

ANNUAL 2018-2019 REPORT



WEST TORONTO COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

A Message from the Chair of the Board

Michelle Coombs



West Toronto Community Legal Services had a good year in 2018-2019. We moved into our new office space and are now well settled in. We solidified our new intake model which allows us to address the considerable increase in clients with landlord and tenant matters. Clients can now more quickly connect with intake workers with experience in housing law.

WTCLS also conducted a needs assessment session at our AGM in November 2018 and we had a good response to a client needs survey to inform our planning for the future. That planning was interrupted by the announcement that the province was cutting funding to Legal Aid Ontario by 30%. LAO made cuts across their services including cuts to the budgets of the community legal clinics. The legal clinics in the Greater Toronto Area saw some of the biggest cuts with funding to WTCLS cut by almost 10%.

The cuts were a tremendous challenge for WTCLS which is a lean and efficient organization doing a big job with limited funding. Our overhead is minimal and our focus is ensuring direct client services. Ultimately, we were forced to reduce staff and eliminate critical direct service law support. A plan to expand elder law legal services — an area that community members identified as much needed — was put on hold.

We continue to serve our community to the highest standards, but our capacity has been impacted. We are less able to help with immigration forms, disability support appeals, and tenants' maintenance

matters. While we navigated the funding cuts, our new storefront location has seen an ever-increasing volume of people looking for legal support. This is particularly the case in landlord and tenant law, which now makes up over 50% of our caseload. With such an increase in demand, we are focusing our attention almost entirely on eviction prevention.

Our Housing Help program is going strong with stable funding from the City of Toronto. Housing Help workers continue to meet with community members to support them in their search for safe and affordable housing, an increasingly difficult job in the context of Toronto's overpriced housing market and limited subsidized housing stock.

Looking forward, we are committed to taking stock and planning our future direction to meet the very significant and increasing needs of our community as the provincial government and Legal Aid Ontario plan further changes to the legal aid system.

Located in the community, responsive to the community, and community governed, legal aid clinics provide low income people with access to justice in a way that no other service can. We look forward to a future in which WTCLS continues to provide vital services to our diverse and vibrant community. ■

Ontario's Community Legal Clinics provide Access to Justice

Elisabeth Brückmann



WTCLS is part of a system of community based legal clinics with a 45 year history in the province of Ontario. The system is made up of general service clinics serving specific geographic areas and speciality clinics with a provincial mandate that focus on a particular area of law or group of people (youth, the elderly, injured workers, indigenous people, people with disabilities, among others). Ontario's community legal clinics make up a collaborative system working together to support people across Ontario to pursue their rights and make change in their communities

The Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO) has identified that a system of community legal clinics functions effectively when the four following characteristics are met:

1. Local community governance

Not all communities are alike and not all have the same legal needs. Rural clinics differ from urban clinics. Northern clinics differ from clinics in the south. Legal clinics are effective because they can provide for those different needs. Each Board of Directors with membership from the local community can tailor services to meet the unique needs of the people in their catchment area.

2. Expertise in poverty law

Clinics specialize in the legal services needed by low income people. Clinic caseworkers have expertise in social assistance, residential housing, low waged employment, and immigration. Some clinics provide more service in the areas of mental health, consumer law, and elder law among others depending on the needs in their community. Clinic caseworkers see the connection between the different areas of poverty law and can provide service that

is holistic and grounded in a network of community services.

3. Legal response provided through a broad array of services

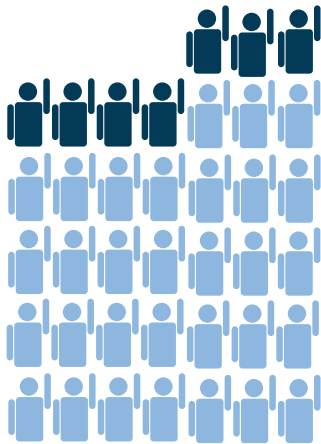
Casework is crucial to helping individuals, but community legal clinics achieve longer term change by employing a broad range of services. Clinics have community legal workers who provide public legal education and support local organizing. Speciality clinics which focus on particular areas of law or ethnolinguistic groups keep us all apprised of the changes to their area of law and can flow their expertise to caseworkers as needed. The speciality clinics also identify law reform initiatives and pursue test cases to promote broader equality and access to justice.

4. Core/presumptive funding for clinics

A community legal clinic system that functions well is not driven by fundraising and donor goals. It requires stable core funding in order to provide a secure safety net for low income people and a solid platform on which to build meaningful access to justice.

Ontario's community legal clinic system functions because it has these four characteristics. Responsive to local needs, expert in poverty law, providing a range of services, and securely funded, the system provides access to justice for low income people and a route to greater equity for all Ontarians. ■

More demand, fewer resources



31%
INCREASE
IN DEMAND FOR OUR SERVICES

With our 2018 move to a new storefront location, the number of people seeking legal assistance has increased. We see the demand every day when we look at how busy it is in our waiting room.

The numbers bear this out. In the first six months of last year, 935 people asked WTCLS for assistance with a legal matter. In the first six months of this year, that number jumped to 1225. That is a 31% increase in demand in just one year.

The need for supports in all our areas of law is significant with growing pressure on our landlord and tenant practice. As the real estate market in Toronto drives up rents, more and more landlords are looking for ways to evict existing tenants from their buildings. Once a sitting tenant is gone, landlords can re-rent their unit at a much inflated price. Landlords use various provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) including “renovictions” and claims of “landlord’s own use” to force out low income people who are left with nowhere decent to live. The pressure on our landlord and tenant practice is evident when you look at our case distribution. More than 50% of the cases we open are in residential housing law.

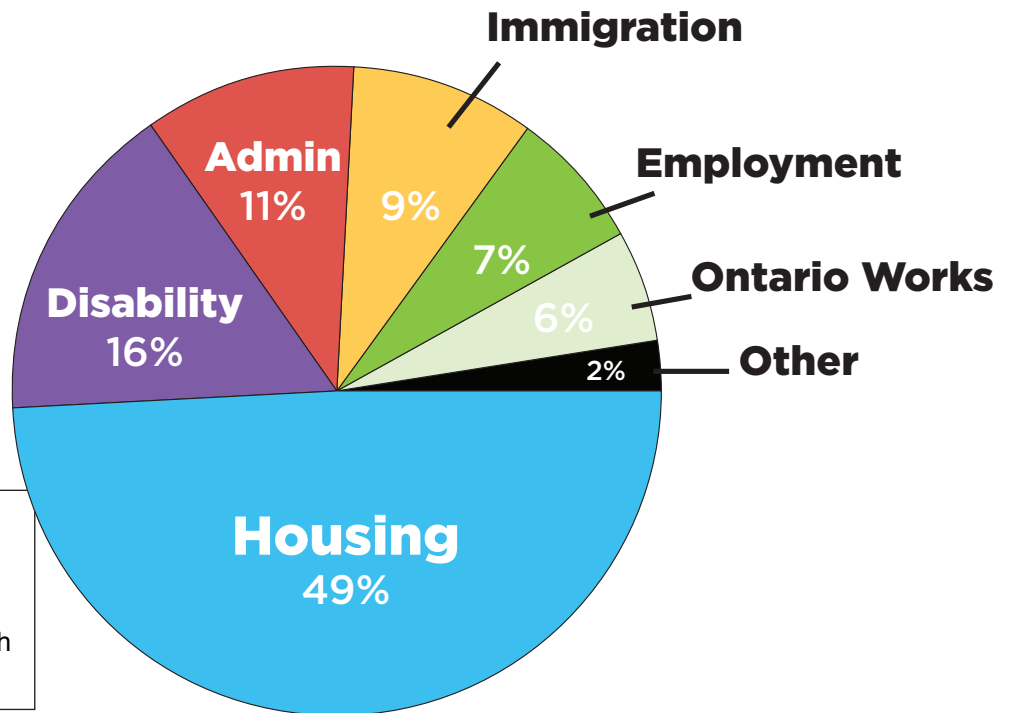
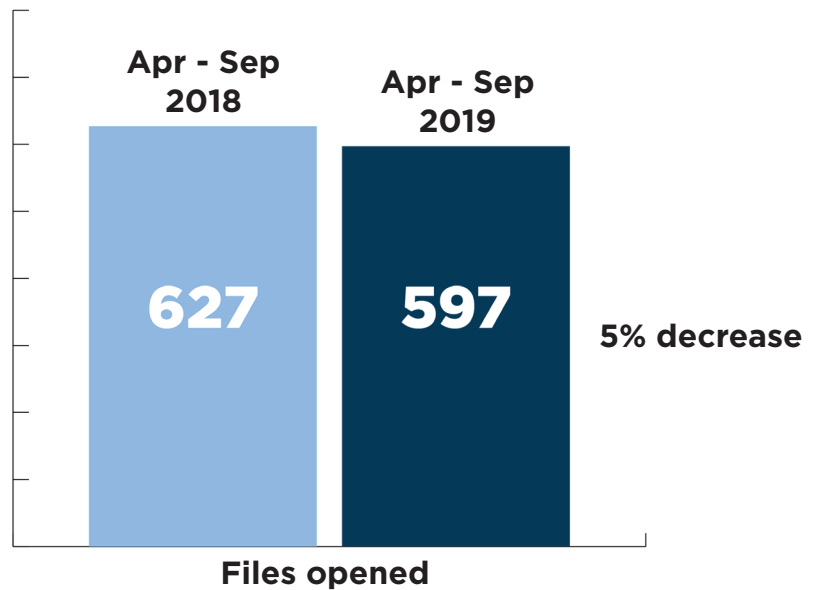
With such a dramatic increase in demand for our services, you would anticipate that we would be opening substantially more case files. That is not happening. The cuts to Legal Aid Ontario announced in April of 2019 have had a negative impact. We have been required to lay off staff and reduce hours in the face of these restrictions.

After so many years of increased services at the clinic, this is disheartening. However the decrease in cases is still relatively small. In the first 6 months last year we opened 627 cases. Over the same time this year, we opened 597 cases, a reduction of just 5%. Despite the cuts, we are still holding the line. We are prioritizing the clients with the highest needs and providing more summary advice to those who are more able to speak for themselves. For the moment, we are managing to continue providing support in all areas of law and we focus on those clients who need us the most. ■

Holding the line

Despite an increase in demand and budget cuts which resulted in a loss of legal staff, WTCLS has seen its casework reduced by just five percent since the past fiscal year.

Figures are for first six months of each fiscal year (April to September).



Our casework

Housing matters continue to account for the lion's share of our work.

Figures are for first six months of each fiscal year (April to September).

“Renovictions”: What you need to know

Low income tenants in West Toronto are facing ever increasing pressure to move out of their units so that landlords can raise rents. As West Toronto gentrifies and the housing market in Toronto becomes more fierce, residents of the downtown core are all the more vulnerable to unscrupulous landlords hoping to take advantage of the high price of housing for their own profit. One of the strategies commonly used is the “renoviction”.

Section 50(1) of the Residential Tenancies Act allows a landlord to serve a notice of termination if the landlord intends to, among other things, perform extensive repairs or renovations that require a building permit and vacant possession of the unit. Many tenants who learn that their landlord will be renovating think they have to move immediately. That is not necessarily the case.

There are rules which apply to this form of termination of tenancy:

The landlord must give at least 120 days in the form of an “N13” notice which must be correctly completed.


The termination date must be the last day of a fixed term tenancy or (if there is no fixed term, the last day of a rental period).

The landlord must intend in good faith to carry out the building work and get all the necessary permits.

If a tenant is given an N13, prior to moving out, the tenant can tell the landlord in writing that they intend to move back into the rental unit after the work is done. If the tenant gives that notice, they are entitled to re-occupy the unit at the same rent they paid before. There are further rules for residential complexes with five or more residential units.

On receiving an N13, the tenant does not need to move until the landlord applies to the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) and obtains an Order terminating the tenancy. Unfortunately, landlords often give N13 notices in bad faith and the tenant is either unaware of their rights or is unsuccessful in avoiding termination at the LTB.

If a tenant finds out that the work did not take place and they have not been permitted to reoccupy the unit, they may apply to the LTB for an order that the notice was given in bad faith. The LTB can then order damages or penalties, but often these are totally insufficient to make up for the loss of a low cost unit, and even when ordered, are not enough to offset the increased rent that the landlord can obtain in the current market.

The law as it stands is just not enough to protect low income tenants when landlords see the financial benefits of evicting and choose the renoviction route. Community members who receive notice for renovation or extensive repair are encouraged to contact WTCLS for advice right away! 



The year in Housing Help Services



In the past year, our Housing Help Services continued to provide support to people navigating Toronto's difficult housing market. Our staff meet with clients at ten different locations in the community and help them to search for housing in the context of extreme scarcity. While we cannot deliver the affordable quality housing that people need, Housing Help Workers are a resource providing the information that people need in order to know what is out there and how to best secure a tenancy that meets their needs. Housing Help Workers also help low income people to apply for subsidized

and specialized housing and access other community resources. For clients with complex needs, our case manager can provide longer term supports. |

New staff member!



Ariel Weber, Case Manager

We were thrilled to welcome Ariel Weber to West Toronto Housing Help Services in August 2019 as our new Case Manager. Ariel is a Registered Social Worker and graduate from the University of Toronto's Master of Social Work program. She completed her educational placements at Durham Community Legal Clinic and the Supervised Access Program in the Victim and Vulnerable Persons Division at the Ministry of the Attorney General. Prior to completing her Master's degree, Ariel worked as an Education Coordinator at North York General Hospital and volunteered for various non-profits, which focused on gender-based violence. In addition to her work at West Toronto Housing Help Services, Ariel works part-time at the Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto as a Duty Coordinator, providing support to families whose children are accessing services at SickKids Hospital. Her past experience includes working as an Education Coordinator at North York General Hospital and volunteering for several nonprofit organizations focusing on gender-based violence. Ariel brings a client-centered, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive lens to all her client work.

Treasurer's report

Jacques Descoteaux



The purpose of our annual external audit is for the auditor to express an opinion on the truth and fairness of an organization's financial statements.

An external audit provides an independent third party assessment of the financial statement, and ensures accountability of management performance as well as a reasonable basis for you, our members, and the public to rely on the financial statements.

The audit of the finances of WTCLS for 2018-2019 was performed by the accounting firm Chaplin LLP. The auditor verifies that the accounting records and

polices are in order to ensure the financial statements are accurate, complete and in adherence with generally accepted accounting principles.

The two principal funders of our work are Legal Aid Ontario and the City of Toronto. I would like to acknowledge and thank our funders for their continued support.

I would also like to thank the auditors, Chaplin & Co., for their services this year.

Audited financial statements

Chaplin & Co.

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

The accompanying summarized financial statements, which comprise the summarized statement of financial position as at March 31, 2019, the summarized statement of operations and fund balances and summarized statement of cash flows for the year then ended, are derived from the complete audited financial statements of West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc. for the year ended March 31, 2019.

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on those financial statements in our report dated November 14, 2019.

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

Management's Responsibility for the Summarized Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation of a summary of the audited financial statements on the basis

described in Note 1.

Auditors' Responsibility

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

Opinion

In our opinion, the summarized financial statements derived from the audited financial statements of West Toronto Community Legal Services Inc. for the year ended March 31, 2019 are a fair summary of those financial statements, in accordance with the basis described in Note 1.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chaplin & Co."

Chaplin & Co., Chartered Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants
Toronto, Canada

November 14, 2019

Note 1:

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

Summarized Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS	2019	2018
Current assets	122,005	132,394
Capital assets	218,373	11,906
	\$340,378	\$144,300
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities	265,379	109,909
Funds balances	74,999	34,391
	\$340,378	\$144,300

The full Financial Statements for 2018-2019 are available upon request by email info@wtcls.org, by phone to 416-531-7375 x227, or at our office.

Summarized Statement of Operations and Fund Balances

REVENUES	2019	2018
Legal Aid Ontario (direct receipts)	869,304	745,031
Legal Aid Ontario (indirect receipts)	26,624	14,849
City of Toronto	334,470	334,471
Other funding	3,700	-
TOTAL REVENUES	\$1,234,098	1,094,341
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,193,452	\$1,078,557
Excess of revenues over expenditures	40,646	10,139
FUNDS BALANCE, BEGINNING OF YEAR	34,391	34,887
Repayment of LAO funds	(38)	(10,635)
FUNDS BALANCE, END OF YEAR	\$74,999	\$34,391

Summarized Statement of Cash Flows

Cash flows provided by (used for)	2019	2018
Operating activities	217,186	14,969
Investment activities	150,518	(8,445)
Increase (decrease) in cash	(15,341)	6,524
CASH, BEGINNING OF YEAR	85,894	79,370
CASH, END OF YEAR	\$70,553	\$85,894

Legal services and hours

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

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

Hours:

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

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

Housing Help Services and hours

West Toronto Housing Help Services. We help low-income people:

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

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

Walk-in clinic hours and locations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

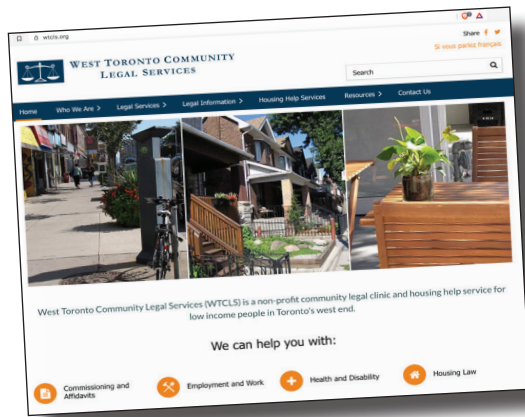
Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC), 1st/3rd Thurs of each month 9:30 - 12:00

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

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

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

Our new website connects to Steps to Justice



Over the last year, WTCLS partnered with Community Legal Education of Ontario (CLEO) to develop a new and more user friendly website. CLEO staff worked with us to implement their best practices in website navigation. Still located at **www.wtcls.org**, the site has been completely redesigned to be easier to use, while still retaining our photographs taken of the catchment area.

Most exciting, the site now has embedded CLEO's Steps to Justice information. Launched in January 2017, Steps to Justice provides Ontarians with reliable, step-by-step information about legal problems they face in their daily lives. Users can enter a range of questions about

everything from landlord and tenant rules, to employment rights, to family law questions, among many topics and find answers easily for themselves. Users are given clear step-by-step instructions on how to navigate complex questions with links to other resources throughout. The site is also clear about when you might want to contact a legal clinic or other legal supports for more assistance. |

Thank you to our staff & volunteers

Board

Sharon Anderson
Elka Aranzales Reales
Alison Bellaire
Michelle Coombs
Jacques Descoteaux
Tyler Hargreaves
Caroline Shultz
Sarah Skinner

Clinic Director

Elisabeth Brückmann

Office Manager

Rob Routh

Legal Team

Francesca Allodi-Ross
Moirá Daly
Helle Hulgaard
Epiphany Leibovitch-Opar
Kathryn Lynch

Housing Help Team

Morena Carranza
Zara Magalhaes
Justin Pomeroy
Cassine Smith
Ariel Weber
Yodit Wendim

Support Team

Maggie Szlimak
Elisabeth Valenti-Sorbara

Intake Workers

Andrea Ajurias
Kent Wakely
Arthur Willwerth

Osgoode Public Interest Volunteers

Iyarusalem Biftu
Stephanie Brown
Saba Chenani
Victoria Peter

Past Staff

Wendy Atkinson
Charlotte Cass
Jacky Chiu
Angelo Giannetta
Paula Monahan
James Shilton
Keerthana Sivapatham
Jhoanna Syllo
Kat Snukal
Lesley Somerville



WTCLS gratefully acknowledges our principal funders,
Legal Aid Ontario and the City of Toronto.



**WEST TORONTO COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES**

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LEGAL AID ONTARIO
AIDE JURIDIQUE ONTARIO



West Toronto Community Legal Services is funded by Legal Aid Ontario.
West Toronto Housing Help Services is funded by the City of Toronto.