

2013 Impact Report

The Origin of the Durham Community Legal Clinic

Justice Through Advocacy since 1985

Mission Statement

The Durham Community Legal Clinic provides access to justice through quality legal services, advocacy and information for people living on a low income or in poverty.

Vision

To promote access to justice throughout Durham Region for low-income individuals by providing high quality legal services

To encourage and facilitate flexibility and innovation in the provision of legal services

To recognize the diverse legal needs of low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities

To operate within a framework of accountability for the expenditure of public funds

2013 Impact Report

The Origin of the Durham Community Legal Clinic

The need for a legal clinic in Durham Region was established largely through the experiences of the Board and staff of the Durham Tenants Hotline, a landlord and tenant advisory office established in 1982 under the auspices of the Social Planning Council of Oshawa-Whitby. This office provided advice and representation to landlords and tenants until 1985.

The Unemployed Help Centre also assisted unemployed people with completing forms, but did not advocate on behalf of clients. The local Area Director's office for Legal Aid did not issue certificates in most areas of traditional poverty law such as Worker's Compensation, Social Assistance Appeals, Employment Insurance Appeals or Landlord and Tenant Matters.

In order to assist the residents of Durham Region in these other areas, the Durham Tenants Hotline applied for funding as a full-service Community Legal Clinic. The application was approved for the early part of 1985 and the Durham Community Legal Clinic opened in February 1985.

Durham Community Legal Clinic is a non-profit, provincially funded organization which provides free legal advice and representation to low income residents of Durham Region in the areas of law for which Legal Aid Certificates are not available. These include Landlord and Tenant, Workers Compensation, Social Assistance, Canada Pension Plan Appeals, Employment Insurance, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Ontario Human Rights, Immigration and Refugee Status, and Wills and Powers of Attorney.

The Clinic plays an ongoing role in community development around particular legal issues and around the specific needs of low income people.

In addition, Durham Community Legal Clinic provides free legal advice daily over the telephone, represents clients at court/tribunal hearings, provides duty counsel service at the Landlord and Tenant Board and, wherever necessary, provides referrals to appropriate sources and agencies where applicable.

A significant part of the services provided are associated with the giving of legal information on an individual basis concerning a wide variety of legal issues and problems. A large proportion of the advice is given to tenants in rental housing situations and to people living on social assistance or to those who have been refused social assistance. Quite often an individual's problems can be resolved through methods of self-help which are explained to the client.

Our Staff

Deborah Hastings, Executive Director

Jeannine Spurrell, Office Manager

Cathy Duignan, Legal Worker

Stefanie Famme, Legal Worker

Matthew Ferguson, Legal Worker

Emily Robb, Tenant Legal Advisor

Lisa Petit, Support Staff

Colleen Twyman, Support Staff

Our Board of Directors

Stephen Bourque, Chair

Paul Dobbs, Vice-Chair

Alex Mak, Treasurer

Kelly Weeks, Secretary

Audrey Andrews, Member

Mark Bouwmeester, Member

Dalton Burger, Member

Jonathan Dixon, Member

Eleanor Hastie, Member

Allyce Mutungi, Member

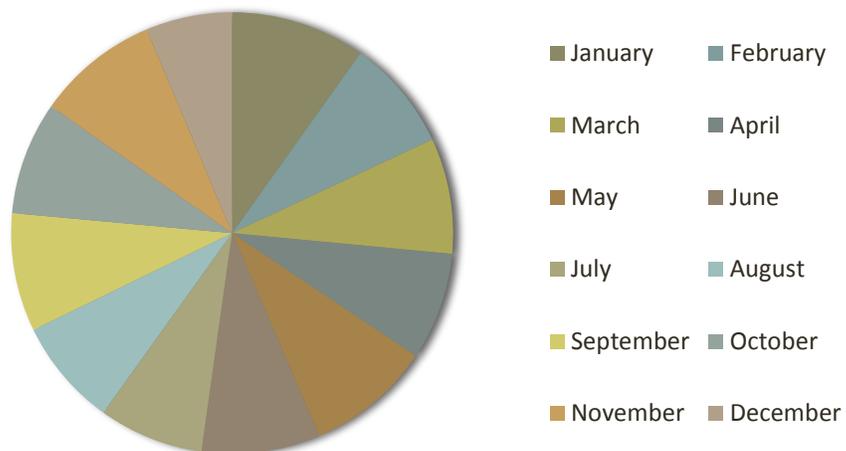
Elizabeth Persaud, Member

Statistics Report

Summary Advice Data 2013

Month	# Summary Advice/ Referrals/ Brief Services	# Days Worked	Average # / Day
January	674	22	30.6
February	557	19	29.3
March	577	25	23
April	538	25	21.5
May	626	22	23.9
June	591	20	29.5
July	526	22	23.9
August	540	21	25.7
September	592	20	29.6
October	558	22	25.4
November	610	22	27.7
December	427	17.5	24.4
Totals	6716	257.5	26.1

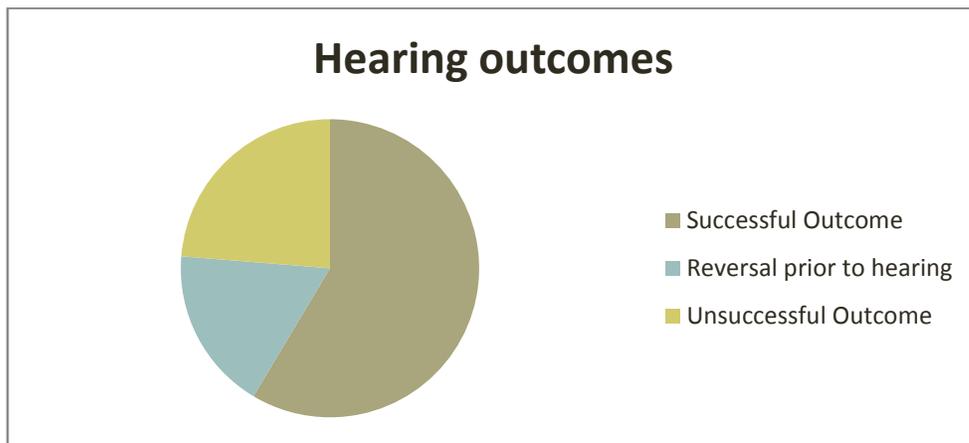
**Summary Advice/ Referrals/ Brief Services
by Month**



Impact report – Appeals stats

The Durham Community Legal Clinic assists individuals living on a low income or in poverty in the Durham Region. We help people who need assistance in appealing decisions from the Ontario Disability Support Program and/or Canada Pension Plan (Disability) denying them disability benefits.

In 2013, of the 267 ODSP or CPP-D clients whose files were being prepared for a hearing before the Social Benefits Tribunal were successful in their appeal, either prior to their case going to a hearing or by a tribunal decision received after attending a hearing.



By assisting individuals in their appeals for these benefits means our clients will receive more money to live on than if they receive Social Assistance benefits. In 2013, this resulted in an increase in basic need payments of \$178,942.60, plus additional funds for rent and utilities.

Successful decisions on their appeals also means that our clients receive retroactive funds which they are legally entitled to back to the date of their denials of benefits based on their original application. In 2013, our clients received a total of \$2,037,183.00 in retroactive benefits.

Appealing Overpayment Decisions

The Durham Community Legal Clinic only assists those living in poverty or on a low-income. Many of our clients have had to rely on social benefits just to cover their basic needs. Sometimes, based on government rules, individuals receive a decision stating that the government believes they have been “overpaid” these benefits and they are expected to repay these funds which have already been spent on basic necessities.

In 2013, our Clinic was able to appeal government overpayment decisions which resulted in a total of \$69,948.57 in requested overpayment funds being overturned.

Housing

In September of 2013, the Durham Community Legal Clinic organized a housing forum for members of the community who have direct or indirect communication with the clients we serve. In attendance were local paralegals and paralegal students, employees of OW and ODSP, and employees from various social service agencies across the region. The topics included Human Rights at the LTB, Mediation, Small Claims Court, and Common Scenarios at the LTB. The Forum had 50 participants and received favourable feedback.

Housing Law Assistance

- We provide summary legal advice over the telephone and on a walk in basis. In 2013, we helped 816 people over the phone and saw 290 people on a walk in basis.
- Our housing worker at the clinic is also Duty Counsel at the Landlord and Tenant Board. In 2013, we advised 976 tenants through Tenant Duty Council Program

Immigration

In July of 2013, our Clinic began offering services in Immigration and Refugee Law in the way of advice and form completion. This service is offered in collaboration with a volunteer paralegal one morning a week by appointment only.

Month	# Summary Advice/ Referrals/ Brief Services
July	5
August	4
September	8
October	4
November	5
December	3
TOTALS	29