



**Community
Legal Clinic**
of York Region

2025 Impact Report



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Board President's Report

DEAR MEMBERS,

The AGM in September, 2024 marked the beginning of my term as Board President and two things became immediately clear: 1) significant thanks was due to John David Ashworth as the previous Board President for the fine shape that the organization was in and 2) that we were blessed with both a strong set of individuals on our Board and a hard working and dedicated staff at the Clinic.

Having a strong Board enabled this past year to be a time of review and renewal. We reviewed our Strategic Plan and determined that it was still on focus to deliver the services required of York Region. A comprehensive Needs Assessment had been developed because of our previous Strategic Plan and this formed significant input to the Board as it evaluated what changes were required moving forward.

At the Strategic Planning offsite it was concluded that the previous Strategic Plan was largely relevant and proposed changes to better align with the needs of our community. A re-affirmation of our Vision: A socially just and equitable York Region provided an excellent "north star" to our deliberations on what the Strategic Plan should include and continues to refine our focus as we turn the Strategic Plan into operational objectives.

Another key focus of the Board this past year, in partnership with our Executive Director, has been the creation of a Business Expansion Plan which has been submitted to Legal Aid Ontario.

A key element of meeting our strategic objectives is having the requisite resources to provide the needed services. Our analysis suggests that the current CLCYR budget results in York Region being somewhat underserved compared to many other Legal Clinics and, while the CLCYR team perform well with the resources they currently have, additional resources are required to have the clinic approach delivering on the vision of a socially just and equitable York Region. We will continue our ongoing dialogue with our funders to enhance the resources we can offer the Region and will use this Business Expansion Plan as the template to ensure those resources go to use as they become available.

While the Board was focused on these strategic elements, our Executive Director, his management team and the entire team of professionals at the Clinic continued their focus on ensuring our client communities were provided the services they required. Making this increasingly challenging for the team has been the challenging homeless crisis caused by the high and increasingly



costly housing issues in York Region. The very real threat of being evicted into homelessness hangs over many, if not all, of the landlord and housing issues our Clinic faces on behalf of our clients.

I continue to be humbled and thankful for the hard work the entire team at the CLCYR does, day in and day out, focusing on housing, immigration, employment, social assistance and the other legal needs of the York Region community. And I am deeply thankful for the dedication and hard work of our terrific Board. Working well together I have confidence in our ability to grow while continuing to focus on the needs of our Region and being a model for other clinics throughout Ontario.

Tim Houlahan,
BOARD PRESIDENT

Executive Director's Report

It's been another very busy year at CLCYR. Unfortunately the massive increase in homelessness continues to be the greatest threat facing our client community of low-income residents of the Region.

York Region reports that homelessness among residents has grown by 595% in the past five years and is expected to continue to grow. Four fifths of them had never been homeless in their lives.

One reason Ontario's 71 Legal Aid Ontario legal clinics operate individually, rather than as one office in Toronto, is so that local clinics can have their "ear-to-the-ground" and quickly notice local trends. Small local offices can then nimbly respond and adjust services to best address the new issue. (For twenty years, for example, we focused on representing disabled Ontarians in appeals of the denial of Ontario disability benefits.)

Over the past few years we noticed the increase in evictions into homelessness, as rents doubled. Rapidly growing homelessness was also identified as a serious issue in our December 2023 Community Needs Assessment.

This issue has also been identified as the gravest social problem facing Region residents by York Region Council and by the United Way. Both have provided us with substantial financial support to defend these eviction cases.

We have adjusted our services in order to best preserve tenancies. These cases can't be settled because landlords can double rents if they remove the tenant. The government and the Landlord & Tenant Board continue to work diligently to ensure that tenants can be evicted easily and quickly, especially in the case of evictions where the tenant is a good tenant. So defending these cases takes considerable caseworker time.

Over the past couple years we have moved one caseworker from another Team to representing tenants and we have added two more. To free up time for representation we are making more summary advice referrals to the increasingly sophisticated, LAO-funded, Community Legal Education Ontario "Steps to Justice" and "Guided Pathways" websites. The most commonly asked question at our Pop-up Legal Clinics is about wills. A person can go to Guided Pathways and it will generate a legal will for them, for free. As more of our client community become homeless we have also identified the need for an ID clinic.

One challenge for our client community is that CLCYR is funded at only about half of the provincial clinic average. We have received significant support from our Board for increasing our



funding, including providing LAO Clinics' VP and Director of Clinic Services with a business plan for doubling our size. (LAO is updating its clinic funding allocation formula as we speak.)

All-in-all we continue to do everything we can to help our client community by resolving their most serious legal problems. I am extremely grateful for, and appreciative of, our determinedly idealistic, compassionate, and tough staff. Defending the most denigrated members of our society often doesn't make one popular. Standing up for their legal rights often takes self-confidence and persistence. Our staff are excellent protectors of our client community.

I'm also very appreciative of our highly capable Board of Directors. The fact that they recently received 150 applications for a Board vacancy speaks to their excellent reputation. Their governance and guidance of our clinic make us much stronger.

Jeff Schlemmer,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

From Our 2025 Strategic Plan

Strategic Directions & Objectives

CLCYR identified the following 4 strategic directions and objectives to guide the organization over the next three years.

1

INCREASE AMOUNT AND QUALITY OF CLIENT SERVICE

Objective: Resources are aligned with priorities identified through community needs assessment, client service is accurately defined and increased through efficiency, effectiveness and additional funding.



2

DEEPEN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

Objective: Greater community responsiveness and capacity for system impact.



3

OPTIMISE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Objective: Human resources, IT, facilities, finance, support optimal client service delivery



4

STRENGTHEN BOARD GOVERNANCE

Objective: Effective governance oversight and strategic decision-making.



Vision

A socially just and equitable York Region.

Mission

To secure and advance the legal rights of all low-income residents of York Region through education, advocacy, and litigation.

Values

RESPECT

Everyone is treated with courtesy, listened to without judgement, and valued.

EMPOWERMENT

Everyone fosters each individual's capacity to grow and recognizes the right of others to make choices.

INCLUSION

Everyone supports equitable, fair treatment, and opportunity for all.

QUALITY

Everyone promotes a culture of excellence based on continuous improvement and performance measurement, striving for the best in service to clients and community.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Everyone acts with integrity, assuming responsibility for the stewardship of the clinic and its mission to secure and advance legal rights

Team Reports

Housing Team

This year we have focused heavily on providing fulsome representation at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) as a result of the worsening housing crisis compounded by the recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).

This past December, the RTA was amended to give the adjudicators the power to allow landlord applications that previously had egregious errors to be accepted instead of being dismissed.

What used to be straight forward dismissals are no longer guaranteed. In addition, Adjudicators have shifted the responsibility of accepting consent agreements onto Dispute Resolution Officers (DROs), cutting down the DROs' availability to mediate, which is their intended function. Unfortunately, we continue to observe folks losing their housing as a direct result of their mental health challenges. For these folks, the Eviction Prevention Program Team has worked very hard with them to overcome these difficult barriers. The team had excellent successes this year despite the increasing hurdles at the LTB.

We have secured funding for an additional housing caseworker with a sole focus on eviction prevention. A replacement Team Lead will also be hired shortly. The team had worked diligently to ensure the utmost client service has been maintained under this period of transition. We continued to have a robust Public Legal Education schedule ensuring that the Region's landlords and tenants are aware of each other's rights and responsibilities, as well as the proper procedures required to resolve disputes. We have also pursued Divisional Court Appeals to address systemic issues, promoting the desire and need for institutional changes, for the betterment of our clients and all tenants in general.

We continue to be involved in encampment outreach through the LOFT Street Outreach Van and York Region's Encampment Coalition. These organizations allow us to directly speak to the most vulnerable members of York Region in a holistic way. This was of particular interest in our meetings with some local elected officials when advocating for the Region solutions around homelessness.

It is a certainty that those of us living in poverty, if we lose our housing we will not be able to get into replacement unit, whether in York Region, or province-wide. It has been all-hands-on-deck to work collaboratively to keep clients in their housing.

Michelle Sutherland

TEAM LEAD



Immigration Team

The CLCYR immigration team has continued to support York Region residents with their immigration issues over the past year.

The CLCYR immigration team regularly helps clients who have an issue bringing their family to Canada or keeping their family in Canada. This can include helping a client reunite with a spouse/partner/child that they have not seen in many years. It can also include helping to keep a client's spouse/partner/child in Canada in order to avoid a long separation. Family reunification provides many benefits to our clients, including helping their mental health and helping to increase their workforce participation.

The CLCYR immigration team also helps clients whose immigration status/authorization is restricting their ability to financially support themselves. We provide help or support with immigration applications that grant clients the authorization to work in Canada. This would most commonly be helping or providing support with a permanent residence application, a work permit or both.

Ian Brittain

TEAM LEAD



Employment Team

The Employment team continues to play a vital role in supporting vulnerable and low-income workers across York Region by addressing a wide range of workplace issues—including violations of minimum employment standards, wrongful dismissals, human rights infringements, unsafe working conditions, and access to employment insurance. By safeguarding workers' rights and providing legal support during the uncertain bridge between job loss and new opportunities, we help workers preserve their livelihoods and avoid falling into deeper systemic issues such as evictions, homelessness, and dependency on social assistance.

The 2024–2025 service year has reaffirmed our commitment to this mission. We are proud to have supported so many individuals in asserting their rights, restoring their livelihoods, and taking meaningful steps toward lasting stability—while also setting a positive precedent for future workers.

Revikka Balachandran

TEAM LEAD

Social Assistance Team

The past year has been an exceptionally busy one for the Social Assistance team. In May 2023, the team instituted a new self representation process for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) applications, due to the large influx of application denials in 2022/2023.

Success rates are comparable when compared with clients who are represented by legal workers at the tribunal hearing. This success is likely due to the continuing relationship of the clinic with community partners such as York Region and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), who provides assistance to clients with gathering medical documentation and other documentation necessary for the hearing process.

The self representation model has allowed caseworkers on the Social Assistance team to focus on ODSP and Ontario Works suspensions and overpayments, which have seen a large increase this year due to eligibility reviews undertaken by Ontario Works and ODSP respectively. These eligibility reviews are reviewing recipient's financial eligibility retroactively for several years, and generating large overpayments. Apart from assessing large overpayments, the Eligibility Review Officers (ERO) are suspending the recipients Ontario Works, and ODSP benefits creating a domino effect.

When clients are suspended from their only source of income, they are unable to pay their rent or pay for food. This leads to a situation, where clients are in danger of losing their housing due to arrears and/or non payment of rent, and facing homelessness.

We continue to strengthen our relationships with community partners. Our team members (along with the housing team), have been instrumental in starting a new satellite at Yellow Brick House, and Identity Clinics at CMHA and other locations, to provide integrated and enhanced services for our clients.

The SA team continues to take a leadership in organizing information sessions (within the clinic), to focus attention on violence against women, and our team members are part of the York Region's **Take Back the Night Committee** that organizes the yearly march to shine a light on the discrimination and violence that women face in society.

Sonali Brown

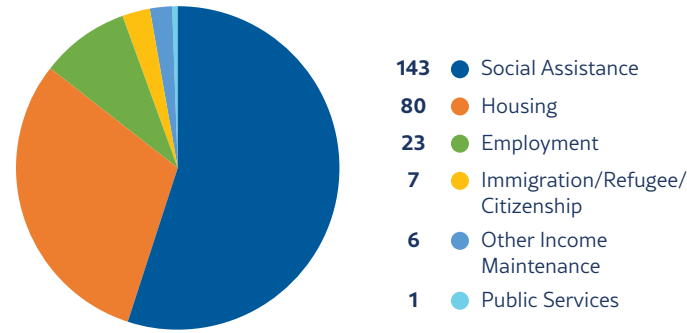
TEAM LEAD



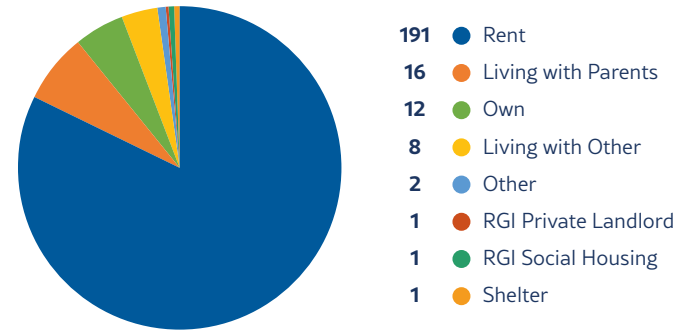
By The Numbers

January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

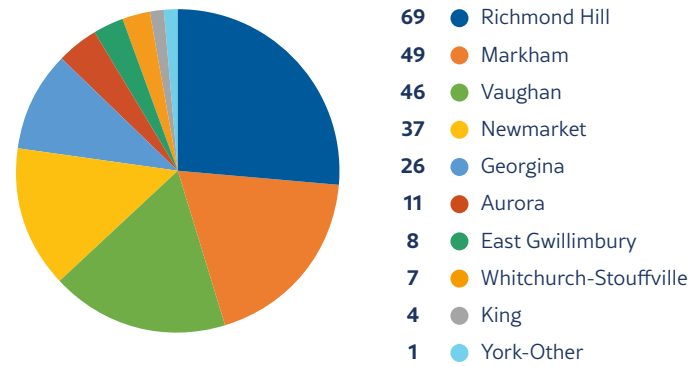
Cases opened by Area of Law



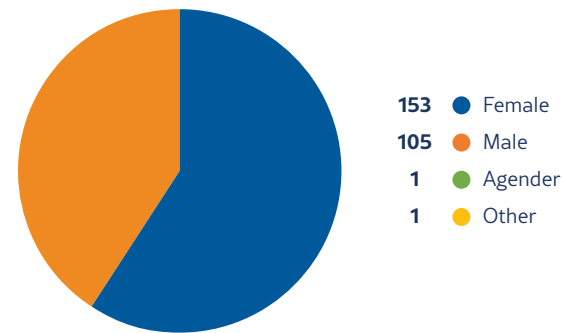
Cases opened by Living Arrangement



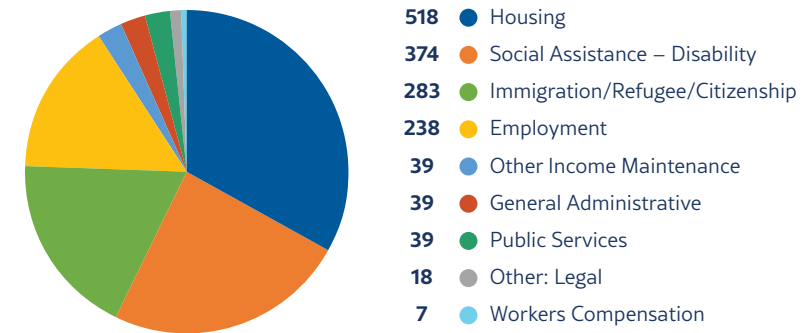
Cases opened by Municipality



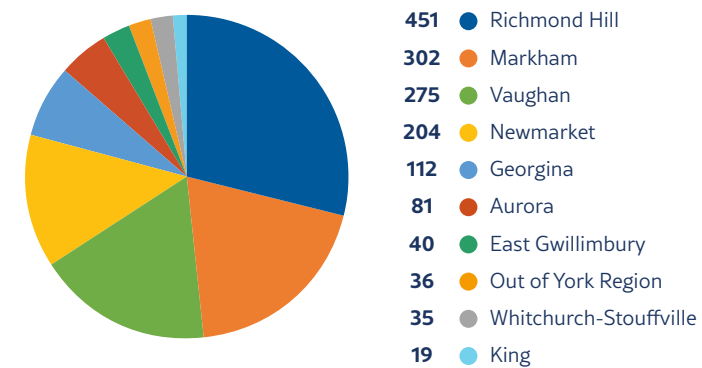
Cases opened by Gender Identity



Advice by Area of Law



Advice by Municipality



“I shall remain highly appreciative of your professional and dedicated work.”

— Anonymous
from client survey

“...thank you for your exemplary service and support...”

— Francesco

Financial Summary

Combined Funds' Assets, Liabilities and Balances (unaudited)

March 31, 2025

Combined Assets

Combined Current Assets	Total
Cash	\$182,364
Term Deposits	\$253,750
Amounts Receivable	0
Prepaid Expenses	\$39,895
Interfund Receivable	\$165,016
Government Remittances	\$42,799
Assets Held in Trust	\$6,444
Capital Assets	\$72,303
Total Combined Assets	\$762,571

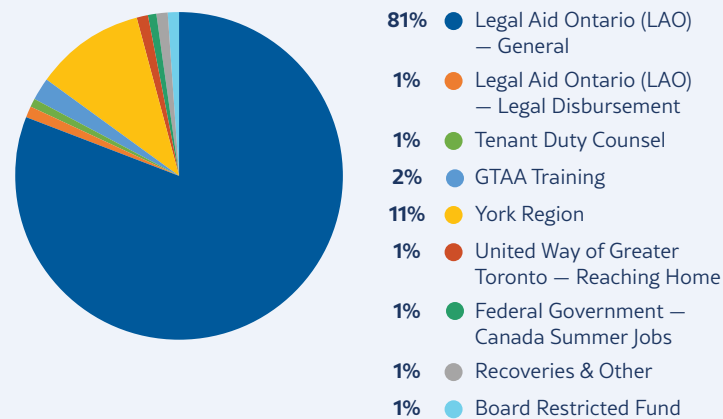
Combined Liabilities & Fund Balances

	Total
Combined Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	41,739
Deferred Revenue	14,070
Interfund Payable	165,016
Amounts Held in Trust	6,444
Combined Fund Balances	\$535,302
Total Combined Liabilities & Fund Balances	\$762,571

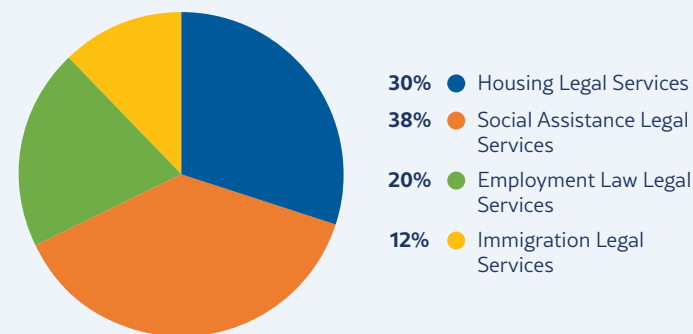
Combined Revenues & Combined Legal Services (unaudited)

March 31, 2025

Combined Revenues



Combined Legal Services Provided



(*) Certain amounts have been reclassified for presentation purposes

Combined Funds' Revenues and Expenses (unaudited)

March 31, 2025

Combined Revenues

	Total
Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) – General	\$ 2,792,293
LAO – Legal Disbursement	\$11,700
Tenant Duty Counsel	\$18,372
GTAA Training	\$72,500
York Region	\$432,926
United Way of Greater Toronto – Reaching Home	\$50,000
Federal Government – Canada Summer Jobs	\$15,670
Recoveries & Other	\$3,358
Board Restricted Fund	\$13,876
Total Combined Revenues	\$3,410,695

Combined Expenses

	Total
LAO Funded Costs of Legal Services Provided	
Social Assistance Legal Services	\$708,046
Housing Legal Services	\$548,184
Employment Legal Services	\$362,868
Immigration Legal Services	\$247,634
Management & Administration	\$412,828
Administration Costs	\$238,427
Operating Costs	\$182,110
Legal Disbursements	\$11,179
Tenant Duty Counsel	\$26,909
GTAA Training	\$75,036
York Region Programs	
Eviction Prevention Program	\$386,926
Tenant Education Rights Program	\$46,000
United Way of Greater Toronto – Reaching Home	\$50,000
Federal Government – Canada Summer Jobs	\$15,670
Capital Fund – Amortization	\$39,543
Total Combined Expenses	\$3,351,360
Combined Surplus / (Deficit)	\$59,335

“Thank you very much for your help, I am very thankful— you helped me a lot!”

— Anonymous
from client survey



Community Legal Clinic

of York Region

Our Board

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Alykhan Suleman
Josie Lui
Gari Ravishankar
Paniz Ghazanfari
John David Ashworth
Batool Nawab
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Nilufer Walimohamed
Sancha Mahalingam

Our Staff

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Claudio Tapia
Craig McKinnon
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Esmín Tonnellier
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Ian Brittain
Jeff Schlemmer
Jennifer Rogers
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Mercedes Morro
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