		46,364
2030		46,364

7. FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

The organization is exposed to various risks through its financial instruments. The following analysis provides a measure of the organization's risk exposure and concentration as of March 31, 2025.

(a) Credit risk

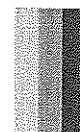
Credit risk is the risk that one party to a financial instrument will cause a financial loss for the other party by failing to meet its obligation. The organization is not exposed to credit risk.

(b) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that an organization will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. The organization is exposed to this risk mainly with respect to its accounts payable and accrued liabilities. The organization maintains adequate cash reserves and generally settles its liabilities within thirty days.

(c) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk comprises three types of risk: currency risk, interest rate risk, and other price risk. The organization is not exposed to any of these risks.



Willowdale Community Legal Services

Annual Report – 2024/2025

Clinic Overview

Willowdale Community Legal Services (WCLS) opened in February 1987, making this our thirty-eight anniversary. WCLS is one of approximately 70 community legal clinics throughout Ontario, and receives all of its funding from Legal Aid Ontario (LAO). Many clinics are general service clinics like ours, which serve a specific geographic area. Others provide specialized legal help in areas such as income maintenance or environmental law, or serve a particular community, such as Aboriginal peoples or seniors.

Our clinic is mandated to provide summary advice, information and referrals, client representation, public legal education, law reform, and community organizing and development. Tenancy, social assistance/income maintenance, and immigration law are our main areas of practice. We also may assist with matters concerning domestic violence and debt.

Clinics provide quarterly statistics and financial reports to LAO. Our financial year runs from April 1 to March 31. Each year, we submit a report to LAO outlining the previous year's activities and request funding for the next year. Our service proposal (funding application) for 2025-2026 is due January 31, 2026.

Board of Directors

We are governed by a community-based Board of Directors as an incorporated non-profit. Our Board consists of a diverse group of volunteers, most of whom live or work in our community. WCLS is fortunate to have such committed Directors; we value and appreciate their contributions. Our Board plays an essential role and is responsible for:

- providing direction on policy issues;
- planning and evaluating;
- overseeing personnel and financial management;
- reporting to the community; and,
- reporting to LAO.

Directors are elected at our October Annual General Meeting. For the past year, our directors have been: **Lynn Wheatley** [Chair], **PJ Dawda** [Vice-Chair], **Gemma Coppins** [Treasurer], **Michael Cowan**, **Susy Guadron**, **Misha Hossein**, **Kelsey Miki**, **Sarah**

Modesta Sepillo, Irma Spahiu, and Ben Torres.

In addition to our monthly Board meetings, we held our annual Board & Staff Planning Meeting on March 25, 2025. We reviewed our annual goals and objectives, staff shared client success stories and the Board held a staff engagement session.

The joint Staff-Board Outreach Committee focused on development projects in the community, such as working with Build a Better Fairview Campaign (BaBF) and addressing a recently announced condominium development project on the southeast corner of Sheppard Avenue East and Don Mills Road. Board Members and staff continued to engage with local politicians about access to justice issues.

A subcommittee of WCLS's Board reviewed and updated two policies this year. WCLS's updated Work From Home Policy was passed at the Board's June 2025 meeting. The updated WCLS Safety Policy was passed at the July 2025 Board meeting.

The ACLCO offers training session to legal clinic Board members, including sessions on Ontario's community legal clinic system and the role of volunteer boards of directors. Most recently the ACLCO launched an Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression – Decolonization Training Project, which included a two hour training session for Board members.

WCLS Staff 2024-2025

Joe Myers	Executive Director
Gillian Reiss	Staff Lawyer / Managing Director
Nir Gepner	Staff Lawyer
Sara Ageorlo	Staff Lawyer
Rebecca Ward	Staff Lawyer
Rola Hamdan	Community Legal Worker
Louie Jane Reducto	Office Administrator / Intake Worker
Heena Liqa	Intake Worker / Administrative Assistant

WCLS strives to provide in-house translation when possible. Rola is fluent in Arabic. Jane is fluent in Tagalog and Bisaya. Heena is fluent in Dari and Sara is fluent in Farsi. Nir is fluent in Hebrew. Gillian can provide basic service in French.

Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Activities

WCLS staff continue to engage in anti-racism anti-oppression training on a monthly basis. Over the past year, we have deepened our understanding of racism and oppression experienced by Indigenous people. Each WCLS staff member attended a community event or participated in an activity to mark National Indigenous Peoples Day to learn more

about Indigenous peoples' history in Canada. We came together to share our experiences and what we learned. We also learned about Indigenous history and symbolism through a tour of the Spirit Garden. The Spirit Garden is an Indigenous cultural space that provides teaching, learning, sharing and healing experiences in Nathan Phillips Square. The project responds in part to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action 82, for government to commission and install a Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour residential school survivors, and all the children lost to their families and communities. It includes a reflecting pond, a Two Wampum walkway, a Voyageur canoe, an Inukshuk, and a timber frame Teaching Lodge.

The WCLS ARAO Committee also hosted a number of presentations for staff. These included a workshop from the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario about developments in the law and the discrimination faced by those living with HIV/AIDS, the showing of a webinar from Black Legal Action Centre about how legal clinics can better serve Black clients and combat anti-Black racism, and a presentation by a lawyer at West Scarborough Community Legal Services discussed strategies for advancing arguments related to anti-Black racism at the Social Benefits Tribunal. The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario presented about the Your Way Forward program, which provides housing services to survivors of gender-based violence. High school and college co-op students also engaged in ARAO work. A number of students presented to staff about an ARAO topic important to them.

WCLS staff also participated in external anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings and educational sessions. The sessions were provided by a number of different organizations, including other legal clinics, Legal Aid Ontario, the North York Community Cluster, the ACLCO, The Law Society of Ontario and the City of Toronto.

We continue our involvement with Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TNLIP) on fostering relationships with Indigenous leaders and enhancing cultural competency among service providers in the community. We are an active member of the "Newcomer & Indigenous Task Group" led by TNLIP. As reported last year, the group is organizing the Reconciliation Conference for the Settlement Sector in Toronto, creating space to have important conversation and collaborations.

Student Placements

WCLS contributes to our legal community by providing placement opportunities for students to learn about poverty-law. WCLS sees value in student engagement at the clinic. Students support the work that we do. They also learn and gain experience at the clinic, which we hope impacts their future career decisions. In 2024-2025 we hosted the following students:

- Paralegal Students → We regularly provide placement opportunities for paralegal students from Seneca College. We hosted three such students last year.
- Pro Bono Law Students → We regularly hold placements for Pro Bono Ontario law students. Last academic year we hosted two law students from the University of Toronto. These students provided research and case support in immigration law. We are hosting two students this academic year.
- Osgoode Hall's Public Interest Requirement → Last academic year, we hosted six students who assisted with JusticeMakers and casework. Osgoode Law students are required to volunteer 40 hours of their time to a public interest organization. We are hosting three new students this academic year.
- High School Co-Op Students → WCLS hosted seven students over the past year from Georges Vanier Secondary School, Notre Dame High School and A.Y. Jackson Secondary School. The students were supervised by our Community Legal Worker and worked closely with WCLS's support staff. The students provided support with public legal education sessions, outreach, social media, non-legal research, and admin support.

WCLS Lease/Office Space

We have been at our current location for more than twenty-eight years. We are close to a transit hub, and most of our clients reside nearby in the Don Mills corridor. On March 31, 2025 our most recent lease expired. The clinic negotiated a lease extension with our landlord, Azuria Group, that goes to March 31, 2030. We are pleased to be able to remain in our current space where WCLS has been located for almost thirty years.

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO)

Funding and Malatest Report

In 2018-2019 the clinic's funding was reduced for the first time in its history by approximately 7%. In the subsequent years WCLS received small increases. In June 2024 the clinic was informed that it would receive an additional 5.5% funding increase for the year. Stable, on-going funding from LAO allows us to provide consistent core services and additional responsive services to help meet our community's needs.

As reported last year, the additional investment in funding announced in June 2024 was intended to address clinics' stated priority of staff compensation, particularly staff lawyer compensation, and the impact of salaries on retention and recruitment. WCLS's Board made the decision last year to apply the largest portion of the 2024 funding increase to the lawyers on staff who were the most underpaid.

In June 2025 LAO announced that the budget for Ontario's community legal clinics for

2025-2026 would increase by 4%. LAO said that each clinic would receive a funding increase, but the percentage increase for each clinic would not be the same. This means that some clinics could receive an increase of 4%, less than 4%, or possibly slightly more than 4%. To determine the most equitable way to distribute the funding increase, LAO hired a consultant to come up with a funding formula.

Historically, the funding for legal clinics has been calculated based on each clinic's original funding allocation with small yearly increases. The small yearly increases were distributed equally among clinics based on percentage of a clinic's budget. Over time, populations and legal needs in a clinic's community may have changed and funding needs may have shifted. Funding increases may not have been proportionate with each community's needs. During the times that LAO has increased or decreased clinic funding disproportionately to current funding, LAO has relied on Low Income Measure (LIM) population data in a clinic's catchment area as the key component in determining the need for poverty law services. For a long time, clinics have pressed LAO to consider other factors in determining the poverty law needs of a community as LIM, while important, does not capture all of the important factors that should be considered when assessing a community's low-income legal needs.

Earlier this year LAO hired Malatest, a Canadian market research and evaluation firm, to produce a report assessing the relative needs for poverty law services across Ontario's 51 general service clinics' catchment areas and to produce a resource allocation methodology that ensures equity in the distribution of resources to these clinics. Researchers met with representatives of WCLS (and the other general service legal clinics) to gather information about the needs in WCLS's catchment area. Researchers also examined which demographic and socioeconomic indicators would be relevant to determining community legal needs. Factors include percentage of populations that receives social assistance, Indigenous populations, access to health care, remoteness, access to affordable housing, homeless population, visible minorities and newcomers, etc. They developed a method for calculating community legal needs scores and created tools for future resources allocations. Malatest issued its report in July 2025.

LAO is in the process of reviewing the report and will soon make a decision as to how the increase to the budget of Ontario's community legal clinics will be spread among the 51 general service clinics.

WCLS Funding by LAO

WCLS is currently engaged in a service agreement with LAO until March 2028.

The Ontario Government proclaimed the *Legal Aid Services Act, 2020* on July 8, 2020 replacing *LASA, 1998*. *LASA, 2020* cancelled the framework negotiated between clinics and LAO close to 20 years ago that had since served clinics and our communities well.

Importantly, *LASA, 2020* continues to recognize the existence and role of legal clinics in providing poverty law services.

The substance of *LASA 2020* can be found in the LAO Entity Service Providers Rules and LAO-Clinic Service Agreement. A final LAO-Clinic Service Agreement was signed and the Rules adopted in October 2021. WCLS's first service agreement under the new rules expired on March 31, 2025. In a letter received on February 19, 2025 LAO confirmed its intention pursuant to section 81(2) of the Act to enter a new service agreement with WCLS and a new agreement was signed on March 2, 2025. WCLS's new service agreement expires on March 31, 2028.

There is still work to be done on outstanding issues arising out of *LASA 2020*. Clinic funding remains at issue. Historically, LAO has funded community clinics on the basis of their actual costs, meaning LAO has provided the necessary resources to clinics in accordance with each clinic's leasing, operating costs, pay equity obligations, etc. If a clinic's rent increased in negotiating a lease renewal, for example, LAO would partner in the discussions and, if approved, would increase the clinic budget to cover the cost. LAO said it intends to move to a stricter model of "envelope funding", meaning they will no longer commit to funding increased expenses including leasing costs, operating expenses and pay equity obligations.

In September 2022 LAO released its Funding Consultation Paper. WCLS endorsed the ACLCO's Clinic Funding Model Submission in response. Talks on the issue stalled in late 2023 as the ACLCO and LAO focused their efforts on staff compensation and the impact of salaries on retention and recruitment. LAO and the ACLCO are still addressing the issue of the appropriate funding model for legal clinics.

Ontario Not For Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)

The ONCA codifies the way in which not-for-profit corporations are created, governed and dissolved. The Act was proclaimed on October 19, 2021. WCLS and other Ontario not-for-profit corporations were required to conform to the new ONCA by October 19, 2024. Changes to the by-laws and the clinic's Articles were approved by WCLS's membership at last year's Annual General Meeting, which was held on October 8, 2024. The clinic submitted its application for articles of amendment prior to the October 19, 2024 deadline and the changes have been approved by the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Tribunals Ontario – Digital First Platform

As we have reported over the past few years, nearly all of WCLS's client hearings are before administrative tribunals that are part of Tribunals Ontario, particularly the Social

Benefits Tribunal and the Landlord and Tenant Board. Tribunals Ontario has permanently moved to digital hearings.

Digital hearings do not work for many of the low-income clients that WCLS serves. The permanent move to online hearing has resulted in delays and reduced access to justice, especially for low and moderate income participants. It is not uncommon for our clients to have neither a device nor reliable internet or data. Other clients are not computer literate so are unable to participate without assistance.

The online hearing process, particularly at the Landlord and Tenant Board, continues to be disorganized and chaotic. Some tenants are forced to connect by telephone, and sometimes wait for hours before their case is called. Many times, after waiting for hours, a client's hearing has to be rescheduled because the Board has run out of time. Some LTB hearing blocks contain dozens of cases and there can be more than 100 people connecting to the same hearing. Parties are commonly unable to connect to hearings or are cut-off in the middle of hearing blocks and forced to try to re-connect. Despite the LTB's introduction of a new technical support helpline for Zoom hearings, the situation remains chaotic.

There are also practical problems in having a digital hearing, such as the introduction of documents and other forms of evidence, as well as examining and cross-examining parties and witnesses. The move to digital hearings has created a situation in which Ontarians who had the most difficulty obtaining access to justice prior to the pandemic are even worse off now.

In May 2023 the Ontario Ombudsman released his report, "Administrative Justice Delayed, Fairness Denied". Regarding the Landlord and Tenant Board, he stated, "the Board is fundamentally failing in its role of providing swift justice to those seeking resolution of residential landlord and tenant issues. In doing so, it is denying justice to a significant segment of Ontarians." He continued: "There were tenants stuck waiting [for hearings] while they endured harassment, unsafe living conditions, and improper attempts to force them from their homes. And there were small landlords, including those renting out space within their own homes, who were trying to cope with tenants' abuse, criminal conduct, and facing financial ruin and serious health harms. It was clear that prolonged delays in having their applications resolved were causing them and others significant hardship."

Tribunals Ontario is attempting to address the Ombudsman's criticisms but progress is slow. Legal clinics like WCLS will no doubt devote time and resources in the future to making hearings more fair and equitable for all Ontarians.

Client Service Measures

LAO requires clinics to develop and implement client service measures to monitor access,

timeliness, and client feedback. To monitor access we survey clients and local agencies. To monitor timeliness we track our response time to clients on new issues two weeks per year. To obtain client feedback we survey nearly all of our clients whose files have been completed. The results are reported to LAO on an annual basis. Our measures and results for 2024-2025 will be finalized and tallied for our funding application.

Toronto East Employment & Immigration Law Services (TEEILS)

In 2015 WCLS joined with the then-five other clinics in Toronto east of Yonge Street to collaborate on an employment law project to assist the many precariously employed low-income earners who required employment law services throughout east Toronto. We applied to LAO for permanent funding with an added immigration component, and received approval for the Toronto East Employment and Immigration Law Services (TEEILS) program in 2017. Don Valley Community Legal Services receives the funding and administers the program. Currently the TEEILS staff consists of Richa Sandill Oza (employment lawyer), John Wigle (employment lawyer), Allison Krochak (immigration lawyer) and Jennifer Wan (immigration lawyer).

Senior management of the member clinics meet regularly to address issues and plan for the future. Training opportunities are also held among staff members who work in immigration and employment law. This quarter, TEEILS clinics participated in de-escalation training provided by the Toronto Drop-In Network. WCLS and TEEILS also collaborate in training Pro Bono Students Canada students who provide support to the TEEILS clinics.

Each TEEILS clinic uses the program's services to meet its own needs depending on the level of service in the area of employment and immigration law that the clinic offered prior to the creation of TEEILS. For example, WCLS provides a variety of immigration law services, whereas other TEEILS clinics were not providing as much or any service in immigration law. On the other hand, WCLS did not provide as much service in employment law as some of the other TEEILS clinics. As a result, we do not use TEEILS immigration law services but do use TEEILS employment law services more than some of the other clinics. The main employment law areas that TEEILS covers are employment standards, wrongful dismissal, Employment Insurance (EI), employment contracts, and human rights. TEEILS has also providing services in the area of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit Program (CERB) and the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB). TEEILS managers have been meeting over the past several months to more clearly define the scope of TEEILS' area of employment law practice so it more closely aligns with the needs of our community.

The TEEILS employment law team reports that WCLS is one of the TEEILS' program's

busiest and most in demand catchment areas for employment law services. The program receives up to ten intakes a week from WCLS. Employment law clients from WCLS are diverse. Many do not speak English, and/or are precariously employed working “gig work” or shift work jobs. TEEILS continues to receive many calls from low-income individuals being asked to re-pay legitimately obtained pandemic benefits.

As reported last year, the non-DVCLS TEEILS managers requested that TEEILS staff return to the pre-COVID arrangement whereby some TEEILS services were offered from non-DVCLS clinics. It is easier and more accessible for WCLS’s clients to meet with TEEILS staff at WCLS. The TEEILS employment law lawyer does attend at WCLS every other Wednesday to work from the clinic. We are hoping to increase the amount of time the TEEILS employment lawyer works our office to one day a week.

Settlement Services

WCLS continues its partnership with The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO) to provide settlement services. TNO settlement workers work from our office and meet with members of our community to assist in providing a range of settlement services, including assisting community members with applications to various agencies and government ministries. We have increased this service over the past year and have a TNO settlement work at WCLS at every day of the week. TNO settlement workers offer services in multiple languages including Farsi, Arabic, Mandarin, Dari and Urdu.

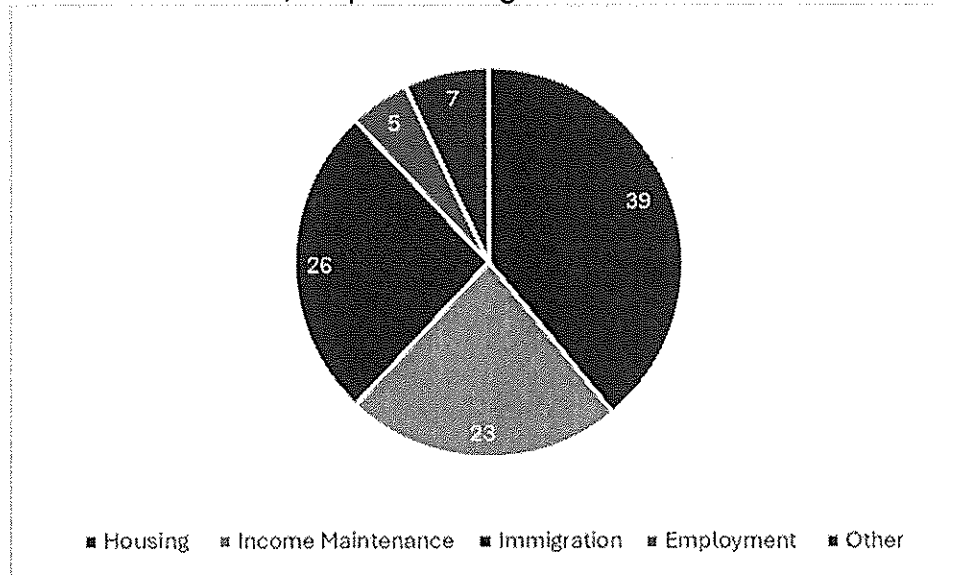
Clinic Casework and Initiative Statistics

(September 16, 2024 to September 15, 2025)

We record our statistics using LAO's data program, CIMS.

Case and Brief Service, and Referral Statistics

From September 16, 2024 to September 15, 2025 WCLS had a total of 5352 contacts from clients. Of those contacts, we provided legal assistance to clients on 2867 matters.



Legal issues in the area of housing accounted for 39% of cases, income maintenance 23%, immigration 26%, and employment 5%. Roughly 7% percent of cases fell into the category of other (human rights, debt, affidavit, notaries, etc.).

Of the 2867 cases, 387 became files that took over two hours of work to complete. The remaining matters were dealt with as advice or brief services, each taking less than two hours. Housing accounted for 169 files (44%), income maintenance 115 files (30%), and immigration 102 files (26%).

WCLS and TEEILS staff make regular appearances at courts and tribunals, including the Social Benefits Tribunal, Social Security Tribunal of Canada, Landlord and Tenant Board, and Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. Staff also appear before the Immigration Appeal Division, Federal Court of Canada and Ontario Superior Court.

Over the past year WCLS rededicated itself to more accurately tracking referrals, which can be onerous and time consuming in the CIMS program. We make referrals for matters in areas of law that our clinic does not handle, for people who do not qualify financially,

and for people who live outside our catchment area. We make legal referrals to other legal clinics, LAO, and the private bar. We also refer clients to agencies, government offices, and service providers.

Initiative Statistics

An initiative is work that is not individual client casework. The clinic opened 104 initiatives between September 16, 2024 and September 15, 2025. Initiatives consisted of: public legal education – 19, outreach – 22, training/professional development – 3 partners/networks – 12, inter-clinic groups – 4 community development – 5, community organizing – 7, governance – 9, and other – 23.

During the past year, WCLS staff delivered more than 30 public legal education workshops. Sessions were provided to community members and service providers from organizations such as Homeless Shelters, Support Enhance Access Service Centre (S.E.A.S.), University Settlement, Fairview Public Library, Working Women Community Centre, Federation of Metro Tenants Associations, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, Catholic Cross Cultural Services, Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, and Flemington Health Centre.

We produced materials or provided information in writing to community agencies and government offices, which included distributing more than 1,500 pamphlets. We also post items of interest, community events and legal issues on our website (www.willowdalelegal.com), Twitter (@LegalWillowdale), Instagram (@LegalWillowdale) and Facebook page. Over the past year our website had 8,259 visitors and 10,712 page views. We received 61 intakes on our website.

WCLS's listserv has a total of 818 subscribers, with 143 joining this past year. We participated in 26 email campaigns and sent out a total of 19,026 emails as part of those campaigns.

Our staff members consistently attend conferences, webinars and workshops to hone our skills and expand our knowledge. Staff members were involved this year in providing several trainings to legal clinic caseworkers and the private bar.

Case Stories

Looking at our statistics gives an overview of numbers but does not give a sense of the relevance of our work to individual clients. The following are brief examples of some of the clients and cases with which we were involved in 2024-2025.

INCOME MAINTENANCE CASES

Proving Disabilities

Every year, WCLS helps dozens of clients appeal decisions by the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) that say that they are not disabled. People who have a low or no income struggle to survive on the minimal assistance provided by Ontario Works (OW). If they have a disability then they can apply to ODSP in order to receive a higher income and not be forced to participate in employment-seeking activities. As ODSP is tied to inflation, whereas OW rates have not increased since 2018, ODSP financial support is now almost double that received from OW. Clients have their doctors complete a package, and they also complete a form. The material provided must show that they have a substantial impairment that substantially restricts their daily life and is expected to last one year or more. Many applications are denied. Often, some information is missing from the materials, such as specialist reports or details about the impact of the condition. Sometimes, ODSP does not interpret the application in a reasonable manner. The client's subjective experience of their condition is also important, so it is necessary to hear their story to understand the disability. We help clients gather evidence and prepare them to testify. We also represent many clients at the Social Benefits Tribunal. The majority of the people who come to WCLS for assistance are successful in obtaining ODSP benefits.

Social Benefits Tribunal Reverses Unfair Decision

We represented FM in her appeal of the denial of her ODSP application. FM had strong medical evidence and testimony. For example, FM's doctor provided detailed explanation of the severity of her symptoms and restrictions. The doctor noted things like "despite numerous medical consultations and attempts at management, her condition has only deteriorated, locking her in a cycle of constant unremitting pain" and "the pain permeates every aspect of her daily life. Simple activities – sitting, standing, bending, and walking – are agonizing and often impossible without assistance." FM testified that she could not sleep continuously for two hours, that she could stand for one to two minutes at time, and that she had to lean somewhere to brush her teeth or wash her face. Nevertheless, the Social Benefits Tribunal agreed with ODSP and denied her appeal. We helped FM file a reconsideration request. We drafted written submissions arguing that the Tribunal applied the wrong legal test when determining FM's eligibility for ODSP benefits. The Tribunal granted FM's reconsideration request and FM had a new hearing. We represented FM during her new hearing and she was found eligible for ODSP with a three-year medical

review date.

ODSP Charges Overpayment, then Backtracks

WA and her spouse were recipients of ODSP benefits. When the couple transitioned to Old Age Security benefits, they continued to receive Extended Health Benefits from the ODSP program. Extended Health Benefits provides funding for medication and medical supplies that are not covered by publicly funded health programs. Their ODSP caseworker initiated a review of their file in late 2024. ODSP determined that the couple had not been entitled to EHB benefits for a period of approximately two years. As a result, the couple owed ODSP approximately \$4,000. WA came to WCLS for assistance with the overpayment. We helped her file an appeal to the Social Benefits Tribunal. This prompted a further review by ODSP. Not only did this result in the overpayment being wiped from the couple's file, ODSP also determined that it owed the couple approximately \$3,000 in income benefits for 2023 and 2024.

ODSP Agree to Reinstate Benefits

ODSP cancelled HW and her spouse's income support. The Director determined that the couple inadequately disposed of assets for the purpose of qualifying for ODSP benefits. The couple, their daughter, and granddaughter lived together in a one-bedroom apartment owned by HW's spouse. The apartment was small and had mould, which was detrimental to HW's health. The family purchased a new home. HW's two daughters took out a mortgage for the new property. The bank advised them not to include their father (HW's spouse) in the mortgage due to his age and reliance on social assistance. Title for the new property was registered solely in the daughter's name due to her ability to qualify for the mortgage. When HW's spouse sold the old apartment, which their daughter had contributed to financially, the proceeds of the sale were transferred to their daughter for the sole purpose of contributing to the new property. In return, the couple would be entitled to live in the property for as long as they wanted. As a result, ODSP stopped the couple's income support. We helped the couple appeal ODSP's decision. We helped the family enter into a written agreement that asserted their rights to the home. The written agreement reflected the family view that the couple and their daughter equally owned the property. We drafted written submissions arguing that the couple transferred money to their daughter as a genuine contribution toward a joint asset that would be their principal residence. It was not an inadequate disposition of assets. The Director ultimately agreed with our position and entered into a consent order at the hearing that reinstated the couple's ODSP income support.

Most Vulnerable are Eligible

SH experienced profound mental health challenges associated with a delusional disorder. She had been in Canada over 20 years, taken care of by her mother. Sadly, her mother passed away and her extended family did not know how to take care of her. Her mother had never regularized her immigration status; however, it was clear that for medical and

personal reasons she could not leave the country. Both Ontario Works and ODSP said that she was not eligible for income support because she was “visiting” Canada. We worked with her extended family and the Public Guardian and Trustee to argue that she was not a visitor to Canada, the only home that she knew. The Tribunal agreed and ordered that her immigration status did not exclude her from social assistance benefits.

IMMIGRATION CASES

Family reunification – non-declared family members

WCLS dedicates a significant portion of its immigration practice to the reunification of families in Canada. Our clinic advises people on routine applications and represents families in non-routine applications.

A, for example, is a Permanent Resident (PR) and a resettled refugee from Somalia who did not declare his wife and four biological children when he applied to come to Canada for fear that his application would be delayed or denied. A contacted WCLS for assistance to reunite with his family. WCLS advocated for A’s reunification with his wife and biological children. We also sought the inclusion of his de-facto child (who has lived with the family since infancy) in the family’s application. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) accepted A’s wife and biological children. We hope that their visas will be issued in the coming weeks. WCLS is currently involved in court litigation over the refusal of the de-facto child of the family.

Alternative ways to overcome long immigration processing times

Lengthy separation affects many of our clients whose family remains abroad while applications are being process. Protected persons in Canada, especially, are affected by IRCC’s long processing times (sometimes 4-6 years). WCLS attempts to find creative ways to reunite families. For example, our clinic files TRP applications (a form of a humanitarian temporary resident processes) to seek reunification in Canada during the processing of a family’s PR applications.

Currently, we have several TRP applications filed. D, for example, is a protected person in Canada. She left Canada with two of her children who had Canadian visitor visas. She had to leave her 11-month-old daughter behind because she did not have a visa. Now that D applied for PR status as a protected person (and included her daughter as a dependent in that application) she may need to wait 4-5 years for her daughter to join her here. This would mean that D’s daughter may need to wait until the age of 7 to come to Canada and see her mother and siblings again. WCLS applied for a TRP for D’s daughter. The case is now before the Federal Court, and we hope to compel IRCC to accept early reunification through this process.

Compelling needs to stay in Canada

WCLS continues to assist people to remain in Canada due to special needs and circumstances. We routinely file humanitarian applications and other process to overcome inadmissibility and/or ineligibility for status in Canada.

B, for example, has lived in Canada for 30 years. She has a daughter who was born in Canada. B is otherwise unable to apply for PR status through a routine pathway. B was contacted by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) last year to commence her removal process. WCLS applied for B's PR status based on humanitarian grounds. We also sought temporary status for her to allow her to remain and work in Canada in light of her special situation and to ensure that she would not be removed during the PR process. Earlier this year, B received temporary authorization to remain in Canada, and a work permit valid for 2 years. We await a decision on her PR application.

TENANCY CASES

Repairs Cases

Every year we are contacted by hundreds of tenants who complain about not getting basic maintenance work done in their units. The issue becomes increasingly challenging as buildings age and require more repairs. By the time a tenant contacts WCLS, they are frustrated and have usually had several discussions with their landlord. In some cases, particularly those involving TCH, the landlord claims to have limited funds to make repairs and cannot do all the repair work that is needed. We continue to challenge landlords to comply with their legal obligations. This can involve applications to the LTB, working with the City of Toronto's Municipal Licensing and Standards Office, and with the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit.

Infestations

We have assisted many tenants over the past year regarding infestations, particularly bedbugs. The key to most of these cases is to get the landlord to take their obligations seriously and to continue to provide regular treatments until the infestation is eliminated. It also helps to connect tenants to community agencies, such as VHA Home HealthCare, which provide supports for tenants. Most landlords hire an exterminator to apply a chemical spray. It commonly takes multiple sprays to rid a unit of a bedbugs and sometimes even numerous treatments prove ineffective. Landlords are often reluctant to arrange for the most effective treatments, such as heat or freezing, as they are more expensive. It is onerous for tenants to prepare their units for multiple chemical treatments, particularly for those who are elderly or disabled. Many of our clients complain about the health hazards from the exposure to the chemical spray. In addition, tenants often must throw out their belongings (bedframes, furniture, bedding, etc.).

Tenants in Accessory Apartments

As rents have increased dramatically over the past few years, we receive increased calls from tenants living in accessory or basement apartments. These are often tenants renting the basement or part of a basement in a house in which the owner lives on the main floor. It is not uncommon for the landlord-tenant relationship to become fractured because the landlord disapproves of something the tenant does. For example, tenants are told that they cannot have visitors, return to their unit after a certain hours, or cook certain types of food. The landlord may not be aware of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). The landlord's response to a tenant disagreeing with them or violating their "rules" can be to tell the tenant to move out immediately. The police are often called. Even if a tenant is successful in defending a landlord's eviction application or in getting an abatement of rent in their own application, success is often short lived. The tenant will often move out of the unit because continuing to live in the house is impractical.

Rent Re-Calculations and Lease Renewals by Toronto Community Housing

Every year TCH tenants are asked to provide information so their subsidized rent can be recalculated. Generally, a tenant's subsidized rent is thirty per cent of their gross income, not including utilities and parking. TCH tenants must report income changes to their tenant services coordinators within thirty days. We often hear from tenants that they reported income changes but TCH failed to recalculate the rent. By the time TCH does a rent recalculation, the tenant faces substantial retroactive rent charges. TCH has acknowledged that the system of reporting changes and calculating rent has been problematic. Two years ago TCH adopted a new policy to try to streamline this process and have rent calculations tied to income reported in a tenant's CRA Notice of Assessment. The new system does not adequately address the problem for tenants who have lost their employment. We see several cases a year in which the rent recalculation takes place too long after the income change is reported. We also see cases where the rent has not been properly recalculated and TCH has failed to follow their own rules and guidelines. Our clinic continues to work with other public housing caseworkers in Toronto legal clinics on this issue as well as TCHC's Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity (OCHE).

Rooming Houses

Over the past three years we have noticed an increase in illegal eviction cases. Most of the cases involve tenants living in unlicensed rooming houses. A rooming house is a house in which a landlord rents out each of the rooms individually and the tenants share the common areas with each other. As rents continue to sky-rocket across Toronto, more low-income tenants turn to rooming houses to find a place to live. After much advocacy from tenant rights groups, including legal clinics, the City of Toronto adopted a bylaw in 2024 to ensure consistent standards and regulatory oversight to protect the safety of tenants and respond to neighbourhood concerns. All operators of multi-tenant houses are required to obtain a licence; however, many landlords have not registered yet.

Multiple Tenants Illegally Evicted from a Rooming House

We reported on this case last year. In June 2023 WCLS was contacted by five rooming house tenants who were threatened with eviction. WCLS contacted the landlord and urged the landlord to follow the eviction process in the RTA. We also contacted the Rental Housing Investigations and Enforcement Unit who contacted the landlord and telling him to follow the procedure in the RTA. Despite this intervention the landlord locked out all of the tenants. The landlord claimed an exemption to the RTA which permitted him to bypass the RTA eviction process. WCLS filed LTB applications on behalf of the tenants for illegal lockouts, claiming damages and compensation. The applications were heard over a series of several days. The Board issued its decision in late October 2024 and held that the rooming house tenancies were covered by the RTA. The Board ordered each of the tenants out-of-pocket compensation and damages, and issued an administrative fine against the landlord of \$40,000.00. The landlord has since appealed the decision to the Ontario Divisional Court. The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO) has agreed to represent the tenants. WCLS is working closely with ACTO on the case. The Divisional Court appeal will be heard on November 10.

Landlord and Tenant Board Refuses to Recognize Spouse as a Tenant

L, her husband, T, and their two children moved into their apartment 7 years ago. T was the only person listed as a tenant in the lease, L and the two children were listed as occupants. L and T's marriage broke down in January 2025 and T moved back to his home country. L and her children continued to reside in the unit. T continued to pay the rent for four months, and then L began paying the rent. T emailed landlord after he stopped paying rent saying he wanted to end the tenancy and included an unsigned notice of termination. L was unaware T sent the landlord a termination notice until the landlord said they would show the unit to prospective tenants. L informed the landlord that she had no intention of moving out, that she had rights as a "tenant" and continued to pay the rent. The landlord filed an application to obtain vacant possession of the rental unit claiming L was an unauthorized occupant. WCLS represented L and argued that pursuant to Regulation 516/06 of the RTA, L, as the spouse of the vacating tenant, was herself considered a tenant of the rental unit despite not being identified as a tenant in the lease. The Board issued a decision claiming L was an unauthorized occupant and that T had not vacated the rental unit and legally terminated the tenancy. In our opinion the case was wrongly decided and WCLS strongly encouraged L to appeal the decision to the Divisional Court and offered to represent her. After considering the matter, L decided not to appeal and to move out of the building.

Landlord Files Multiple Applications to Evict Family

Our staff lawyer represented a couple with young children in two separate eviction applications their landlord filed with the LTB. The family is made up of a mother, father, baby, and developmentally disabled toddler. First, the landlord applied to evict the family

because they had not been paying their rent on time in recent months. The father works overnight shift work and the family had been having difficulty paying rent on time. WCLS worked with the landlord to set up an agreement where the tenants would maintain their tenancy as long as they paid their rent on time for twelve consecutive months. The tenants have successfully complied with this agreement and only have two months remaining in the agreement. Second, the landlord filed an eviction application based on noise complaints from downstairs neighbours. The LTB determined that the noises coming from the family's home were noises of everyday living with two small children and were not serious enough to warrant an eviction. The landlord's application was dismissed.

Landlord Seeks RTA Exemption to Evict Tenants

WCLS assisted a couple living in a basement unit of their landlord's house who were facing pressure from the landlord to move out. The couple lives on a limited income and have rented the affordable basement unit for over five years. The landlord's parents moved into the basement earlier in the year and the landlord was pressuring the tenants to move out so their parents would have more room. The landlord filed an LTB application and tried to claim the tenants' unit was not covered by the RTA since the tenants now shared the basement with the landlord's parents so they could evict the tenants without following the RTA process. WCLS argued that the tenancy is covered by the RTA. The LTB made an order dismissing the landlord's application, stating that the tenancy was covered by the RTA and that the tenants have protections against eviction. The tenants have remained living in their affordable unit since then.

Tenant Harassed by Landlord

Our staff lawyer represented a tenant who had been experiencing harassment and threats from his landlord about moving out of his rental unit for months. The LTB held that the landlord had substantially interfered with the tenant's reasonable enjoyment of the rental unit and had engaged in ongoing harassment. The Board noted that the landlord's actions were wilful and deliberate and that the landlord had failed to take any corrective action after receiving a letter that WCLS had sent to the landlord addressing the tenant's concerns and requesting the landlord stop the threatening behaviour. The Board ordered the landlord to stop their conduct, pay the tenant a rent abatement, as well as pay the LTB an administrative fine of \$5,000.00 due to the severity of the landlord's conduct and the impact on the tenant.

TCHC Claims Tenant Misrepresented Who Lives in Unit

This past year WCLS was contacted by a number of long-term tenants who were the subject to investigations in which TCHC claimed they failed to report who was living in their rental unit. Pursuant to the *Housing Services Act*, tenants receiving a rent subsidy are required to report changes to their income and household composition within 30 days. Such changes will result in the subsidized housing provider, like TCHC, to recalculate the amount of a tenant's rent subsidy.

In the case of M, TCHC alleged that her adult daughter, V, was living with her. The investigation went on for 18 months and M provided TCHC with documents to verify that V was living elsewhere. M, a disabled senior with serious mobility limitations explained that V lives close by and often attends the unit to assist M with daily activities. TCHC revoked her rent subsidy claiming she misrepresented who was living in the unit and filed an eviction application at the LTB. WCLS represented M and in the lead up to the hearing, gathered additional documentation to persuade TCHC that V was in fact not residing with M in her TCHC unit. WCLS was able to show that V lived close by and regularly, almost daily, attended at her mother's unit to assist her with her daily activities. Prior to the hearing an agreement was reached in which TCHC decided not to pursue the matter and accepted that V was providing support and not living in the unit.

Tenant with Hoarding Problem Faces Eviction

Each year WCLS is contacted by tenants who are threatened with eviction due to hoarding. Hoarding is a recognized mental health condition. Some of our hoarding cases can go on for many months if not years. D, a disabled senior in receipt of ODSP who lives alone, contacted WCLS earlier this year. We assisted D with a similar case in 2019 and D was able to avoid eviction because of intervention by a local community agency offering support to hoarders. The pandemic seriously exacerbated D's mental health and he lost connection with the agency providing him support. Without suitable supports, D returned to hoarding, which prompted his landlord to file for eviction at the LTB. We have been engaged D's family members to help him de-clutter his unit. We have also help connect D to LOFT Community Services. D's LTB hearing is scheduled for early December and we are hopeful with the de-cluttering efforts and the additional supports provided by LOFT, D will again be able to avoid eviction.

EMPLOYMENT CASES

Advocacy for Terminated Worker Facing Homelessness

K lived in a boarding house where he performed general housekeeping duties on the property in exchange for a rent-free unit in the building. At the outset of his employment, K, a man in his 50s, requested modified duties to accommodate his arthritic knee. His request was immediately denied by his employer and they refused to negotiate any alternatives. K dutifully continued to perform all that was asked of him without accommodation. Unfortunately, K injured himself while at work and requested time off work and reiterated his need for accommodation. K's employer again flatly denied these requests and then informed him that they were taking steps to evict him from the building. In 2023, TEEILS employment lawyers initiated a claim against the employer at the Human Rights Tribunal on behalf of K. In response, the employer initiated a countersuit at the Small Claims Court against K for rental arrears. Determined to protect

our client's rights, we filed a defence to the countersuit. In 2025, we settled both claims wherein the employer agreed to drop the lawsuit and compensate K for the infringement of his rights under the Human Rights Code.

Harassment and Racial Discrimination

E, a young, female refugee from Columbia, was living in social housing with her son when she started working as a cleaner for a recruitment agency in 2018. Shortly after commencing her employment, her supervisor began verbally harassing E. Specifically, he would direct racial slurs at E and constantly criticize her abilities. E informed upper management about the issue, but no action was taken. After many more instances of harassment and E's complaints being ignored, a manager contacted E and informed her that she was being laid off because a lack of work and would not receive anything in compensation for her sudden termination. TEEILS stepped in and filed a claim at the Human Rights Tribunal for the harassment and discrimination against the company and the individual supervisor. Through our advocacy and negotiation, the company agreed to a settlement of \$10,000. We will be continuing the claim against the individual supervisor to ensure E receives adequate compensation for the mistreatment she has experienced.

OTHER CASES

Clients Pursued by Collection Agencies

We receive many calls from clients who are being pursued by collection agencies. Some involve tenants who owe money to their former landlords for rent arrears, claims of property damage or utility costs. Other common cases involve credit card debts. The pandemic has been catastrophic for many of our clients who have lost jobs and employment opportunities, resulting in greater debt. Clients may find themselves facing down a collection agency, defending a claim in Small Claims Court, or responding to a former landlord's enforcement action. During the past year we have assisted numerous clients who face such circumstances in understanding their rights, settling accounts, creating payment plans, filing disputes with the Credit Bureau, filing complaints with the Ministry of Government & Consumer Services, preparing for garnishment hearings and navigating through the Small Claims Court process.

Initiatives

Community Outreach

JusticeMakers

JusticeMakers is a group of community residents and WCLS clients that advocate for issues related to people living with low-incomes in our community. Over the past year, JusticeMakers has written letters to government officials advocating for increases to social assistance rates and supported BaBF's work to secure affordable housing.

JusticeMakers workshop facilitators also provide skill-building sessions for members to sharpen their advocacy skills and increase their knowledge. For example, workshops have been provided about how to give media interviews, tenancy rights and responsibilities, successful advocacy campaigns, and different types of affordable housing models in Toronto.

Build A Better Fairview (BaBF)

BaBF continues to advocate that community benefits be included in Cadillac Fairview's proposed condominium towers around Fairview Mall on the Northeast corner of Sheppard Avenue East and Don Mills Road. We are still engaged with the City Councillor's office about our concerns, including adequate green space, affordable housing, and the creation of new schools to accommodate the increase in population. Our aim is for the developer and City to create a community consultation group as part of the development process. On August 8, BaBF hosted a community safety walk around the Fairview area. Attendees were invited to note safety issues along the walking path. Participants highlighted issues including lack of accessibility for mobility devices, feeling unsafe while crossing the road, and poorly maintained spaces. The community's concerns were shared with the City Councillor's office.

BaBF has expanded its advocacy to include the proposed development at 2600 Don Mills Road. The City has issued a "Notice of Complete Application" for the proposal to demolish the existing rental apartment building and replace it with four new towers. The developers are currently proposing to build a rental replacement tower ahead of demolishing the existing building, however, BaBF is concerned that they have no legal requirement to follow through with this promise. We are focused on ensuring a smooth transition for residents and adequate compensation for any disruptions. On August 14, BaBF hosted an information session for the residents of 2600 Don Mills Road. Residents learned about the proposed development and the possible impacts this could have on their housing. BaBF continues to be in communication with residents about the development and their concerns.

In November 2024, BaBF was awarded the Community Champion Award by the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario for its advocacy efforts.

Cummer Ave. Drop-Inn

The Drop-Inn is a safe, warm and friendly environment where guests have their basic needs met, receive assistance and are referred to community resources. Open every Wednesday year-round, it provides breakfast and hot lunch, along with other on-site services to meet legal, medical and social needs. We are on site once every other month.

Public Legal Education (PLE) Partnerships

WCLS provides PLE series to various organizations in our community.

We signed a Program Agreement with the Toronto Public Library to deliver a series of monthly sessions from September 2025 through August 2026 at the Fairview Mall Library, which recently re-opened after an extensive renovation. The Fairview Mall Library is a hub of activity in our community and the partnership enables us to connect with our community while providing legal information in a centrally and well-located trusted community space. WCLS also remains committed to delivering our PLE sessions at the Ethennonnhawahstihnen Public library on an as-needed basis.

We continue our partnership with SEAS Centre (Support Enhance Access Service Centre). We provide PLE sessions on a monthly basis accompanied by a Mandarin speaking interpreter for their South East Asian community.

We also continue to provide sessions on demand to other service providers in the community such as FHC, WWCC, The Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto, TNO, CICS, TNG, ACCESS Employment, University Settlement, Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, and local shelters.

Community Events

WCLS continues to be part of the North York Pop-Up Hub Mobile Housing Supports, which has received funding for another year. This initiative provides outreach and support to individuals facing housing insecurity in the North York area. We have participated in Pop-Hub events at the Cummer Avenue United Church Drop-In program and the Salvation Army, North York. Our staff have been on-site during events to introduce our services and engage with community members. This continued collaboration strengthens our community presence and bridges service gaps for equity-deserving groups and newcomers.

WCLS supported NeighbourLink Food Hub at 415 Willowdale Avenue. NeighbourLink launched an additional Food Bank at 675 Sheppard Avenue East, which serves approximately 100 households per distribution, with the majority of clients being Farsi-speaking families.

In addition, WCLS participated in the “Taste of North York” festival for the third year. This year’s festival once again drew hundreds of local residents, offering important opportunity to engage with the public, raise awareness about our services, and build relationship within the community.

Policy and Systemic Advocacy

Meeting with Local Politicians

WCLS continued to advocate on behalf of our clients to representatives at all levels of government. We have regular contact with local politicians and their offices, including:

Federal:

- Ali Ehsassi, MP for Willowdale
- Maggie Chi, MP for Don Valley North

Provincial:

- Stan Cho, MPP for Willowdale
- Jonathan Tsao, MPP for Don Valley North

Municipal:

- Shelley Carroll, City Councillor for Ward 17
- Lily Cheng, City Councillor for Ward 18

Social Assistance “Modernization”

WCLS engaged in ongoing advocacy in favour of a robust social assistance system. In 2018-2019 the provincial government announced devastating cuts to social assistance. This included a change in definition of disability and the cancellation of the Transition Child Benefit. After much pressure, the government formally reinstated the Transition Child Benefit and then quietly withdrew its proposal to make it harder to get ODSP benefits. Instead, there is a renewed focus on “social assistance modernization”. WCLS along with other clinics are actively advocating for a modernized social assistance system that is co-designed with recipients, raises the rates to an adequate level, and maintains the rights of recipients to challenge unfair decisions. WCLS has met multiple times with the corporate delivery agent of employment services, which begun administering supports in March 2025.

Networks and Workgroups

Our staff are members of numerous workgroups, networks and committees, both with other legal clinic and other organizations in our catchment area. These groups serve a variety of purposes, including: law reform, networking, information sharing, and community development.

Social Assistance Action Committee (SAAC)

One of our staff lawyers is a co-chair of the Social Assistance Action Committee (SAAC). SAAC is an inter-clinic working group of community legal clinic lawyers and paralegals from the GTA who meet monthly to support each other in our work in social assistance and other income maintenance areas and to develop and coordinate systemic advocacy.

TNLIP Newcomer Community Advisory & Action Table

WCLS is an active member with Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership Settlement & Language group. This year we engaged with their Newcomer Indigenous Task Group and Data Advisory Group. We also assisted in planning and organizing the annual Faith Forum, and participated in the Mental Health Community Consultation and the Food Leaders Networking event.

Community Coordination Plan - North York Community Cluster

The Community Coordination Plan (CCP) was initiated at the beginning of the pandemic by United Way Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto to support organizations' efforts to delivery services. The Plan was designed to be agile and iterative to the urgent needs of vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are an active member of the North York Community Cluster table, which is comprised of decision-making level representatives of community agencies and other stakeholders supporting vulnerable residents in the Cluster area. We are part of the Housing initiative and we continue to support the Mental Health & Equity Work.

Fairview Interagency Network

WCLS continues to be an active member of the Fairview Interagency Network (FIN), a network of 35 grassroots organizations to share information, collaborate on addressing issues in the Fairview Community and support local community development work in the Fairview area.

Willowdale Community Legal Services

Board of Directors – 2024-2025

Board of Directors:

Our Board members are volunteers. Board members are elected from our membership for a two-year term and may be elected for a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms, severing a total of six years.

Our bylaws provide for ten Board members. We have two Board members who withdrew from the Board, and two who have reached the end of their term, and three Board members who are in the middle of their two-year terms.

Directors Who Are Retiring Or Resigning:

Kelsey Miki has been a valued WCLS Board member since October 2020. Kelsey graduated from the paralegal studies program at Seneca College in 2020. Kelsey has worked very closely with WCLS's outreach committee since joining the Board and was instrumental in helping to organize candidate meetings in the community in the lead up to the 2024 provincial election. Kelsey also participated in the clinic's strategic planning initiative shortly after joining the Board in October 2020. Kelsey is resigning as she has moved out of WCLS's catchment area and will continue to volunteer in the community in which she now resides.

Gemma Coppins joined the Board in November 2023. Gemma is an accountant and has acted as WCLS's Treasurer since joining the Board. Gemma's knowledge of financial statements has been an incredible asset to WCLS and helped inform and educate members of the Board. Gemma recently gave birth to a daughter and is resigning from the Board to create a better work/life balance.

WCLS is very appreciative of the contributions made by Gemma and Kelsey and we wish them the best of luck in the future and hold out hope that they may return to WCLS's Board of Directors in the future.

Standing for Election:

Elvis Prifti was a long-time WCLS Board member. Elvis was elected to the Board in October 2017, 2019 and again in 2021, and served the Board for six years at a time when WCLS had term limits for Board members. He is a local community resident with a background in financial management and accounting. Elvis is interested in the provision of legal services for low-income members of the community. Elvis served as Treasurer during his previous time on WCLS's Board and we are hoping he might consider volunteering for the position again in light of Gemma's resignation.

Current WCLS Board Members:

Lynn Wheatley has served on the Board for many years, and for the last several years as Board Chair. She was elected to the clinic's Board of Directors in October 2018, 2020 and

again 2022. Lynn also served on WCLS's Board previously, from 2010 to 2016. Lynn lives in the clinic's catchment area. Lynn worked as a staff lawyer at various legal clinics for many years. She is currently the Administrative Deputy Judge for the Toronto Small Claims Court. As someone who worked in legal clinics in the past, Lynn brings valuable experience to her role as a Board member and is a passionate advocate for the work done by community legal clinics.

Michael Cowan joined the Board in 2024. Mike is PhD student in political science student at the University of Toronto. He formerly operated his own small business doing home repairs and renovations. He is a community resident with an interest in legal issues that affect WCLS's low-income clients. Mike grew up in the clinic's catchment area and views being part of WCLS's Board as an opportunity to give back to the community. Michael has been a part of WCLS's Outreach Committee since joining the Board.

PJ Dawda is also a long-time WCLS Board member. Most recently, PJ was elected to the Board in 2020 and again in 2022. PJ is a strong advocate for the services provided by community legal clinics. He has an LL.B., core subject International Economic Law, and a B. Com. (major in business management) and has for a long time worked in the corporate and travel/leisure fields.

Sarah Modesta Sepillo joined the Board in 2024. Sarah works in the social services sector in Toronto and her work touches on WCLS's catchment area. As an immigrant to Canada Sarah understands and appreciates that challenges that immigrants face. Sarah regards volunteering for WCLS's Board of Directors as part of her mission to give more back to her community. Sarah sat on WCLS's Hiring Committee this year and also represented WCLS at the 2024 ACLCO AGM and received the Community Champion Award on behalf of BaBF.

Irma Spahiu has served on WCLS's Board for many years. She was elected to the Board in October 2019 and again in 2021. Irma resigned from the Board in November 2022 to complete a four month Law Practice Placement at WCLS. Irma rejoined the Board in 2024. Irma has a PhD in law from York University and has taught at York University and the University of Toronto. Irma's specializes in privacy rights and has a deep perspective on the issue. She has volunteered with various community organizations in the past.

Misha Hossein joined the Board in 2024. Misha is also long-term local community resident. She has worked in the social services sector in North York for more than 10 years. Living in WCLS catchment area and working in the social services section has helped Misha develop an understanding of the issues that most impact local low-income residents and the work of WCLS. Misha also sees volunteering on WCLS's Board of Directors as another opportunity to serve the community.

Susy Guadron joined WCLS's Board in 2024. Susy has lived in the Willowdale community for more than 20 years. She has worked as a law clerk since 2005 and has gained knowledge and understanding of the barriers faced by the BIPOC community. Susy also volunteers with other community organizations. She views being a member of WCLS's Board of Directors as an opportunity to support and advocate for the legal rights of those most vulnerable in our community. In the past, Susy sat on WCLS's Hiring Committee.

Ben Torres is a long-time WCLS Board member. Ben was re-joined the Board in 2024. Ben has served on the executive committee of WCLS's Board for many years and for a period was Board Chair. Ben has a Master's degree in International Law. He has worked

as a certified project manager with more than 20 years consulting experience as a senior project manager, practice director and principal consultant. Ben is committed to the clinic's mission and has volunteered in numerous capacities in the Willowdale area.