



Scarborough
Community
Legal Services

Annual Report 2025



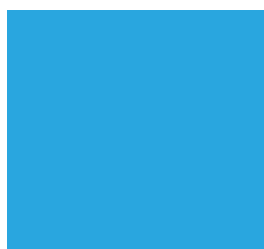


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Message

FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year has been one of both challenge and resilience for our clinic and the communities we serve. The legal issues faced by our clients have become increasingly complex and intertwined. In Scarborough, we are seeing the impacts of rising housing costs, unstable employment, immigration barriers, and gaps in social assistance systems that together create significant pressures for low-income individuals and families. These realities remind us that access to justice is not only a legal issue-it is a fundamental matter of equity and well being.

Amid these growing challenges, our clients continue to inspire us with their courage, determination, and resourcefulness. Each day, we see people navigating extraordinary hardship with perseverance. Their resilience fuels our work and reinforces our belief in the importance of a strong, community-based legal clinic that stands alongside those most affected by systemic inequities.

We are deeply grateful to our exceptional staff team, whose dedication and expertise make our work possible. The past year has demanded adaptability and creativity, and our team has continually risen to the occasion. We also extend our sincere thanks to our volunteer Board of Directors for their leadership and stewardship. Their time, insight, and commitment to our mission have been invaluable in guiding and shaping the clinic's work.

This year, we also completed an important milestone: the development of a new five-year Strategic Plan. Through this process, we reflected on who we are as an organization, the needs of the communities we serve, and our priorities for the future. We invite you to review the highlights of our Strategic Plan on the next page of this report. The plan sets a clear direction for the years ahead-strengthening our capacity to respond to evolving community needs, deepening our advocacy, and reinforcing our commitment to equity and access to justice.

As we move forward, we do so with gratitude for the trust placed in us by our community members, funders, and partners. Together, we remain committed to building a more just, inclusive, and equitable community for all.

Daniel Greanya

Chair, Board of Directors

Renee Griffin

Executive Director

Strategic Plan

2025-2030

MISSION

SCLS assists low-income individuals and groups access justice and protect their legal rights by providing free legal services and working to change systems to benefit people living in poverty. We work with community members, organizations, and social justice groups to achieve our mission. Our four key strategies are: legal services, legal education, community development and law reform.

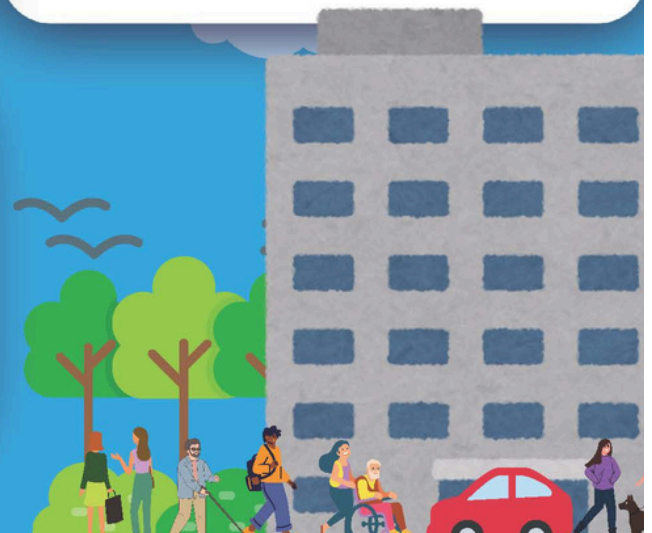
VALUES

Respect
Diversity, Inclusion &
Equity
Accessibility
Social Justice

Community
Collective Action
Excellence & Accountability
Expert & Caring Staff

VISION

A community where all people can access justice, have equal opportunity, and live free from discrimination and poverty.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN:

Priority #1

Legal Expertise & Impact

- Enhance services to traditionally underserved communities
- Deepen legal expertise and local expertise on poverty law issues
- Enhance our advocacy and law reform work on systemic poverty law issues

Priority #3

Equity & Justice in Action

- Cultivate accessible services for all equity-deserving groups
- Create a physically accessible space
- Maintain and nurture present relationships with Black and Indigenous serving organizations

Priority #2

Community-Centered Leadership & Visibility

- Enhance our relationships with organizational members, leaders & organizations
- Deepen our understanding of community and supporting organizations
- Maintain and nurture the present Communities Building Justice Together (CBJT) relationships
- Enhance our visibility with the community

Priority #4

Organizational Vitality & Talent

- Create an organization that represents the community it serves.
- Invest in workplace culture and staff wellbeing to support the retention of staff
- Strengthen our ability to attract staff

2025 Community Champion Award

IS PRESENTED TO VOICES OF SCARBOROUGH

Voices of Scarborough is a group of community residents, activists, and individuals that aim to amplify the voices that need to be heard to make real changes in our community and advocate for those who are not able to access adequate legal services. With this award we celebrate and acknowledge Voices of Scarborough for their leadership and dedication to advancing equality and improving access to justice. Thank you for your continued work for our community!

SABA Public Interest Fellow: Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy

This past year at SCLS has been the most rewarding and transformative period of my professional journey. I first joined the clinic in January as an LPP student, and I was called to the Ontario Bar in August 2025. After completing my student term, I was fortunate to be awarded a fellowship from the South Asian Bar Association Foundation, one of only five awarded across North America. This fellowship was a tremendous honour and a true turning point: it validated my commitment to public interest law, and it gave me the opportunity to continue the work I had begun here while expanding into new areas.

One of the key reasons I was selected for the fellowship was the need for a Tamil-speaking lawyer at our clinic. Our community has a large Tamil population, and language has too often been a barrier to accessing justice. I have seen this most clearly in the story of one Tamil-speaking client I have worked with, who has lived with precarious immigration status for nearly twenty years. His struggles were not because of a lack of effort, but because he was bounced between professionals who could only address half of his needs: lawyers who did not speak Tamil, or social workers who knew Tamil but not immigration law. At the clinic, we have been able to bridge that divide, and together we have made significant progress toward stabilizing his status. For me, this case has been both humbling and fulfilling – it has been a reminder of how critical it is to have advocates who can meet clients where they are, and how important it is to serve one's own community.

Much of my work has focused on housing law, where I have represented tenants at the Landlord and Tenant Board. These hearings were opportunities to stand up for tenants and sharpen my own skills as an advocate. I have learned how to cross-examine witnesses, negotiate with opposing counsel, draft effective submissions, and manage a demanding caseload. These are technical skills, but they come paired with a broader lesson: housing is a human right, and every person has a right to dignity, security, and stable housing.

I was also able to broaden my practice beyond housing law, working on immigration and social assistance files. This expanded scope has given me a much fuller understanding of the interconnected legal challenges our clients face and how critical it is for clinics to offer holistic support. Outside of the courtroom, I have also loved participating in community outreach. Whether presenting public legal education workshops, answering questions at community barbeques, or simply meeting neighbours at outreach tables, I have seen how powerful it is when people are given the tools to advocate for themselves. Clinics do more than just litigation – I've learned that our mission is also about education, empowerment, and community building.

Most of all, I am grateful to my colleagues at the clinic. This is, without question, the best place I have ever worked. The licensing process tested my skills and my resilience, and the clinic supported me through it all both personally and professionally. I have learned from mentors who generously share their knowledge, and I have been shaped by a team that is deeply committed to access to justice. If I become a good lawyer, it will be because of the incredible staff here who have invested in me and in our community. Working at SCLS has truly been a privilege. It has confirmed for me that legal aid is not only necessary but life changing, and I am excited to continue serving my community.

OCTOBER 2024 TO SEPTEMBER 2025

BY THE NUMBERS



1292

Housing



765

Income
Maintenance



230

Immigration



2589

NEW CASES
OPENED



222

Employment

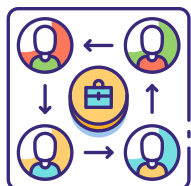


80

Admin &
Other

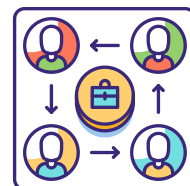
7%  in new cases
since last year

10%  in income maintenance
cases since last year



2260

REFERRALS WERE MADE TO
COMMUNITY RESOURCES



52

NEW COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FILES WERE OPENED



We undertook

100+



initiatives related to public legal
education, community
development, law reform & other
non-casework related activities

Communities Building Justice Together

PROJECT UPDATE

As part of our commitment to anti-discrimination work, in December 2023 we launched a project, “Communities Building Justice Together” (CBJT), funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario. Through the project we aimed to increase access to justice for Indigenous and Black communities in East Scarborough. Our eighteen month project came to an end this summer and we are very excited to share a summary of our achievements.

We are deeply grateful to our Project Advisory Committee (PAC), a group of Scarborough residents and community leaders who brought lived experience, professional expertise, and a shared commitment to equity to the project. Their insight has been invaluable in shaping the project’s work:

- Racquel Hamlet – Manager, 211 Community Health Centre (TAIBU)
- Ellie Henry – Former Indigenous System Navigator, Scarborough Health Network
- Anil Philip – Community Outreach Worker, Black Legal Action Centre
- Heather Young – Case Manager, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- Naomi Tsegaye – Social Worker, Woodgreen Community Services & Scarborough resident
- Kris-Andre Smith – Scarborough resident & Lawyer
- Tonie Ogilvie – Former Community Resource Specialist, 2 Spirited People of the 1st Nations

Building and Deepening Relationships

At the heart of this work is connection with our community. Throughout the project, we strengthened our relationships with incredible Black-led and Indigenous-led community partners, whose wisdom and dedication have guided our work.

Our CBJT Team



Kinzi Ahmed
CLW, Black Justice Coordinator

Former team member in 2024-2025:

Abby Carpenter
CLW, Indigenous Justice Coordinator

We thank our primary partners for their support and knowledge sharing: 2 Spirited People of the First Nations, Scarborough Health Network – Indigenous Patient Navigation, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, TAIBU & Toronto Community Crisis, Malvern Family Resources, and Tropicana Community Services. These partnerships are more than collaborations — they are friendships rooted in trust, shared vision, and the belief that justice begins with community.

Sharing Knowledge and Creating Access Through Public Legal Education

We know that knowledge is power, and making the law accessible to community members is essential. We have hosted many workshops, drop-ins, and outreach events over the last 18 months, offering space for people to ask questions, get informed, and feel supported. In addition to one-time learning events, we also established monthly legal drop-ins at Toronto Community Crisis (TAIBU) and East Scarborough Storefront so that we meet clients where they are in the community.

Helping People Navigate Complex Systems

We set out to help community members navigate legal and social service systems and we're proud to share that we've exceeded our project's goal. To date, we've supported people in accessing:

- Legal aid certificates,
- Primary health care and mental health services,
- Housing supports, grants, and funding sources,
- Developmental Services Ontario testing and PASSPORT funding assistance,
- Notary and commissioning services,
- Support for survivors of domestic violence to complete RGI housing SPP applications, and
- Help obtaining important documents such as identification, health cards, and SINs.

Creating Practical Public Legal Education Resources

Community feedback guided the creation of new, easy-to-use public legal education materials designed to meet the real needs of our Black and Indigenous communities. These include information booklets covering topics such as applying for Ontario Works, using the Landlord & Tenant Board portal, 10 Things RGI tenants in Scarborough should know, challenging an EI decision, family reunification in immigration law and humanitarian & compassionate grounds. We also developed two Self-Help Toolkits designed to assist community members in self-advocacy. These include a Guide to Appealing an ODSP Disability Decision and Fighting an Eviction at the Landlord & Tenant Board. These resources are already making a difference with hundreds having been distributed in our community, giving people the confidence to take the next step in their legal journey.

We know that the work we have completed as part of the CBJT project is just the beginning. We will continue to engage in sustained collaboration and mutual learning with our Black and Indigenous communities. SCLS commits to ongoing partnership with Black and Indigenous communities, ensuring that their voices continue to shape our work and drive meaningful, lasting change in the pursuit of justice for all.

Employment

TEAM REPORT



Over the last year, our employment law team has continued to assist workers from our community with a variety of workplace issues including wrongful terminations, unpaid wages, and discrimination. Many of our clients have been vulnerable workers, including those who identify as women, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. SCLS continues to partner with inter-clinic groups on employment-related issues impacting our community. We continue to participate in the Workers' Rights Action Group and to work closely with the TEEILS program, receiving support and assistance from staff lawyers Richa Sandill and John Wigle of Don Valley Community Legal Services on many employment law files.

This year saw two new additions to our employment law team. In May, our clinic welcomed staff lawyer Thoby King, who splits his time between the employment and housing teams. Additionally, our Community Legal Worker Randy McLin joined the employment team, alongside his work with the social assistance team. They join long-time employment and housing Community Legal Worker Petrea McConvey.

The employment team's work addresses a wide range of issues affecting workers in our community to meet the needs of our clients, with a primary focus on claims under the Employment Standards Act. Our work also includes advocating for workers experiencing human rights violations, wrongful dismissals, and challenges accessing employment insurance, among other legal issues. In one recent case, we successfully resolved a judicial review at Federal Court concerning COVID-19 benefits.

In addition to representing and advising clients, the team remains committed to public outreach and legal education, including attendance at community events and producing free informational resources relating to employment issues. We see these activities as essential to strengthening our relationships with community partners and empowering vulnerable community members.

As we enter 2026, our employment team will continue to evolve in order to respond to the changing needs of our community. We will continue to identify opportunities to promote the employment law services we offer to even more members of our community.

Our Employment Team

Thoby King
Staff Lawyer



Petrea McConvey
CLW



Randy McLin
CLW

We received support from **Jennifer Wan** Staff Lawyer and **John Wigle**, Staff Lawyer, from the Toronto East Employment & Immigration Law Services program (TEEILS)

Housing

TEAM REPORT

The past twelve months have been another busy year for the housing team. The Ontario government introduced new legislation - Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, 2025, and Bill 10, the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, 2025 - both of which raised serious concerns among housing advocates about their impact on the city's most vulnerable residents. Despite repeated headlines about housing prices "crashing" in Toronto, affordability remained out of reach for many, particularly the working poor and recipients of social assistance. By April 2025, the Landlord and Tenant Board reported a backlog of more than 48,000 matters.

While these issues dominated headlines, our day-to-day work remained focused on serving a high volume of tenants with housing concerns including evictions, tenant rights, human rights, and subsidized housing. We also increased our capacity with the addition of new staff on the team. In May, we welcomed staff lawyer, Thoby King, and in October we welcomed our newest team member, CLW Amala Drijpal. Our work was further supported by students Nishat Kazmi, Em Pedota, and Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy—all now young lawyers with a strong and proven commitment to social justice.

Mental Health and Advocacy

Many of our clients live with mental health disabilities. This creates an added challenge in addressing the legal issues they present with in our housing law practice. A major factor contributing to and exacerbating mental health challenges in our clients is no doubt their life circumstances and poverty.

Our Housing Team



Janet Brakohiapa
Staff Lawyer



Kevin Laforest
Staff Lawyer



Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy
LPP Student/Staff Lawyer



Petrea McConvey
CLW



Linda Mitchell
CLW

Thoby King
Staff Lawyer

Amala Drijpal
CLW

Former team members in 2024-2025:

Nishat Kazmi, Licensing Candidate/Staff Lawyer

Em Pedota, Licensing Candidate/Staff Lawyer

In the last five years, the decline of the economy, job losses, and rising rent prices, have further exacerbated the issues our clients face. Many often present feeling hopeless and defeated. This poses challenges in dealing with our casework. It is most often impossible to deal with the client's legal issue, until the underlying issues are addressed.

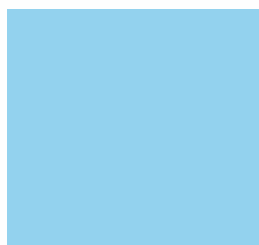
Over the last year we have strengthened key partnerships with agencies that can support our most vulnerable clients. These include the City of Toronto's Eviction Prevention in the Community Program (EPIC), ACSA Community Services' Voluntary Trustee Program, and the Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity. Working in collaboration with these agencies and programs has resulted in significantly more positive outcomes for our clients. Additionally, partnering with our community service work team, which is led by a social worker, has allowed us to offer wrap around services to our clients, particularly those with mental health needs.

Bureaucratization of the Landlord-Tenant Relationship: No-Fault Evictions and Rent Safe

Despite political rhetoric at both the municipal and provincial levels, no-fault evictions, particularly through N12 notices for landlord's own use, remain common. Legislative amendments introduced in 2020 which were intended to place a stricter burden on landlords to disclose prior N12 notices, have been neutered and, practically speaking, rendered meaningless by higher courts. Further, recent amendments relaxing requirements with respect to Notices of Termination – something that was previously not allowed – will only embolden further abuse. The Landlord and Tenant Board has also stopped disclosing unpaid fines and, to date, it remains unclear what efforts, if any, are made to collect on fines against landlords who are evicting tenants in bad faith. Similarly, Toronto's attempt to introduce a renoviction by-law represents only a marginal improvement as in practice, it may make cases harder for tenants to win while providing landlords additional tools to persuade adjudicators to order evictions.

Another example of this bureaucratic drift is the proposed RentSafe program changes, modeled after the city's DineSafe initiative. The plan would require landlords to post green, yellow, or red placards at building entrances, based on inspection results. While well-intentioned, this initiative misses the reality of tenants' lived experience. For our clients, who often have no choice but to live in aging buildings with chronic disrepair, pests, and failing infrastructure, colour-coded signs offer little improvement. At best, such policies reflect ignorance of working-class conditions; at worst, they demonstrate a detachment from the lived reality of tenants struggling to maintain safe, stable housing. What tenants really need is immediate and consistent enforcement of existing municipal Property Standards by-laws.

The drive by politicians and city officials to bureaucratize evictions and the landlord-tenant relationship continues to produce little to no benefit for tenants. At SCLS, we remain committed to a hands-on approach: holding landlords accountable, rigorously testing allegations at the LTB, and pursuing reviews and appeals of flawed decisions.



Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing (RGI)

Preserving tenancies for tenants who live in subsidized housing is one of our casework priorities. While we have a high rate of success resolving cancelled subsidy and incorrect calculation of rent issues on a case-by-case basis, significant systemic change is needed. For example, the *Residential Tenancies Act*, explicitly prevents the Landlord and Tenant Board from considering issues relating to cancelled subsidies and the calculation of rent. This puts RGI tenants facing eviction for arrears of rent at a serious disadvantage as the Board is required to accept at face value the amount the landlord claims as owing. Tenants are forced to pay arrears they may not owe or be evicted. In these cases, we try to resolve the issues directly with the housing provider or the City before the case gets to a hearing.

In the last year we had a high number of these types of cases from a new RGI housing provider, Circle Community LandTrust (Circle). The ownership of some 200 Toronto Community Housing scattered properties in our catchment area was transferred to Circle by the City. This was in response to a scathing report by Senator Art Eggleton declaring Toronto Community Housing a failed organization both financially and socially and calling for some properties to be transferred to non-profit housing providers. The transition has been rough.

We engaged a three part strategy to deal with these issues: push back with Circle, hold the City accountable for the proper administration of the RGI program, outreach to all the units that were transferred. We were able to assist all the tenants who contacted us to achieve a positive outcome. Circle has now made a number of changes in the way it administers the RGI program and sought our input regarding further improvements. We hope to develop an eviction prevention protocol with Circle similar to the one we developed with Toronto Community Housing many years ago.

In the face of countless challenges to their health and well-being, our clients continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience. Their fight for housing is also a fight for dignity and justice. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to building a future where safe, stable housing is not a headline, but a reality.

COMING BACK HOME

“Sarah” is an Indigenous senior living with significant mental health challenges who was evicted from her rent-geared-to-income housing after losing her rent subsidy and falling into rental arrears. After being evicted by the sheriff, “Sarah” was living in a crowded homeless shelter, where she faced numerous hardships, including several hospitalizations due to medical emergencies.

Our housing caseworker and community support worker worked closely with her former landlord and the City’s EPIC program to find a resolution. After sustained advocacy and coordination of supports, “Sarah’s” RGI subsidy was reinstated, her rent arrears were paid, and her tenancy was reinstated. She was able to return to her home and was reunited with her son and grandson who also live in the building - restoring both her housing stability and family connection. This outcome highlights the power of collaboration and persistence in achieving meaningful justice for our most vulnerable community members.

Immigration

TEAM REPORT

Change is now a regular part of Canada's immigration system. As the government sets new priorities, immigration laws and policies keep shifting.

Many people in our community have been surprised by sudden changes. For example, visa rules for some countries were removed and then brought back, sometimes only in special cases. This makes it harder to give clear answers to questions that used to be quite simple. To help, we've started informal legal drop-ins by partnering with organizations and agencies in different parts of our community.

Lower immigration numbers and stricter rules mean that many people who were building lives in Canada now have no clear path forward. The government also continues a "pause" on private refugee sponsorships, which used to be the only option for many refugees trying to reunite with family.

After Amnesty International released a report about the exploitation of migrant workers in Canada, our immigration team hosted a talk on anti-Black racism. Experts spoke about Canada's history, problems with the Temporary Foreign Worker program, and anti-Black racism in the immigration detention system. We're very thankful to the panelists for sharing their knowledge.

In our legal work, we continue to respond to the needs of our community. We work to expand our capacity and take on a broader range of immigration issues for financially eligible clients in our catchment area. This year, we have found ourselves responding to complex immigration matters, such as serious inadmissibility.

Our Immigration Team



Matthew Smith
Staff Lawyer



Janet Brakohiapa
Staff Lawyer



Kevin Laforest
Staff Lawyer

We received support from **Jennifer Wan**, Staff Lawyer, from the Toronto East Employment & Immigration Law Services program (TEELS).

Looking ahead, there may be big changes to the sponsorship system in 2026. But for now, things are getting slower. Family reunification is taking longer. In-Canada spousal sponsorships now take up to 36 months, and applications for family members of protected persons can take up to 50 months, about four years.

Despite the challenges and delays in Canada's immigration system, the strength and determination of our clients continue to inspire us. We remain committed to standing alongside our community, advocating for fairness, and helping families build safe, stable lives in Canada. We look forward to another productive and rewarding year working with the community here in Scarborough.

SUCCESS STORIES: REUNIFICATION & STABILITY

- **Reuniting a couple separated by crisis:** We helped a human rights activist from Afghanistan bring her husband to Canada after her first application was refused. She had immigration debt and other issues, but we worked through them and successfully argued that she was eligible for an important public policy exemption. Our arguments were accepted, and the application processed without delay. The couple are now reunited.
- **Helping a long-time resident gain status:** An older man who had lived in Canada for decades without status due to homelessness, language barriers, and some bad advice received a Temporary Resident Permit. We're now helping him apply for permanent residence.
- **Supporting a former minor refugee claimant:** A young man who was left in Canada as a minor claimant over 10 years ago struggled to get permanent residence due to personal and economic hardships. We helped him fix his application and now he's on track to apply for citizenship.
- **Reuniting stranded daughters with a refugee family:** A family sponsored through the "Group of 5" program had two daughters stuck in different countries. The family struggled with two visa offices who were no longer responding to their inquiries. We helped restart their applications, and both daughters are now safely in Canada.
- **Securing status for a child:** A young mother had one child born in Canada and another born abroad. Her daughter's immigration status was uncertain, causing stress. After four years of delays, we helped secure permanent residence for the daughter. Now both children have access to housing and education.
- **Overcoming medical inadmissibility:** A client with kidney disease was told her application for permanent residence might be refused due to high medical costs. A friend's kind and generous offer to donate a kidney provided a glimmer of hope. We collected and submitted medical evidence showing that, as long as the transplant could happen within 10 months, the projected five-year cost should be low enough to qualify her for a public policy exemption. IRCC accepted our arguments, and she is now eligible for permanent residence and treatment in Canada.

Income Maintenance

TEAM REPORT

Over this past year, the Income Maintenance team has experienced several internal changes as we have said goodbye to licensing candidates Em Pedota and Nishat Kazmi while welcoming Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy, who was recently admitted to the Ontario Bar after completing her LPP placement at SCLS.

Despite staffing changes, we are proud to report that we have continued to work tirelessly in our efforts to provide high quality legal services to the residents of East Scarborough, while remaining dedicated to community engagement, advocacy, and public legal education.

Our team has continued to see significant demand for help in appealing denial of disability status decisions under the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). In order to satisfy this demand, we often assist clients with this type of case via our, "ODSP Guided Appeal Preparation Program". This program allows our team to support clients in the collection and submission of additional medical evidence in order to bolster their cases and prepare them to represent themselves at their Social Benefits Tribunal hearings. Clients have continued to provide us with positive feedback regarding their high degree of satisfaction with this program.

We also, when required, continue to represent clients with complex disability appeals, medical review appeals, and applications for reconsideration.

Additionally, we have continued to assist and represent clients with other social assistance issues as well. These cases often involve Ontario Works (OW) or ODSP file suspensions or cancellations, issues associated with immigration status which impact social assistance benefits, and the creation and collection of overpayments.

Our Income Maintenance Team



Kinzi Ahmed
CLW



Josh Carson
Staff Lawyer



Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy
LPP Student/Staff Lawyer



Randy McLin
CLW

Former team members in 2024-2025:
James Polak, CLW
Nishat Kazmi,
Licensing Candidate/Staff Lawyer
Em Pedota,
Licensing Candidate/Staff Lawyer

ODSP Updates

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients saw a 2.8% rate increase to core benefits, effective July 1, 2025. This represents the lowest annual increase to ODSP rates since they were tied to inflation back in 2022. Unfortunately, this increase does not apply to other allowances like the Special Diet Allowance, which has remained unchanged for years now while food costs have continued to skyrocket.

OW Updates

Ontario Works (OW) rates remain frozen for the seventh year in a row with no adjustment for inflation. As Ontario household costs continue to rise year-over-year, this marks another year where the real value of income provided to OW recipients is effectively reduced.

Additionally, as of March 1, 2025, the delivery of all employment services for people receiving OW in Toronto has changed from being administered by the City of Toronto to Employment Ontario (EO). Due to this change, OW recipients will continue to receive support with community connections, personal safety, health and life skills from their City of Toronto OW caseworkers but for employment-specific training and support they will be assisted by an EO service provider.

Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)

The Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) finally launched in July 2025. This new federal benefit program is aimed at reducing poverty and improving the financial security of working-age people with disabilities.

The CDB will provide eligible recipients with a benefit amount of up to \$200.00 per month with a maximum annual amount of up to \$2,400.00. Applications for the CDB opened on June 20, 2025 and initial payments were made to eligible recipients in July 2025.

To qualify for the CDB:

- You must be between 18 to 64 years age;
- You must have been approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC);
- You and your spouse or common-law partner (if applicable) must have filed your 2024 federal income tax return;
- You must be a Canadian resident for income tax filing purposes, and
- You must be one of the following:
 - A Canadian citizen;
 - A permanent resident;
 - An individual registered or entitled to be registered under the *Indian Act*;
 - A protected person; or
 - A temporary resident who has lived in Canada throughout the previous 18 months.



Concerning Trends

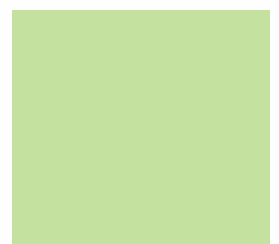
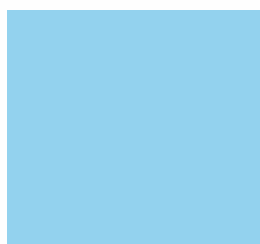
One of the more noticeable and disturbing trends that we have noticed over the past year has been the increase in cases involving large overpayments (+\$100,000.00). We have also seen an increase in files which has been closed on the basis that a client has been unable to provide OW or ODSP with information or documentation spanning long durations, sometimes of 10 years or more. These files present a huge stress and burden on our clients as the financial consequences they face can have a substantial impact on their future.

Community Development and Outreach

Our team members have continued to participate in many of the clinic's outreach and community development activities this past year. Some of these events include:

- East Scarborough Storefront Newcomer Fair,
- Agincourt Community Services Association (ACSA) Community Connect Drop-in,
- J'ouvert Play Day,
- Toronto Public Library - Coffee and Conversation Program at Cedarbrae Library,
- Afro-Carib Fest,
- PLE / Outreach at Ontario Works (OW) / Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) locations,
- National Black HIV / AIDS Awareness Day,
- Monthly legal drop-ins at East Scarborough Storefront, and
- Monthly legal drop-ins at Toronto Community Crisis / 211 / TAIBU.

While our entire team has made collective efforts to engage with the community over this past year, we want to acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary efforts and accomplishments of Kinzi Ahmed. She has been our clinic's community development lead over this past year. Kinzi's efforts to expand our Clinic's reach into the community by forming and nurturing connections with community members and partner organizations has been inspiring to us all.



Community Support

TEAM REPORT

Over the past year, the Community Support Team continued to see a significant number of clients who need social work support in addition to legal services. Common themes included a need for mental health supports including connections to psychiatry and counselling, housing search and application assistance, and navigating income supports.

The rising needs of our community far exceed the resources and programs which are available. At SCLS, we provide case management services for clients who have an active legal file. Our case management services are short-term and are provided alongside the legal services. Once the legal case has been closed, the social work file will typically be closed soon thereafter. A significant challenge we face is a lack of long-term case management services for clients who require more support beyond the resolution of their legal issue. There are limited programs offering long-term case management services, a long waitlist, and exclusionary criteria which create barriers in accessing these services. Often clients return to us multiple times as their legal issues are the result of a complex social system which does little to invest in the community and deal with the underlying social issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, food insecurity and more.

Over the last year, the Community Support Team assisted a number of clients who have had their Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) suspended due to a delay in filing their income taxes. This can create difficulties for clients in managing their expenses such as rent, utilities and groceries. Organizations such as ACSA Community Services and Woodgreen offer year round tax clinics which can assist eligible clients in filing their tax returns for current and previous years. Connecting with these organizations is crucial in helping clients avoid having their GIS suspended or reinstating their pension benefits.

This summer, with funding from the Government of Canada's Canada Summer Jobs Program, SCLS was able to take on a summer student, Natalie Misener. Natalie is a fourth year Bachelor of Social Work student. Natalie will also be completing her social work placement with SCLS during the school year and providing social work services to clients under the supervision of our social worker, Imbisat Chaudhry.

Our Community Support Team



Imbisat Chaudhry, R.S.W
Community Support Worker

Natalie Misener
BSW Student

Former team member in 2024-2025:

Tien Huynh, BSW Student

The Administration team has continued to operate with efficiency and effectiveness throughout 2025. This year, the team supported the onboarding of new staff and students, ensuring smooth transitions.

At reception, improvements to intake processes have helped us better serve clients with diverse needs. This work has been especially important as we experienced a notable influx of walk-in clients, with our client numbers growing. Despite this increased demand, the team has remained committed to ensuring each client is met with an efficient intake, timely information, and compassionate support.

The Administration team has also strengthened communication between staff and clients, ensuring accurate information flow and smooth coordination across the clinic. Looking ahead, our work will remain closely aligned with the clinic's 2025 strategic goals and new initiatives. This includes advancing equity by ensuring intake and referral processes are accessible to clients from diverse backgrounds, enhancing service delivery and streamlining operations, and supporting staff retention by maintaining consistent administrative systems that reduce barriers to their work.

With attention to detail and a strong commitment to the clinic's mission, the Administration team will continue to adapt to shifting client needs, provide consistent support to staff, and play a central role in advancing the clinic's overall strategic vision.

Administration

TEAM REPORT

Our Administration Team



Renee Griffin
Executive Director



Tapradi Ntogaiti
Administration Manager

Maggie Abebe
Admin Assistant

Valerie Johnbull
Admin Assistant

Lana Kroutskikh
Office Administrator



Meet our office pups, Syd and Andre, who keep our office paws-itively happy!

THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

Our clinic is governed by an independent Board of Directors, accountable to both the membership and the community we serve. The Board ensures the financial health of the organization, oversees adherence to bylaws and policies, and provides direction and supervision to the Executive Director. For 2024-25, our Board members included: Daniel Greanya (Chair), Andrea Ajurias (Vice Chair), Canice Mok (Treasurer), Sal Santos (Secretary), Sephria Amo, Kimberley Covey, Ultra Gautam, Neville Jacobs, Anees Munshi, Kris-Andre Smith, Steven Torresan, and Nadia Umadat.

We extend our sincere thanks to all our volunteer Board members, whose tireless efforts continue to support the clinic's mission and enrich the communities we serve.

SCLS in the Community

This year, our community development initiatives focused on deepening connections and expanding access to legal services across Scarborough. Highlights of our work included:

- **Monthly Drop-In Services:** We continued hosting monthly drop-ins at East Scarborough Storefront and began attending monthly drop-ins at TAIBU's Case Management Program. Through these partnerships we can meet our clients directly in their communities to provide legal services.
- **Toronto Public Library Partnership:** Our partnership with the Toronto Public Library continued to grow, ensuring that residents have ongoing access to legal resources and information.
- **CBJT Community Event:** On May 7, 2025 we brought together over 60 community members and organizations for an event to celebrate the success of the CBJT project and connect individuals to services. We also presented Neville Jacobs with our inaugural Racial Justice Advocacy Award which is awarded to a changemaker for racial equity. In the future, this award will be called the "Neville Jacobs Racial Justice Advocacy Award" and will be awarded annually to a member of our community.
- **Community Engagement and Presence:** We actively participated in a wide range of community events, including Homeless Connect's Community Connect event, Afro Carib Fest, National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Indigenous-focused events at Indigenous Friendship Centres, Emancipation Day celebrations, the J'ouvert Celebration, Storefront's Newcomer Fair and TAIBU's Back-to-School BBQ, among others. These engagements allowed us to connect directly with community members and share legal information,

Our community development and outreach efforts remain central to our mission of ensuring Scarborough residents have equitable access to legal information and services, while strengthening SCLS's visibility and presence within the community.



Finances

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2025

Complete audited financial statements are available.
Please contact us to request a copy.

SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2025

	General Fund	Legal Disbursement Fund	Capital Fund	Non-LAO Fund	2025 Total	2024 Total
ASSETS						
CURRENT						
Cash	\$ 4,799	\$ 1,495	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,294	\$ 41,601
Amounts receivable	-	181	-	29,400	29,581	3,610
Government remittances	14,778	148	-	-	14,926	13,459
Prepaid expenses	27,676	-	-	-	27,676	30,283
Interfund receivable (Note 3)	8,580	-	-	-	8,580	3,793
	55,833	1,824	-	29,400	87,057	92,746
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 4)	-	-	-	-	-	2,339
	\$ 55,833	\$ 1,824	\$ -	\$ 29,400	\$ 87,057	\$ 95,085
LIABILITIES						
CURRENT						
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 92,374	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,170	\$ 98,544	\$ 120,005
Deferred income (Note 5)	-	-	-	14,027	14,027	51,473
Interfund payable (Note 3)	-	-	-	8,580	8,580	3,793
	92,374	-	-	28,777	121,151	175,271
FUND BALANCE (DEFICIT)						
NET ASSETS	(36,541)	1,824	-	623	(34,094)	(80,186)
	\$ 55,833	\$ 1,824	\$ -	\$ 29,400	\$ 87,057	\$ 95,085

REVENUES

2024-25 Total: \$ 2,113,476

2025-26 Total: \$ 2,238,609

EXPENSES

2024-25 Total: \$2,116,968

2025-26 Total: \$ 2,192,517

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

We thank our primary funder, **Legal Aid Ontario**, for their continued support of our work. We also thank the **Law Foundation of Ontario**, **Government of Canada - Employment and Social Development Canada**, and the **South Asian Bar Association North America Foundation** for their funding over the last year.



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada



We Remember...



Improving conditions and ensuring dignity for those living in poverty is at the heart of all our work. As we continue to work towards these goals, we are inspired by the memory of Al Gosling who died in 2009 at the age of 82 when he became homeless after he was evicted from his subsidized apartment by Toronto Community Housing. As we reflect on the last year, we remember Mr. Gosling and all those who have died as a result of poverty and homelessness.



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