

2014 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

2014 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 (currently on Maternity leave)

Kim Kreider, Interim Office Manager

Cathy Duignan, Legal Worker

Stefanie Famme, Legal Worker

Matthew Ferguson, Legal Worker

Emily Robb, Tenant Legal Advisor

Lisa Petit, Support Staff

Colleen Archer, Support Staff

Our Board of Directors

Paul Dobbs, Chair

Stephen Bourque, Vice-Chair

Alex Mak, Treasurer

Audrey Andrews, Secretary

Mark Bouwmeester, Member

Dalton Burger, Member

Jonathan Dixon, Member

Eleanor Hastie, Member

Elizabeth Persaud, Member

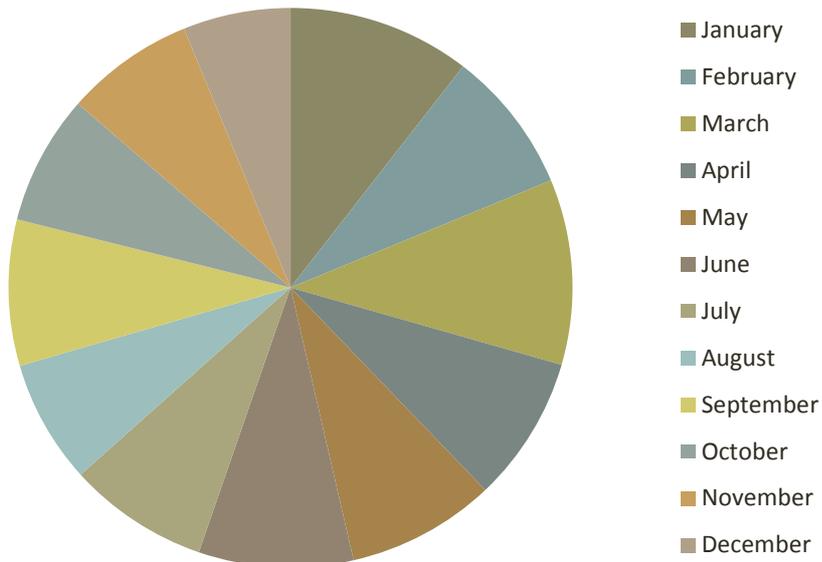
Tara Robins, Member

Mustafa Elkalza, Member

Statistics Report

Month	# Summary Advice/ Referrals/ Brief Services	# Days Worked	Average # / Day
January	658	22	29.9
February	519	19	27.3
March	674	21	32.1
April	529	19	27.8
May	537	21	25.6
June	557	21	26.5
July	507	21	24.1
August	449	20	22.5
September	531	21	25.3
October	471	22	21.4
November	466	20	23.3
December	387	18.5	20.9

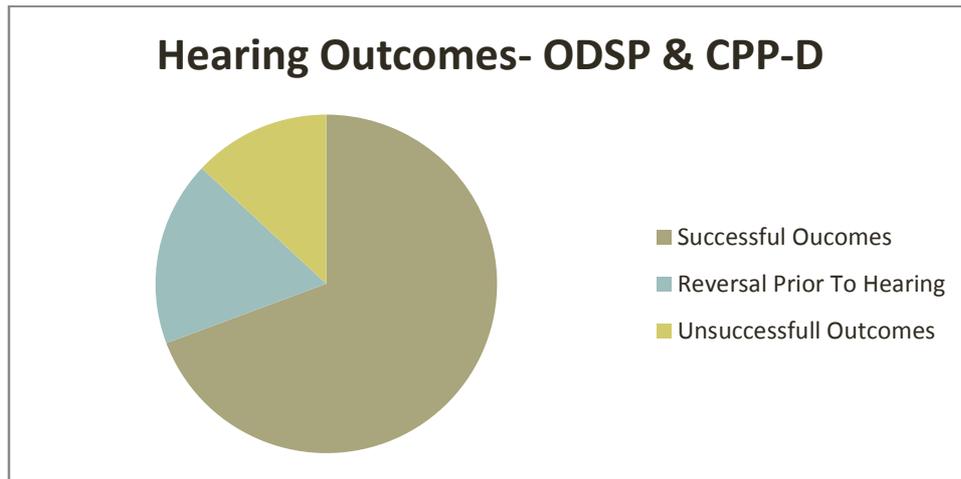
Summary Advice/ Referrals/ Brief Services by Month



Appeals Statistics

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 2014, our Clinic prepared 230 ODSP or CPP-D files for hearing before the Social Benefits Tribunal. Of these files, 195 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 2014, this resulted in an increase in basic need payments of \$99,754.33, 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 2014, our clients received a total of \$1,191,373.37 in retroactive benefits.

In the case of Canada Pension Plan Disability, our clients received retroactive benefits in the amount of \$364,000.00 with an estimated increase in the amount of monthly benefits in the amount of \$8,173.00.

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 2014, our Clinic was able to appeal government overpayment decisions which resulted in a total of \$116,600.00 in requested overpayment funds being overturned.

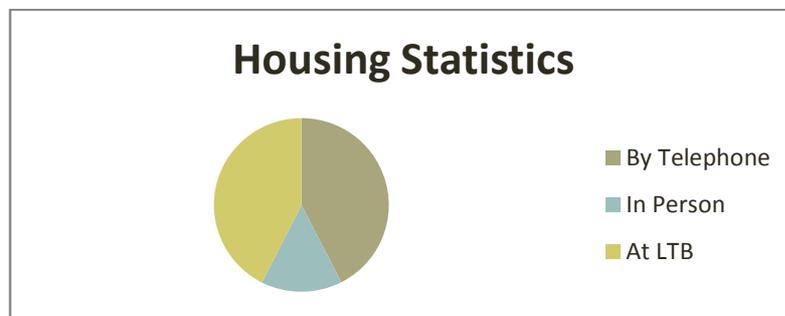
Other Services

The Durham Community Legal Clinic offered, over the past year, representation at hearings before the Human Rights Tribunal in the area of Ontario Human Rights as well as before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

In 2014, of the 8 cases represented by our Clinic in these areas of law, our clients received awards or settlements in the total amount of \$64,580.00.

Housing Law Assistance

- We provide summary legal advice over the telephone and on a walk in basis. In 2014, we helped 945 people over the phone and saw 334 people who had tenants' issues on a walk in basis.
- Our housing worker at the clinic is also Duty Counsel at the Landlord and Tenant Board. In 2014, we advised 948 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.

In 2014, our Clinic continued to offer these services in Immigration and Refugee Law to residents of Durham Region on an appointment basis.

Month	# Immigration and Refugee Law clients assisted	Month	# Immigration and Refugee Law clients assisted
January	4	July	0
February	10	August	0
March	5	September	8
April	10	October	10
May	5	November	15
June	0	December	7