

2021/2022 Annual General Report



DCLC
Durham Community Legal Clinic

Justice Through Advocacy
November 23, 2022

President, Drew Samuels

A year ago, almost to the day, we were in a period of uncertainty. The pandemic had businesses and services repeatedly opening and shutting doors with little notice, we were transitioning our leadership team at the clinic, and the clinic was in a position where it had stopped its outreach efforts due to safety concerns.

Well, what a difference a year makes! Although COVID-19 is still affecting our communities, we are finding new ways to adapt and provide a high-level service to our clients both virtually and in-person. Safeguards are still necessary, and we must remain cautious and vigilant, but we have been able to deliver services to our clients to ensure access to justice. We conducted a successful executive search and hired Patrick Gillespie as our new Executive Director. He comes with a breadth of knowledge and experience. We are so grateful to have him on our team. Patrick has hit the ground running and has been busy forming his management team, hiring front-line staff to ensure we meet our commitment to Durham Region residents, and re-engaging with our community partners to find areas of intersection



We find ourselves in a strong financial position both in our last and next fiscal years and because of this, we can focus on initiatives such as outreach and partnering with other organizations to empower those residents of Durham Region who need it most. This includes our long-standing partnership with Durham College and the Durham Access to Justice Hub (“Hub”). This partnership has benefited the community because the Hub is able to provide supervised legal services which are ancillary to the services we provide at the clinic. The Hub provides a wider umbrella of services for our clients, and it has been a successful endeavour for all.

We are still in the process of becoming accredited through Imagine Canada. One of the main focuses our Board has had is to create a new strategic plan, and to review aspects of our operation such as our policies and making any necessary revisions to modernize our business. We have a target timeframe of the end of the first quarter of 2023, and we are well on our way to achieving this goal.

Our Board committees have been revamped and we have an open invitation to our membership to volunteer and to get involved. The committee names are (1) Governance, (2) Financial, and (3) Quality Assurance. We are committed to meeting quarterly with the members of these committees for strategic support to further our goals.

Looking forward, I anticipate continued support from Legal Aid Ontario as we fulfill our obligations in our service agreement. We will be working closely with the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario as they help to empower our organization with strategic support. We want to continue collaborating with community partners in Durham Region and perhaps make new connections where appropriate.

Last and certainly not least would be to acknowledge the staff at the clinic. Nothing can be achieved without the dedicated professionals who truly care about the needs of our community. They have been patient and resilient through our period of transition, and they have been the dependable team of men and women who remain the source of unbridled passion for their line of work. Our Board and community are lucky to have them all. I can say confidently that when our Board has to navigate difficult decisions, the staff provide us with the motivation to achieve our goals.

Executive Director, Patrick Gillespie

As the new Executive Director of the Durham Community Legal Clinic (DCLC), I am proud of the commitment, drive and compassion of this DCLC Team and Board in all they have done and continue to do. Their hard work and dedication ensure the residents of Durham receive the services they so deserve and need.

The Durham region is one of the largest and most diverse areas in all the provincial clinic system. This past year has seen a steady and measured return to pre-pandemic operation levels in serving such a large and diverse community. This included a focus on rebuilding staffing and leadership. A new management team is almost all in place, along with a growing complement of skilled and diverse employees.



Our outreach program has restarted and the initial response from the community has been nothing short of euphoria. The Clinic has provided a number of presentations and education to a variety of groups through our local library system and at community events. Together with our partners, DCLC is eager to rebuild relationships and opportunities to better serve the community.

Durham Community Legal Clinic continues to work closely with our fellow clinics on many projects and initiatives that will help reach, educate, and serve the most vulnerable. This includes the SHAPE project which takes a coordinated approach to the development and delivery of legal information, advice and public legal education on sexual harassment in the workplace. As well, we are part of the Your Way Forward project which provides legal education, advice, representation, and holistic services for survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence in both urban and rural settings across Ontario.

Our close relationship with Durham College remains strong. DCLC acts as a training ground for paralegal students from the College. As a partner in the Durham Access to Justice Hub, the Durham College Paralegal Program further supplements the Clinic's services by offering legal practice areas DCLC cannot on its own. Training has been a focus for the Clinic as well. DCLC staff began cross training in multiple areas of law to further hone their skills and knowledge. This training will continue, in order to ensure both the Clinic and the Hub have the ability to serve the ever changing and diverse needs of our community.

The past fiscal year 2021/22 has been one of resilience and re-emergence. Partnerships have been re-established, projects renewed, and passions rekindled. As the Clinic moves forward to 2022/23, it will focus on expanded growth in services, partnerships, fundraising and best practices. We will be embarking on a new strategic plan and operational review. The Clinic is also looking forward to the launch of an improved website, in addition to and a total computer and systems upgrade from Legal Aid Ontario. DCLC will support the Board with its Accreditation Review and membership drive. Last, but not least, Durham Community Legal Clinic will concentrate on reviving and building upon existing partnerships and initiatives, particularly with the Durham Access to Justice Hub, to serve our community and its needs to our fullest potential.

AGENDA

Annual General Meeting

November 23, 2022

- 6:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Drew Samuels and Dave Musgrave (President and Vice-President)
- 6:05 p.m. Land Acknowledgement**
Shay (Director)
- 6:10 p.m. Adoption of the Minutes from the 2021 AGM**
Owais Hashmi (Secretary)
- 6:20 p.m. President's Report and Executive Director's Report**
Drew Samuels and Patrick Gillespie (ED)
- 6:40 p.m. Remarks from Guests/Members**
- 6:45 p.m. Remarks from DCLC Staff**
Rochelle (Social Worker)
- 7:00 p.m. Membership Vote on By-Laws**
- 7:10 p.m. Receiving, considering and adopting the Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2022**
Ramana Sivapathasundaram (Treasurer)
Derek Chu (Hilborn - Auditor)
- 7:20 p.m. Membership Vote on Appointment of Auditors**
Ramana Sivapathasundaram
- 7:30 p.m. Closing Remarks & Adjournment**

2021/2022 Intake & Cases Stats

Month / Year	# of Intakes / Referrals	# of Cases
Apr 2021	615	268
May 2021	550	249
Jun 2021	562	222
Jul 2021	591	426
Aug 2021	505	375
Sep 2021	399	389
Oct 2021	480	375
Nov 2021	468	454
Dec 2021	397	308
Jan 2022	596	378
Feb 2022	520	326
Mar 2022	678	444
TOTALS	6,361	4,214

Treasurer's Report

Ramana Sivapathasundaram



**2022 Fiscal Year
(April 2021 to March 2022)**

Highlights include:

- The auditors, **Hilborn LLP**, gave DCLC a passing “Unqualified” Opinion for our fiscal 2022.
- Overall, the clinic's financial position is a good shape. The clinic has sufficient assets to cover its liabilities and continue operations.
- Overall excess of revenues over expenses was \$242,173 compared to \$20,343 compared to fiscal 2021.
 - o Revenue features:
 - Overall revenues were up 5%.
 - Funding from Legal Aid Ontario has increased by 3.2% to \$1,395,068. These funds are recorded under “General Fund” and are used to provide a range of legal and paralegal services, including information, advice and representation to low-income individuals and families.
 - \$91,500 was received from Government of Canada – Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law Inc. These amounts are reported under Survivors of Gender Based Violence Fund and are used to support victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence by providing legal advice and representation to low-income clients.
 - o Expenditure features:
 - Overall expenses were down 9.5%.
 - Salaries and benefits decreased by approximately 11% and this is due to accruals of staff settlement in fiscal 2021.
 - Legal fees have decreased due to various issues dealt by the clinic in fiscal 2022 versus in fiscal 2021.
 - Supplies and services have increased by 59% and increase in office expense has been the main driver for this increase.
 - Audit fees has been down significantly. This is due to prior invoices that were not recorded in the previous years were all recorded in the last year and current year reflects the actual for the year.

Our Staff & Services

Employment/Human Rights/WSIB

The employment team continues to provide varied services to residents of Durham Region, including assistance with employment law matters, representation before the Human Rights Tribunal, the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board and Workplace Safety & Insurance Appeals Tribunal.

As the pandemic began to wind down and society began to re-open, DCLC saw a gradual increase over in terms of client volumes with approximately 300 new cases opened across the three practice areas.



Unfortunately, the delays at the Human Rights Tribunal which have been building since 2018, continued to worsen over this fiscal period and many files still face significant delays. This has necessitated exploring other forums that may be open to clients who have experienced discrimination. One option includes the feasibility of pursuing such matters at the Small Claims Court in place of the human rights tribunal.

Housing – Landlord & Tenant Law

Housing continues to provide a wide array of services to Durham Region tenants. This includes, summary advice, help with preparing tenant applications, full representation, and Tenant Duty Counsel services at the Landlord and Tenant Board. As society reopens, DCLC has seen a 79% increase in housing case demands.

Unfortunately, the Digital First approach has significantly impacted how and when we are taking on cases for full representation. On average, clients are waiting 6 to 8 months to receive a hearing date and between 60-90 days to receive a decision. During the 2021-2022 period our Clinic also saw a massive increase in N12 (Landlord's Own Use) applications as landlords seek to take advantage of rising rental rates by evicting long-time tenants.

DCLC has been able to work around many of the challenges in housing; nevertheless, we only anticipate an increase in housing needs going forward as the cost of living increases and affordability within the Durham Region decreases.

Commissioning/Notarizing

The Durham Community Legal Clinic (“DCLC”) has continued to offer Notarizing and Commissioning of documents services for most documents free of charge, or for a nominal fee, for members of the Region of Durham.

Types of documents our Commissioners and Notaries commonly assist with are invitation letters, certified copies of documents, travel consent letters for children travelling with one parent, and sworn affidavits to assist with income verification. DCLC also assists with commissioning various documents for all areas of practice in the clinic.

Will & Estates

DCLC has recently recommenced offering Will and Power of Attorney services. There has been an interest from both community partners and community members seeking a return of this service following the reopening of our doors. We have assisted clients with legal information, summary advice and with preparing Simple Will and Power of Attorney for Personal Care and Property documents. On occasion, staff have travelled off-site to speak with community members in person that were unable to attend the clinic on their own. DCLC also assists with legal information and summary legal advice relating to Estate matters. DCLC has seen a steady increase in the demand for continuing Will & Estate services and will continue to streamline the process to reach more of our community members.

Income Maintenance

DCLC supports our clients with income maintenance matters, which are predominantly social assistance appeals. We assist with appeals for those denied benefits, overpayments, or a reduction of benefits from both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. The Clinic has also begun to focus on providing legal services for Canada Pension Plan Disability appeals for those in the Region of Durham who have been denied this benefit. As we build capacity to represent those who qualify with their appeals to the Social Benefits Tribunal and the Social Security Tribunal, we strive to help as much as we are able by providing summary legal advice, review of documentation and resources such a self-help kit to guide self-represented appellants through the Social Benefits Tribunal process.

