

Annual Report 2026



Scarborough
Community
Legal Services

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VISIT US AT



www.scarboroughcommunitylegal.ca



@sclsclinic



@sclsclinic

MISSION

We assist 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.

VISION

We envision a community where all people can access justice, have equality of opportunity, and live free from discrimination and poverty.

VALUES



Respect



Diversity, Inclusion & Equity



Accessibility



Expert & Caring Staff



Social Justice



Community



Collective Action



Excellence & Accountability

2026 BY THE NUMBERS



1260
Housing



874
Social
Assistance



203
Immigration



2647

New cases
were opened



254
Employment



56
Admin &
Other

14%



in social assistance and employment
cases since last year



2233

referrals were made to
community resources



54

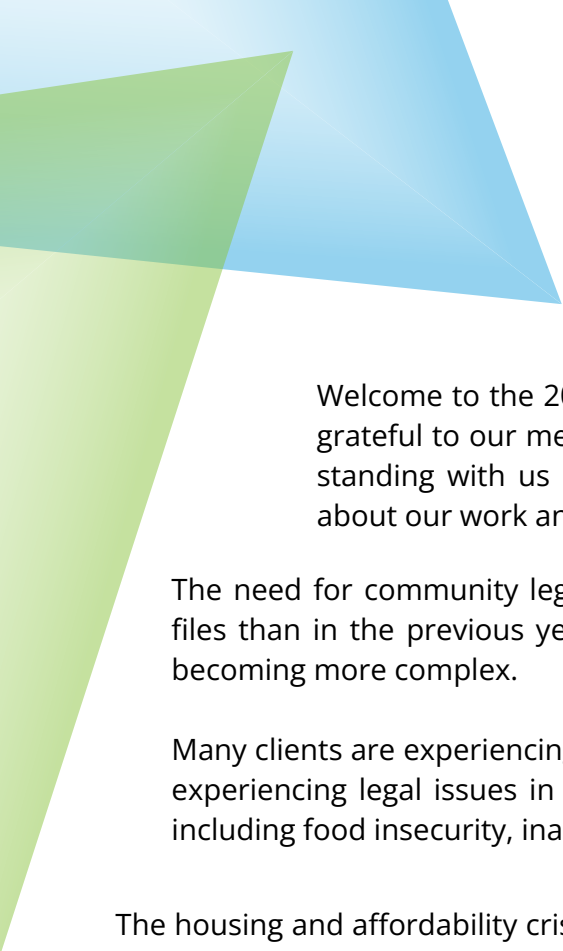
New community support
files were opened



We undertook
100+

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





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 2026 Annual Report of Scarborough Community Legal Services. We are grateful to our members, clients, community partners, funders, staff and volunteers for standing with us over the past year. We invite you to read this report to learn more about our work and the difference we are making together.

The need for community legal services continues to grow. This past year, we opened more case files than in the previous year. At the same time, the legal problems our clients bring to us are becoming more complex.

Many clients are experiencing deeper poverty and facing several challenges at once. We see clients experiencing legal issues in multiple areas of law, while also dealing with socio-economic issues including food insecurity, inadequate income, and precarious employment.

The housing and affordability crisis continues to have a major impact on Scarborough. Across Toronto, more than 12,000 people are experiencing homelessness, while more than 100,000 households are waiting for social housing. Many face wait times of years. These pressures are particularly serious for Scarborough tenants, where many people depend on older rental housing and have few affordable alternatives. Rising rents, low incomes and inadequate social assistance are leaving more people at risk of losing their homes.

These are not just statistics. They are the daily realities of our clients and are reflected in the growing number of requests for legal services coming to our clinic.

Scarborough Community Legal Services continues to make racial justice an important part of our work. We continue to apply an anti-racism lens to all new policies and to policies being reviewed as part of our regular policy review process. This helps us consider how our policies and practices can better support equity and address barriers faced by racialized communities.

This year, we once again hosted our annual Black History Month continuing legal education event, focusing on the impact of anti-Black racism in workplaces and employment systems. The panel explored legal protections under human rights and employment law, as well as advocacy strategies for addressing discrimination and advancing equity.

Our work is strengthened by our ongoing partnerships with Black-led community organizations, including TAIBU and Tropicana Community Services. We will continue to build sustained relationships and engage in mutual learning with racialized communities. We are committed to ensuring that community voices continue to shape our work and help drive meaningful, lasting change in the pursuit of justice for all.

We are incredibly grateful to our staff and students for their hard work, dedication and compassion. Every day, they help people navigate difficult legal problems and work to protect clients' rights. The past year has demanded adaptability and creativity, and our team has continually risen to the occasion.

We are grateful to our community partners and to all of our funders for their support. In particular, we thank Legal Aid Ontario, our primary funder, whose support makes it possible for us to provide legal services to people who could not otherwise afford them.

The challenges facing our community are significant, but so is the strength of the people and organizations that make up Scarborough. We are proud of what we have accomplished together and look forward to continuing this important work in the year ahead.

Thank you for your continued support of Scarborough Community Legal Services.

Daniel Greanya

Chair, Board of Directors

Renee Griffin

Executive Director

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 2025-26, our Board members included: Daniel Greanya (Chair), Andrea Ajurias (Vice Chair), Canice Mok (Treasurer), Sal Santos (Secretary), Tonie Ogilvie, Kimberley Covey, Uttra Gautam, Neville Jacobs, Anees Munshi, Kris-Andre Smith, Steven Torresan, Lydia Nembhard 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.

In particular, we want to extend our deepest thanks to Sal Santos for more than 30 years of dedicated service on our Board of Directors, during many of which he served as Treasurer. Sal retired from the Board this year after making an invaluable contribution to the leadership and governance of our organization. He was always an active and thoughtful participant at the table and a strong champion for our clients and our community. As a longtime Scarborough resident and member of the community, Sal brought a deep understanding of the people we serve to his work. We are incredibly grateful for his years of commitment, leadership and service, and we wish him only the very best.

2026 Community Champion Award

**IS PRESENTED TO
THE STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES IN SCARBOROUGH PROGRAM
CMHA TORONTO**

The Strengthening Communities in Scarborough Program of CMHA Toronto provides vital mental health, addiction, case management, and community supports to residents in Scarborough. Working directly within Toronto Community Housing communities, program staff provide ongoing support, connect residents with essential services, and help individuals navigate complex challenges affecting their health, housing, and well-being.

With this award, we celebrate and acknowledge the staff of the Strengthening Communities in Scarborough Program for their dedication, compassion, and commitment to supporting some of our community's most vulnerable residents. Their collaborative work with SCLS, particularly in supporting tenants facing eviction and housing instability, helps strengthen access to services and contributes to greater housing stability.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the residents of Scarborough!

2026 Neville Jacobs Racial Justice Advocacy Award

**IS PRESENTED TO
THE AYA BLACK JUSTICE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM
TROPICANA COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The Black Justice Navigator Program, delivered by Tropicana Community Services, provides culturally responsive support to Black adults involved with the criminal justice system. The program helps individuals navigate complex systems, connect with essential community resources and services, and access support that responds to the unique barriers experienced by Black community members within the justice system.

The Neville Jacobs Racial Justice Advocacy Award was established in 2025 to recognize individuals, programs, and organizations demonstrating a meaningful commitment to advancing racial justice and improving access to justice in our communities.

With this award, we celebrate and acknowledge Tropicana's Black Justice Navigator Program for its dedication to the Black community and for its commitment to addressing systemic barriers through culturally responsive, community-based support. This work contributes to greater access to services, stronger community connections, and a more equitable justice system.

Thank you for your continued commitment to advancing racial justice and supporting Black communities in Scarborough and beyond!



“Diya’s” Story

“Diya” lives in a Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) unit with her children. Her husband was charged with assault and although there was a no-contact order preventing him from returning to the unit, “Diya” feared for her family’s safety.

We helped her make a safety plan and assisted her to apply for a transfer to a new rental unit under the Special Priority Program for Victims of Domestic Abuse (“SPP”). Her application was denied because rent arrears were owing. Unbeknownst to her, her husband had not paid the rent for several months and thousands of dollars were owing at the time she made her SPP application. The SPP application couldn’t move forward unless she paid the arrears or made a repayment agreement.

The rent was based on her husband’s income, and TCHC refused to recalculate the rent based on her income alone unless he agreed to be removed from the lease. Her husband refused and “Diya” had no way to force him to do it. She couldn’t afford to keep up with the monthly rent, let alone pay the arrears on her income from social assistance. Because she couldn’t pay the monthly rent in full, she remained in a vicious cycle with new arrears accumulating each month, and she continued to be ineligible for the SPP.

We appealed to the City and asked that either TCHC be directed to recalculate the rent based on only “Diya’s” income, or approve the SPP application and allow her to pay only her portion of the arrears once she moved to a new unit. After our sustained advocacy, the City directed TCHC to recalculate “Diya’s” rent based on her income from social assistance and to do so retroactively to the date her husband stopped living in the unit. We also made a request to social assistance for funds to pay the arrears and the request was approved.

After more than six months of pushing the City and TCHC, “Diya’s” SPP application was finally approved and now she and her children can live more safely in a new and affordable home.

EMPLOYMENT

TEAM REPORT

Throughout 2026, the employment law team continued to advise and support workers across our catchment. Our goal was to uphold workers' rights across the many types of concerns they face. To that end, we continued to collaborate with inter-clinic working groups, as well as with the Toronto East Employment and Immigration Law Services ("TEEILS") program, receiving support and assistance from staff lawyers Richa Oza, Cosimo Morin, and John Wigle of Don Valley Community Legal Services.

We had a few changes to our employment team this year as well. We said goodbye to Richa Oza and Thoby King, while also welcoming 2 new additions: Melissa Rajaram and a new TEEILS lawyer, Kanika Gupta.

While we continued to see many of the same trends from prior years, 2026 came with unique difficulties where many workers faced prolonged uncertainty due to international trade disputes and its ripple effects. The majority of our clients continued to come from vulnerable backgrounds, such as having precarious immigration status, being in single-earner families, or having complex disabilities.

As a trend, the largest percentage of our employment law cases centered around employment dismissals, where the accuracy and fairness of termination and severance payments were often the core issue. Lost or missing wages and workplace human rights issues also made up a considerable portion of our cases.

New to the employment law scene this year was the implementation of the Employment Insurance Board of Appeal ("EI-BOA"), as of April 1, 2026. Taking over from the Social Security Tribunal – General Division, the new EI-BOA now hears all first-level appeals of Service Canada decisions on EI matters. Appeals are meant to be scheduled within 30 days of a Notice of Appeal being filed, and are to be heard in front of a 3-member panel comprised of representatives from the government, workers, and employers.

Our Employment Team



Melissa-Devi Rajaram
Staff Lawyer



Petrea McConvey
CLW



Randy McLin
CLW

We received support from Staff Lawyers, **Richa Oza**, **John Wigle**, **Cosimo Morin**, and **Kanika Gupta** from the Toronto East Employment & Immigration Law Services program (TEEILS)

Early on we have identified that the new EI-BOA may present some communication barriers for our clients. Currently, the EI-BOA communicates with appellants and representatives using the Canada Post Connect (“CPC”) secure messaging portal or by mail. The CPC portal can be tricky to navigate and saving copies of messages for your records is not currently available. Document submissions for individuals who do not have access to consistent or reliable internet is currently limited to mail or attending Service Canada locations. This can serve as a barrier for individuals living in remote communities or who lack access to technology. That being said, the EI-BOA website is bright and user-friendly. With large fonts and minimal visual noise, it uses a layout that can be easy to use. It contains how-to guides, general information, access to relevant forms, and links to decision databases. Overall, the implementation of the EI-BOA was the result of a decade of advocacy from multiple workers’ rights groups, and we look forward to seeing how this specialized tribunal can increase access to justice.

To highlight a win for workers, our TEEILS partner, Richa Oza, was counsel for the appellant in *Bokhari v. Top Medical Transportation Services*, 2026 ONSC 1073. This was a request for Judicial Review to the Divisional Court, from a decision of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (“HRTTO”). In his HRTTO claim, Mr. Bokhari alleged that his employer discriminatorily fired him due to an ankle injury. The HRTTO subsequently issued a Notice of Intent to Dismiss (“NOID”), claiming he had not made a sufficient connection between his issue and the Code. The HRTTO did not hold a hearing and instead summarily dismissed Mr. Bokhari’s claim. His reconsideration request was also dismissed.

In its decision, the Court decided that the HRTTO’s decisions were unreasonable. First, the Court noted that whether Mr. Bokhari’s injury was a disability under the Code was a question that should have been decided after a merits hearing. Specifically, the Court noted that the HRTTO’s approach deprived applicants of the Code’s protection and created a barrier to accessing a remedy under the Code. The Court also called attention to the Code’s quasi-constitutional status, its objective of eliminating discrimination, and the HRTTO’s important role in Ontario’s human rights scheme.

This decision is a great win for workers, human rights claimants and advocates, and comes at a crucial time. There has been an identifiable trend of the HRTTO increasingly scrutinizing claims for jurisdictional issues. More and more claimants receive NOIDs from the HRTTO, indicating an informal “raising of the bar” for what constitutes discrimination under the Code. Human rights claims are complex enough as is, particularly where the respondent is someone’s current or recent employer. These claims can often elicit painful emotions in claimants, distinct from the fear and unease that typically comes with litigation. The NOIDs themselves create an additional barrier in access to justice, in a forum that is meant to be specially geared toward dealing with human rights issues. In a tribunal that is full of individuals who represent themselves, the hope is that the Court’s ruling in *Bokhari* can be used to satisfy NOIDs, or more ideally, decrease how easily they are issued.

As we enter 2027, 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.

HOUSING

TEAM REPORT

Over the past year, our housing team has continued to assist a high volume of tenants with their housing issues. With rising rents and the increasing cost of living, many tenants are struggling to keep up with their rent and facing the possibility of eviction.

Affordability continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing our clients. At the same time, changes to Ontario's housing laws are creating new challenges for tenants trying to understand and protect their rights. Our housing team remains committed to helping tenants stay in their homes, understand their rights and access the legal help they need.

Changes to Tenant Law

Over the past year, there have been significant changes to the laws governing tenants and landlords in Ontario. Bill 60, the *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025*, received Royal Assent on November 24, 2025, and made a number of changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. Some of these changes have already taken effect, while others will come into effect over time.

Our Housing Team



Janet Brakohiapa
Staff Lawyer



Melissa-Devi Rajaram
Staff Lawyer



Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy
Staff Lawyer

Tracey Yu
Staff Lawyer



Petrea McConvey
CLW



Linda Mitchell
CLW



Heather Butt
CLW

Former team members
in 2025-2026:

Staff Lawyers:
**Kevin Laforest &
Thoby King**

CLW: **Amala Drijpal**

While some of these changes were intended to address delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (“LTB”), several of them make it more difficult for tenants to defend their homes. This is particularly concerning for the low-income and vulnerable tenants we serve, who may already face significant barriers in accessing legal help.

For example, as of July 1, 2026, tenants have only 15 days to ask the LTB to review an order, rather than the previous 30 days. As of September 21, 2026, tenants facing eviction for unpaid rent have also been given less time to respond to an N4 notice before a landlord can file an eviction application with the LTB. The rules also make it more difficult for tenants to raise certain claims about maintenance and their rights at an eviction hearing unless they can first pay 50% of the arrears claimed.

There have also been changes to the rules around landlords taking back units for their own use, persistent late payment of rent, agreements to end a tenancy and requests to delay an eviction. Some of these changes may have a significant impact on tenants who are already struggling to maintain their housing.

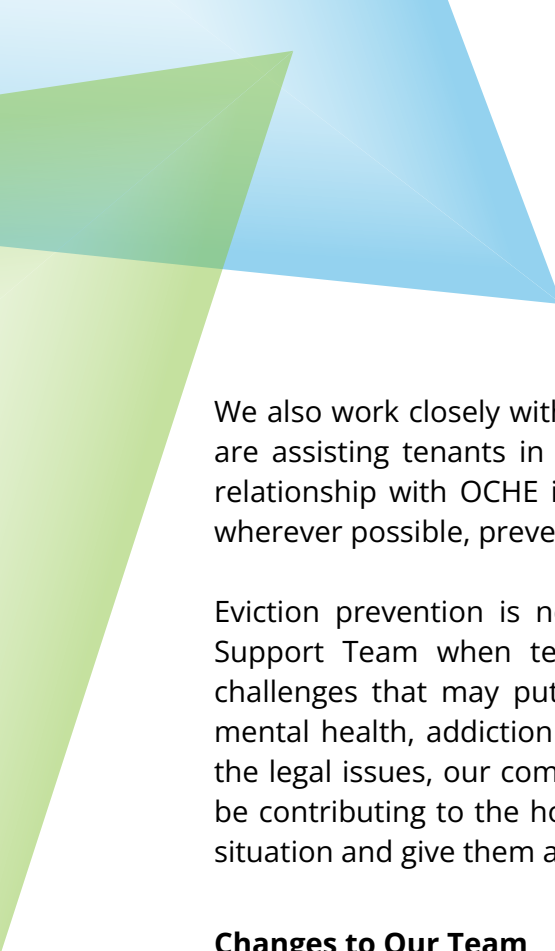
We are particularly concerned about the impact these changes will have on access to justice. For a tenant who is already living on a very limited income, being required to pay a significant amount of money before being able to raise a tenant’s rights issue at an eviction hearing may mean that they simply cannot address these issues. Shorter timelines can also make it more difficult for tenants to get legal advice and take the steps necessary to protect themselves.

It will take time to see the full impact of these changes. As cases move forward, we expect that new legal issues will arise and that there may be opportunities to challenge some of the changes through individual cases and broader systemic advocacy. In the meantime, our housing team will continue to work with tenants to understand these new rules and help them navigate an increasingly complicated system.

Protecting Subsidized Housing

Preserving the tenancies of people living in subsidized housing remains an important priority for our housing team. Many of our clients living in rent-geared-to-income (“RGI”) housing face eviction because of disputes about rent, subsidies or the amount they are said to owe.

These cases can be particularly difficult because of limitations in the Residential Tenancies Act. The LTB generally cannot consider disputes about the cancellation of a subsidy or the calculation of rent when deciding an eviction application. As a result, an RGI tenant facing eviction for rent arrears can be placed at a serious disadvantage.



We have had success resolving many of these cases by working directly with housing providers and the City before a matter reaches a hearing. Our goal is to make sure that errors are corrected and that tenants do not lose their homes because of an incorrect calculation or cancelled subsidy that should not have been cancelled.

We also work closely with the Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity (“OCHE”) when we are assisting tenants in social housing who are facing eviction because of rent arrears. Our relationship with OCHE is an important part of our work to help tenants resolve issues and, wherever possible, prevent the loss of their housing.

Eviction prevention is not only about legal issues. We regularly work with our Community Support Team when tenants are facing eviction because of behavioural issues or other challenges that may put their tenancy at risk. Many of these tenants are also dealing with mental health, addiction or other significant challenges. While our housing law team work on the legal issues, our community support workers can assist with the non-legal issues that may be contributing to the housing problem. This combined approach can help stabilize a tenant's situation and give them a better chance of maintaining their housing.

Changes to Our Team

This year also brought some changes to our housing team. In May, we were very sad to say goodbye to one of our strongest tenant advocates, Kevin LaForest. Kevin worked with the clinic for six years and assisted a large number of tenants in our community. He left SCLS to continue his excellent work in the clinic system. We are sure that Kevin will be greatly missed by the many tenants he helped during his time with us.

We were also sorry to say goodbye to Thoby King and Amala Drijpal this year. Thoby and Amala have both moved on to private law firms and we wish them both well in their future careers.

While we said goodbye to some members of our team, we were pleased to welcome several new staff members. In April, Melissa Rajaram and Heather Butt joined SCLS as permanent members of the team. In June, we also welcomed Tracey Yu to the team on a contract.

We are very pleased to have Melissa, Heather and Tracey join our team. Each brings valuable experience and a strong commitment to helping people in our community. Their arrival has strengthened our ability to respond to the growing need for housing services in Scarborough.

Despite the many challenges facing tenants, our clients continue to show remarkable resilience. As we look ahead, our housing team will continue to work alongside tenants, housing providers, community organizations and other allies to prevent evictions and protect housing wherever we can.



“Norma’s” Story

“Norma” is a vulnerable senior struggling with complex health issues who lives in a Toronto Community Housing (“TCHC”) rent geared to income unit with her grandchildren. After her housing subsidy was cancelled “Norma” couldn’t afford to pay the market rent and fell into arrears. Her file was referred to the Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity (“OCHE”) to try to resolve the rent issue. While the OCHE worker helped the family to get most of the documents they needed to get back their subsidy “Norma’s” family needed a lot of support and, unfortunately, the subsidy wasn’t reinstated.

TCHC then filed an eviction application at the Landlord and Tenant Board claiming arrears of over \$30,000 based on the market rent. In these types of cases, because the Landlord and Tenant Board doesn’t have jurisdiction to deal with issues relating to cancelled subsidies, tenants must pay the full arrears claimed or be evicted.

We began helping “Norma” only a short time before the hearing date. We were able to obtain an adjournment to give us time to try to resolve the subsidy issue with TCHC. Through the extraordinary collective efforts of our community support team and housing team, we helped the family obtain all the necessary documents requested by the landlord but TCHC still refused to follow the OCHE report and the City’s directive to reinstate the subsidy. With the new hearing date only days away, and on the eve of a long weekend, we successfully persuaded the City to direct TCHC to reinstate the subsidy before the hearing.

The subsidy was reinstated and the arrears were reduced to less than \$1000. “Norma” was able to make arrangements to pay back the arrears. Now she and her grandchildren can continue to live in their RGI unit, in an affordable and sustainable tenancy.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

TEAM REPORT

This year the Social Assistance team has continued our tireless efforts to provide high quality legal advice, assistance and representation to our clients while also remaining dedicated to community engagement, advocacy, and public legal education. This report provides an overview of some of our team's key areas of work and highlights some of the developments and trends that we have noted from this past year.

Trends

This year, we continued to see significant demand for help in appealing denial of disability status decisions under Ontario Disability Support Program ("ODSP"). In order to meet this demand, we often assist clients with this type of case via our 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 then prepare them to represent themselves at their Social Benefits Tribunal hearing. Clients have continued to provide us with positive feedback regarding their high degree of satisfaction with this program. However, when required, we continue to represent clients with complex disability appeals, medical review appeals, and applications for reconsideration in ODSP eligibility matters.

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

Over the last year, we have also noticed several trends including:

- An increase in cases involving discretionary items or benefits under OW/ODSP;
- An increase in the number of cases in which clients have (1) not received an official decision letter and/or (2) an internal review decision letter from OW/ODSP, despite this

Our Social Assistance Team



Josh Carson
Staff Lawyer



Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy
Staff Lawyer



Kinzi Ahmed
CLW



Randy McLin
CLW

being required under the legislation. This means the recipient cannot effectively understand decisions made by OW/ODSP staff which impact their benefits; and

- We continue to receive requests for assistance in cases involving large overpayments (+\$100,000.00) and files which have been closed on the basis that a client has been unable to provide OW/ODSP with information spanning durations of almost 10 years or more. These files present a huge stress and burden on the clients as the financial consequences they face will often have a substantial impact on their future.

ODSP & OW Updates

ODSP recipients saw a 1.9% rate increase to core benefits, effective July 1, 2026. This represents the lowest annual increase to ODSP rates since they were tied to inflation in 2022. Continued inadequate ODSP rates place additional stressors on our clients given increasing food and rent costs during this time of economic and political uncertainty.

Ontario Works ("OW") rates remain unchanged for an eighth 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.

OW/ODSP Eligibility Changes for People with Temporary or No Immigration Status

On August 13, 2026, the Ontario government made changes to the rules about social assistance eligibility that are likely to affect people with temporary or no immigration status in Canada. These new rules have limited who is eligible for OW or ODSP. After these changes came into effect, generally a person without status or a person who has temporary status in Canada, is not eligible for social assistance unless they have filed a refugee claim or they have sent in an application for permanent residence. Additionally, a person with an enforceable removal order is also not eligible unless they have made an application for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H&C application).

This is a particularly important issue because some people with precarious immigration status cannot be removed to their country of origin for reasons beyond their control and cannot get work permits to support themselves. The Ontario government has left these highly vulnerable people with minimal options to survive. As we move forward under these new rules, our team will be carefully monitoring how OW and ODSP staff apply these rules to our client's eligibility based upon their immigration status.

Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)

The Canada Disability Benefit ("CDB") is a new federal benefit program that 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 \$204.20 per month for the period of July 2026 to June 2027.

Over the coming year, we will continue to monitor these trends and respond to the changing needs of our community. We remain committed to providing high-quality legal services, advocacy, and support to help our clients access the income and benefits they need.

IMMIGRATION

TEAM REPORT

This has been an extremely difficult year for all newcomers involved in the immigration system. There have been sweeping changes to many of the immigration applications and processes that are most needed by low-income newcomers in our community. While these changes have often been officially described as “strengthening” and “stabilizing”, the results we have seen are quite the opposite.

This year we have seen changes to the processing times for applications for permanent residence based on humanitarian grounds (“H&Cs”). Ordinary expected processing time shifted suddenly from about 2-3 years to a shocking 10-year expected processing time.

We also have seen unpredictability in the processing time for protected persons, many of whom are still dealing with the fallout of the circumstances that drove them to make their claim in the first place. They are now also finding themselves separated from family abroad for many years without any indication when they may see their spouses or young children again.

We have also seen a sudden push to restrict temporary residents. A policy decision that has derailed many students or temporary workers and has swept up individuals requiring humanitarian discretion under a temporary resident permit program. This has done real harm to ordinary families or newlyweds trying to be together with their loved ones pending the outcome of the permanent residence (“PR”) applications.

Bill C-12 passed this year and injected yet another complicated layer of prohibitions and exceptions onto the process of making a refugee claim in Canada. We have seen the results of these changes. In large numbers, claimants have been denied full access to the refugee protection division, which was built and developed over many years to fairly assess refugee claims. Claimants often now find themselves in limbo, waiting for word, navigating a new uncertain process.

Our Immigration Team



Matthew Smith
Staff Lawyer



Janet Brakohiapa
Staff Lawyer

Former team member in
2025-2026:

Kevin Laforest
Staff Lawyer

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

We have also seen the same results in immigration decision-making. The number of applications to the Federal Court of Canada to review immigration decisions has ballooned. The Chief Justice of the Federal Court has recently described an “unprecedented increase” in immigration applications to the Court. They are now on track to receive 33,000 immigration filings this year. Without any other venue for meaningful oversight, or even any reliable way to communicate with immigration officers who make these decisions, the Court has unfortunately become the only way to address unreasonable, unlawful, unjust, unfounded, and unfair decisions. We fear that all the other recent changes described above do nothing to solve these issues and will only increase the Federal Court backlog.

We have done our best to inform the community about the recent changes to timelines, application processes, and eligibility. We have arranged education sessions with both front-line settlement workers and community members to provide information about how people might protect themselves from these immigration changes or, in some cases, become part of the larger legal challenge to the changes themselves.

Following our Black History Month panel last year covering the struggles of temporary foreign workers, we worked to move that theoretical discussion into practical action. We consulted with our employment team to build knowledge of the legislation affecting temporary foreign workers, including the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (EPFNA).

We expanded our regular services to include applications for Open Work Permits for Vulnerable Workers (VOWP). These applications are an imperfect but vitally important protection for temporary foreign workers in Canada. When approved, these applications can permit short term access to an open work permit. This temporary open permit also provides stability for people who have found themselves victims of an abusive workplace.

We are pleased to report that we had two successful applications under this program in the relatively short time since we started. We assisted a live-in caregiver to recover her reputation with Canadian immigration after she was misled and then arbitrarily dismissed by her employer. We also assisted a local factory worker whose employer ignored the rules of employment in Ontario and put their employee's health, and his future in Canada, in serious jeopardy.

This year we helped clients navigate complicated legal issues arising in many different parts of the immigration system. We have advised and represented on matters as simple as advice on glitches with the PR application portal, and as complicated as inadmissibility to Canada on criminal or national security grounds. We are also representing clients this year on files at the Federal Court and the Immigration and Refugee Board, though processes are delayed and results are still forthcoming.

Finally, there were some changes to our immigration team this year. We lost the invaluable help of staff lawyer Kevin Laforest who provided part-time support for our immigration team for many years. He is already sorely missed at our clinic. We know he continues to do good work for low-income people in other spaces in the clinic system, and we wish him all the best.



IMMIGRATION SUCCESS STORIES

Stabilizing status for a family: We very recently received approval in principle on two linked humanitarian and compassionate applications for minor children from the United States. When the biological mother of the children was no longer able to care for them, a family member from Canada found herself faced with a decision to either bring the children back to Canada with her or abandon them to the foster care system in the US. We guided the family member here through the process of obtaining official parental authority in Canada and helped her submit applications for status.

H&C Application for a single mother: We were also very grateful to receive approval in principle on a humanitarian and compassionate application this year for a woman who has been working hard in Canada for many years while also struggling to raise her young son with high medical needs. She is on track now for stability for the first time in decades.

Helping a Caregiver: We successfully applied for reconsideration of a refused PR application in the caregiver pathway after a client unsuccessfully requested reconsideration twice on her own. We were able to show that IRCC was incorrectly rejecting her education credentials as insufficient. That client's application for PR restarted after our submissions.

TRP Approval: We received a temporary resident permit approval for an elderly man who had his hopes for PR interrupted by a mistake over 20 years ago that led to minor criminal charges. This applicant is now on track to finally settle his criminal issues with Canadian authorities and apply for permanent residence as a long-term TRP holder.

Obtaining Citizenship: We helped a client navigate citizenship prohibitions on an odd procedural matter that threatened to stall his eligibility for citizenship indefinitely. After our submissions, the citizenship process restarted, and our client was granted citizenship shortly afterwards.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

TEAM REPORT

In 2026 we expanded our community support resources when our social worker, Imbisat Chaudhry, joined us on a full time basis until March 2027. We also hosted a successful BSW student placement, Natalie Misener, who was subsequently hired on a contract to provide support to the Community Support Team and assist with other clinic duties.

The Community Support Team often provides social work services related to eviction prevention. For example, over the last year we continued to see a significant number of cases involving clients with hoarding behaviours facing eviction. We support clients in accessing help through the VHA's Safer Spaces Program. The program is very successful in preventing evictions, however, due to resource constraints this program has an approximate wait time of 6 months or more.

In 2026, the team had a significant number of successes. For example, we assisted a single mother of a child with a disability who had been living in Canada for over 20 years without status. She received an approval in principle for her humanitarian and compassionate application after 4 and a half years and was subsequently approved for an open work permit. Following the changes in her immigration status, the community support team assisted her in applying for various social assistance programs for her child including ACSD, the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), and more. The team also supported her with her housing application and the client was able to move out of the shelter into her new rent-geared-to-income unit.

In another case, we assisted a woman who had been living with her abuser for over 30 years. The community support team assisted her in applying for housing through the City of Toronto under the Special Priority Program ("SPP") and was able to navigate an initial denial. Her SPP application was approved and she is now currently looking for her own unit with a newfound hope for her future.

Over the coming year, the Community Support team hopes to continue expanding its work and finding new ways to support and connect with members of our community.

Our Community Support Team



Imbisat Chaudhry, R.S.W, MSW
Community Support Worker



Natalie Misener, R.S.W
Community Support Worker

This September we also welcomed Giselle Naser, a BSW student at Toronto Metropolitan University

ADMINISTRATION

TEAM REPORT

The Administration team plays a vital role in supporting the work of Scarborough Community Legal Services and ensuring that community members can access the services and supports they need.

As the first point of contact for many individuals seeking assistance, our team helps create a welcoming and accessible experience for clients, community partners, and members of the public. Whether responding to phone calls, emails, walk-ins, or referrals, the Administration team helps connect people to appropriate services while ensuring that inquiries are handled efficiently and compassionately.

Over the past year, we have continued to see a steady increase in walk-ins, referrals, and requests for intake services. Reception staff work closely with clients to gather preliminary information, assess the nature of inquiries, schedule intakes where appropriate, and provide referrals to other community agencies and resources when services fall outside the clinic's mandate.

As demand for legal and social support services continues to grow, the Administration team remains committed to ensuring that clients receive timely assistance and clear information about available options.

In addition to managing front-line inquiries, the Administration team provides direct administrative support to the clinic's Social Assistance practice. Administrative staff regularly assist clients with organizing forms, preparing affidavits and other supporting documentation, obtaining records, and facilitating communication between clients and legal workers.

Our Administration Team



Renee Griffin
Executive Director



Tapradi Ntogaite
Administration Manager

Maggie Abebe
Admin Assistant

Lana Kroutskikh
Office Administrator

Valerie Johnbull
Admin Assistant

Natalie Misener
Community Support Worker

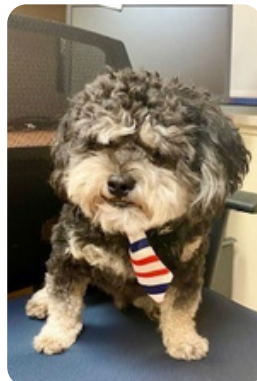
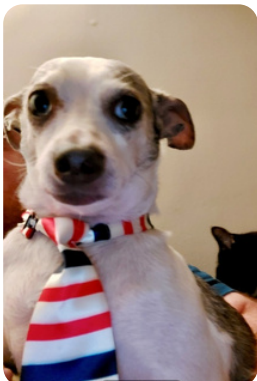
These supports are particularly important for clients navigating Ontario Disability Support Program (“ODSP”) matters, many of whom face significant barriers related to income insecurity, housing instability, health challenges, language barriers, or limited access to technology. By helping clients gather and organize the documentation needed to advance their cases, the Administration team contributes meaningfully to positive client outcomes and access to justice.

Beyond client-facing services, the Administration team continued to support the operational needs of the clinic throughout the year. This included onboarding new staff and students, coordinating office operations, facilities management, information technology, procurement, records management, and administrative systems. The team also supported internal committees, organizational reporting requirements, governance activities, and a variety of projects designed to improve efficiency and service delivery. While much of this work occurs behind the scenes, it is essential to maintaining a well-functioning organization and enabling legal and support staff to focus on serving clients.

The summer months presented additional operational demands as the clinic continued to experience high service volumes while staff took well-earned vacation leave. We were pleased to welcome Natalie Misener through the Canada Summer Jobs Program. Natalie provided valuable support at reception during this busy period, helping to maintain service continuity, respond to client inquiries, and ensure that front-line operations continued to run smoothly.

Throughout the year, the Administration team also worked to adapt to changing organizational needs and increasing service demands. As the clinic continues to grow and evolve, administrative processes and systems must also evolve to support staff, improve client experiences, and enhance overall service delivery. The team's flexibility, responsiveness, and commitment to continuous improvement have been instrumental in helping the organization navigate these changes.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that demand for legal and social support services will remain high. The Administration team remains committed to providing a welcoming and accessible first point of contact for community members, delivering responsive support to clients and staff, and strengthening the operational foundations that allow the clinic to fulfill its mission. We are proud to support the important work of SCLS and look forward to continuing to serve our community in the year ahead.



Meet Syd and Andre, our unofficial wellness team, specializing in smiles, tail wags and good company!

IN THE COMMUNITY

This year, our community development initiatives focused on strengthening community partnerships, expanding access to legal information and services:

Community Partnerships and Referral Pathways: We continued strengthening relationships with organizations to connect clients with services. Through our partnership with TAIBU, SCLS established an official referral pathway to TAIBU's primary care team helping clients access important health and community supports.

Community Outreach: We continued our extensive community outreach activities including hosting regular learning events at the Toronto Public Library and Toronto Employment and Social Services locations and attending our monthly drop-ins at East Scarborough Storefront and TAIBU.

Black History Month Programming: Our Black History Month programming continued to provide an important opportunity for community education and discussion. This year's event focused on employment law and anti-Black racism and attracted more than 90 participants, making it one of our key community education initiatives of the year.

Public Legal Education: Learning events helped community members and organizations navigate changing laws and legal processes. Our public legal education pamphlets and printed resources were comprehensively reviewed and updated, ensuring that community members accessing SCLS had current legal information and resources available to them.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Work: Through our Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Committee, we continued advancing anti-racism education. This included Black History Month programming and a social media campaign highlighting Black-led organizations, legal victories affecting Black communities, historical milestones and issues affecting racialized communities.

While our entire team's collective efforts to engage with the community have again exceeded expectations this past year, we want to acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of Kinzi Ahmed, Linda Mitchell, and Imbisat Chaudhry in leading our efforts to expand our Clinic's reach into the community by forming and nurturing connections with community members and partners.

Our community development and outreach efforts remain central to our mission. Through public legal education, community partnerships, referral pathways and anti-racism initiatives, we continue to strengthen SCLS's connections within Scarborough and respond to the diverse and evolving needs of the communities we serve.



FINANCES

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2026

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

SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES							
Statement of Financial Position							
March 31, 2026							
	General Fund	Legal Disbursement Fund	Capital Fund	Non-LAO Fund	2026 Total	2025 Total	
ASSETS							
CURRENT							
Cash	\$ 4,424	\$ 3,923	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,347	\$ 6,294	
Amounts receivable	2,220	-	-	-	2,220	29,581	
Government remittances	11,479	51	-	-	11,530	14,926	
Prepaid expenses	26,793	-	-	-	26,793	27,676	
Interfund receivable (Note 3)	-	-	-	5,930	5,930	8,580	
	\$ 44,916	\$ 3,974	\$ -	\$ 5,930	\$ 54,820	\$ 87,057	
LIABILITIES							
CURRENT							
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 94,566	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 94,566	\$ 98,545	
Deferred income	-	-	-	-	-	14,027	
Interfund payable (Note 3)	5,930	-	-	-	5,930	8,580	
	100,496	-	-	-	100,496	121,152	
FUND BALANCE (DEFICIT)							
NET ASSETS	(55,580)	3,974	-	5,930	(45,676)	(34,095)	
	\$ 44,916	\$ 3,974	\$ -	\$ 5,930	\$ 54,820	\$ 87,057	

REVENUES

2024-25 Total: \$ 2,238,609

2025-26 Total: \$ 2,251,566

EXPENSES

2024-25 Total: \$2,192,517

2025-26 Total: \$ 2,238,707

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 of North America** for their funding over the last year.



Government of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada

What our clients are saying...

"From our very first conversation, you treated me with kindness, patience, and respect. You carefully reviewed my documents, explained the legal process in a way that I could understand, answered my questions thoughtfully, and consistently followed up. Your guidance gave me confidence during one of the most stressful periods I have experienced. Thanks to your dedication, my housing situation was clarified, my rent was corrected, and I gained a much better understanding of my rights and responsibilities. I am truly grateful for the time and effort you invested in helping me."

"More people need to be aware of the help at your clinic. You went above and beyond with more help than anyone before. You were very patient and kind to me."

"Without your help I would be homeless now."

"Without your help and determination we could never have gone as far as we did and for this I thank you!"

"When I faced the threat of homelessness I felt incredibly stressed, hopeless and scared. From our initial meetings, you and your colleagues have treated me with respect, dignity and compassion, gave me encouragement, and assurances of unwavering support. With the help of your team's coaching, research, constant 2-way communications with me, and representation, you did not simply change my life but in essence, gave me back my life."

"Without the clinic, I would never have received the help I needed."

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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