



Hamilton Community Legal Clinic  
Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton

# Annual General Report

## Justice:

The Spirit of Belonging.

# 2023





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## Our Vision

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic will be recognized and valued as an important provider of poverty law services and advocate for social change.

## Our Mission

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic is a community based not for profit agency whose diverse team of caring professionals and volunteers provides legal services to low income individuals and communities to promote access to justice and to improve quality of life. We do this through: summary advice and referral, representation, community development, law reform and public legal education.

## Our Values

We are committed to the empowerment of individuals and the communities within Hamilton by upholding the following values as we engage in our mission: trust, respect and integrity; equity, diversity and inclusion; leadership, excellence and innovation.

# Board Members

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## 2022-2023

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- Anne Patenaude-Dlugosz
- David Quezada
- Deepa Dayal
- Hina Saeed
- Kelly Barker
- Kingsley Audu
- Kris Noakes
- Lisa Feinberg
- Sandi Bell
- Simon Lebrun

## 2023-2024

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- David Quezada
- Hina Saeed
- Kelly Barker
- Kingsley Audu
- Kris Noakes
- Lisa Feinberg
- Simon Lebrun

A big thank you to Anne Patenaude-Dlugosz, Deepa Dayal, and Sandi Bell for all you have done. Wishing you all the best in your new chapter!



# Message from the Chair, Board of Directors

Over the last year, the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic continues to respond to the emerging legal and social justice needs for vulnerable and low income individuals in our community.

There is an increased demand for legal support in the areas of housing, income, employment, and immigration legal services. Further, the collective impact of a housing shortage, low social assistance rates, inflation and immigration means our services are needed more than ever before.

In addition, our work to address systemic discrimination and hate towards Indigenous, Black, racialized and 2SLGBTQ community members through our outreach leads and work with No Hate in the Hammer's Anti-Hate Toolkit is making an impact.

We are excited to continue to advance our work with our new strategic plan, which will continue to deepen the seeds of justice that we have worked to plant within our community over the last 12 years. To do so, an increase in resources and investments will be required.

As you review this year's Annual General Report, I hope you are provided with an opportunity to reflect on our amazing team, our commitment to justice, and collaboration.

Hina Saeed  
Chair, Board of Directors



# Special Tribute

## lead·er·ship

### **/ˈlɛdərˌʃɪp/ noun**

1. The action of leading a group of people or an organization.

"Different styles of leadership"

2. Sandi Bell & Deepa Dayal



Community governance is a cornerstone of legal clinics. We don't take this critical oversight role for granted. Our success depends on committed volunteers, representative of the diverse communities we serve, who direct the use of limited resources to meet legal needs unique to Hamilton. Our Board of Directors equals 'Access to Justice'.

This year we honour two long serving volunteers who epitomize the qualities that define an exemplary Board member. It is bittersweet to say good-bye to Sandi Bell and Deepa Dayal on the completion of their terms.

Deepa joined the Hamilton Mountain Legal & Community Services Board in 2003 and Sandi followed in 2004. They both brought a profound dedication to social justice, community service and improving the lives of people in this City. They share a holistic, collaborative, rights-based approach to the work of the Board, with an emphasis on equity and belonging.

Both Deepa and Sandi helped steward the amalgamation process of the City's three clinics in 2010. They were members of the founding board of HCLC, Sandi in the role of Chair and Deepa secretary and then Vice-Chair. Their ongoing contribution and historic knowledge were deemed so critical, that their terms on the Board were unanimously extended three years ago.

We will celebrate these amazing builders of our Clinic at the AGM. Please take the opportunity to thank Deepa and Sandi for their tireless efforts to improve access to justice in Hamilton. They have set a standard of leadership that is an exemplar for the clinic system. We are deeply indebted. And while sad that they are leaving the role, their legacy shall continue to inspire us. Bah mah pii go wob min. (Until we meet again). Chi Miigwetch! Thank you! Merci Beaucoup! Nia:wen!

# Message from the Executive Director and Legal Director

After a year of working at the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, I am in awe of the incredibly dedicated social justice staff team at the clinic but this is something that Mike, our legal director has witnessed for in excess of thirty years.

As we navigated the post-pandemic environment over the last year, we experienced internal changes. We were troubled when the tribunals chose not go back to in-person hearings, leaving endless delays that have harmed folks in many ways. We are witnesses to the housing crisis; we see and hear the desperation of people trying to stay housed and those left with no housing options at all.

Our clinic has responded to over thirty-four thousand initial enquiries for services this year. With a team of thirty-five, we are busy.

Our support staff are the 'first responders' at the clinic in that every day they are the first staff to hear the heartbreaking stories of suffering and injustice. Our support staff's incredible knowledge and care in some of the most difficult situations is exceptional.

Our legal team opened over six thousand new advice files, with most in housing and income support. However, we are experiencing increased calls for support involving migrant workers, immigration and human rights. In addition to this work, our legal team offers Public Legal Education throughout the community. Our legal team has engaged in several law reform initiatives, including the encampment litigation and a call for an inquiry into the death of a homeless man.

Complementing the legal work, community outreach leads are striving for systemic changes in the justice system. We are proud of the incredible work of Together We Rise, Queer Justice, and Yen Tene. Our Community Development staff are working with local communities, pursuing systemic justice initiatives to effect policy changes aimed at improving lives. Our Hamilton Legal Outreach team is on the street meeting with individuals in need and collaborating with many front line agencies to serve hard to reach clients.



# Message from the Executive Director and Legal Director

The housing crisis in Hamilton is toughest on folks with marginal incomes, those who are racialized, people with disabilities and our seniors. A combined effort within all levels of government to increase affordable housing and income support is urgently required. The Landlord Tenant Board, Social Benefits Tribunal and Human Rights Tribunal need to improve their process for the recruitment, training and support of adjudicators. They must also address the delays occasioned by too heavily relying on remote platforms.

Our work with No Hate in the Hammer, a community coalition, is vital to end hate in our community. The organized and growing hate, especially towards Queer, Black, Indigenous, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities needs a coordinated and collaborative response. We are proud of our work with the community and with the development of the new Anti-Hate Toolkit.

Like many non-profits, our funding has been cut in past years. Without significant investment in our clinic and clinics across Ontario, we are concerned about Ontarian's access to justice rights.

As you peruse this Annual Report, we know you will see what we see every day: a team committed to addressing the immediate and systemic community and legal issues and one committed to working alongside our most made-marginal, made-precarious neighbours. We invite all of our community to work alongside us and build a belonging community where everyone can participate fully and is valued.

**Clare Freeman, Executive Director**

**Michael Ollier, Director of Legal Services**



# Financial Report

Statement of Operations and Funds Balance: Year ended March 31, 2023

<b>Revenues</b>	
Legal Aid Ontario	
-direct receipts	\$3,551,963.00
-indirect receipts	\$66,282.00
Tenant Duty Counsel Program	\$66,973.00
Employment and Social Development Canada	\$9,180.00
Recovered from clients	\$7,465.00
City of Hamilton	\$152,700.00
Hamilton Community Foundation	\$50,000.00
Other Income	\$18,754.00
	<b>\$3,923,317.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries	\$2,627,977.00
Benefits	\$467,055.00
Professional dues	\$25,686.00
Travel	\$40,126.00
Communications	\$21,979.00
Accommodations	\$163,056.00
Equipment	\$13,918.00
Library	\$1,896.00
Supplies and services	\$49,090.00
Audit fees	\$5,094.00
Indirect payments (note 5)	\$49,256.00
Legal disbursements	\$38,758.00
Project expenses	\$280,074.00
Amortization	
	<b>\$3,783,965.00</b>
<b>Expenses of revenues over expenses</b>	
(expenses over revenues)	\$132,799.00
Return of funding to Legal Aid Ontario	(88,316)
Return of funding to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario	(8,246)
Funds balance, beginning of year	<b>\$176,496.00</b>
Funds balance, end of year	<b>\$212,733.00</b>

# Clinic Practices

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# ARAO Journey

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The HCLC ARAO Journey uses an emergent process of change that is non-linear, to transform our ARAO practices and systems. Recognizing there isn't one specific way to do things and that things are constantly changing as we move forward and adapting to the changes within. Through a Participatory model HCLC is seeking lasting change through staff developing their ability to identify their own racial biases, and understand how these biases can manifest in the working culture, with community partners and client services.

We accomplished this with a dedicated group of staff who volunteer their time and, the Executive Director. The ARAO committee takes on the responsibility to steer and monitor the tasks to be completed and identify problems early in the process along with the ARAO Lead.



# Legal Services

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We have had another busy year at HCLC! As pandemic restrictions lifted, we have noted a continued increase in our in-person traffic at the office. We have observed that those who attend in-person are often the most vulnerable clients who would have difficulty accessing services remotely. In addition to providing in-person service, frontline staff are also answering phones and responding to emails.



**6115**

Summary Advice  
Cases



**14,055**

Phone Calls  
Answered



**3542**

Referrals  
(to community agencies,  
politicians, other services)



**22,000+**

Emails  
(sent and received)

## Challenges:

Online portal systems continue to prove challenging for our clients when accessing documents. Our frontline team often assists clients in requesting documents on an urgent basis which is vitally important as they cannot obtain legal advice without the documents that set out the legal issues.

We also encounter clients who do not have access to technology in order to participate in virtual hearings. Frontline staff will assist clients by facilitating access to the computer in our interview room and showing them how to operate the basic functions to participate in their hearing.

Given the housing and opioid crisis in Hamilton, we also see a number of clients who are extremely vulnerable and arrive at our office simply because they have nowhere else to go or do not know where to turn. These clients may or may not have a legal issue that we can help with but our frontline staff work diligently at providing them with whatever support we can whether it is a place to rest, a snack, glass of water or referrals to services that might be of more assistance.

## Summary:

2022-23 was a busy, successful year on the frontline at HCLC. We look forward to continuing to serve our community.

# Employment Law

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The employment law program here at the clinic has continued to reach the financially disadvantaged and marginalized. This year, the employment law program has continued to attain its mandate and had achieved several substantial accomplishments. These achievements include settlements in the 5-figure range for workers and providing timely summary advice, which enables the worker the empowerment to fight their employment dispute. The employment law program has also done more outreach including a monthly drop-in service called Understanding Employment in Ontario, where migrant workers are able to discuss their employment issues with an employment law. Another outreach program that is in the progress of being developed in conjunction with City of Hamilton relates to employment rights of newcomers in the Hamilton region. We anticipate the release of newcomer employment checklist and videos discussing the rights of workers over the next year.



# Housing Law

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The area of housing law has always been active since the days the clinics began. This has to be the most trying period of all, however, considering how many factors are contributing to the current crises. The market cost of rents has increased dramatically since the end of Rent Control and well beyond the rate of inflation. The challenges of simply affording rent have left many of our clients homeless and many more anxious about keeping the housing they have. The supply of affordable housing is being eroded as properties age without repairs, the prospect of selling units to new owner-occupiers at a high return tempts landlords to make a profit, and the push for new housing seems to mean only building for those who have means.

The legal staff are now often advising in situations where landlords intend to move in themselves, have sold to someone who intends to, or demand vacant possession in order to renovate. Clearly, the opportunity to make money is the driving factor, as many tenants are being offered tens of thousands of dollars to move out. The pressures on people trying to pay the rent such as when a partner leaves or employment situations change have meant eviction, now with a larger judgment against tenants considering the current levels of rents.

Market rents are unaffordable for most of our clientele, many of whom receive a rent subsidy or reside in non-profit housing. These units, while affordable, come with their own set of challenges. The maintenance of social housing units is not adequately funded. The ongoing requirements to demonstrate eligibility can be problematic for some households and even a failure to submit information in a timely fashion can mean loss of subsidy and eviction for not being able to pay the market rent.

Tenants facing eviction or obliged to pursue their landlord to get repairs done, must go to the Landlord and Tenant Board. This Administrative Tribunal was busy prior to the pandemic; it became even busier since then. The LTB is almost entirely on-line now. The hope was that would speed up the process. The reality is that is not the case. The much-publicized delays threaten to undermine the administration of justice. The clinic recognizes the importance of a well-functioning Tribunal and is committed to working with all stakeholders to address the needs of parties moving forward.

# Housing Law

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Housing continues to be the highest area of advice requested. The impact of housing issues has never been more impactful than they are now. The goal for our clientele is to have ongoing affordable housing starts to add to the affordable housing stock, with adequate maintenance budgets to sustain them for the future. That and a fully functioning Landlord and Tenant Board would be a meaningful improvement to the legal welfare of tenants in Hamilton.

## Encampment Update

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Since early 2023, the encampment team participated in a number of settlement meetings with the City of Hamilton. In May 2023, a proposed encampment protocol was introduced that stalled settlement discussions with the City. The proposed protocol did not pass at Council and the City embarked on a number of community stakeholder and public feedback sessions in order to amend the protocol. At the General Issues Committee on August 14, 2023, the City introduced its amended protocol. City Council passed the new Encampment Protocol on August 18, 2023. We currently await further discussions in late August 2023 with the City to understand what this protocol might look like in practice and how it may affect our litigation moving forward.

Outside of settlement discussions, we continue to work with community partners to locate and connect with clients to provide updated applicant affidavits. The team also has an upcoming motion in late October 2023 to determine whether our additional expert affidavits will be admitted into evidence.



# Immigration Law

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The Team has grown to include lawyers, community legal workers and community developers.. We have seen a gradual increase in the last year and thus the team gets more intakes in this area. If we are to remain relevant in the community, we cannot exclude immigration needs of our multicultural members whether they are newcomers or long time established.

This team receives training in collaboration with the Refugee Law Office of Hamilton.



## **Partnerships:**

We are collaborating with the Centre for Refugee Children and have agreed to serve as Refugee Children Representatives for unrepresented children in refugee claim proceedings as the need arises.

## **Public Legal Education**

In mid May (May 18, 2023) we held a live stream social media event together with the MP constituent assistance aimed at the Sudanese community to discuss and clarify the Temporary measures for foreign national family members of Canadian citizens and permanent residents facing the Conflict in Sudan. We are of the Legal Aid Ontario Immigration Advisory Committee.

**Campaigns:** We participate and support the campaigns of the Migrant Rights Network dealing with status for all and migrant worker's issues. This is usually done with online / social media petitions and support letters.

We are proud to share that we successfully obtained permanent residence status for members of our community who landed January and March of 2023. We also work to get approvals of work permits for very vulnerable clients.

# WSIB Update

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Our clinic was involved in two important initiatives.

The first was our active participation in the WSIB's consultations on their appeals processes. This was in conjunction with a Value for Money audit conducted by the accounting firm of KPMG.

The proposed changes to the pre-hearing process at the WSIB were nothing short of an assault on the appeal rights of injured workers. The pre-report consultations asked for input on topics that had nothing to do with the report's terrible recommendations. We were part of a number of stakeholders who opposed the recommended changes, requested a proper stakeholder consultation and got the involvement of our Local MPP's. The WSIB has "blinked" and will be spending the fall on further consultation.

The second initiative had to do with the manner in which the WSIB calculates the inflation adjustments. The WSIB decided, many years ago, not to follow the Act when calculating the cost of living adjustments; when inflation was relatively stable it did not have much impact on injured workers' benefits. With the rapidly increasing inflation of 2021 and 2022, the WSIB method shortchanged injured workers benefits by 2.5%. We were part of a small group of caseworkers that tried to have the WSIB to change their method of calculation to the method set out in the Act.

That failed, and so did our attempts to appeal the indexing decisions at the WSIB. We took the WSIB to court in a case called *Grisales and Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups v Workplace Safety & Insurance Board*; both Ms. Grisales and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups were represented pro bono by lawyers at Raven Law. The court decided in late June that the issue of indexing was appealable at the WSIB. We will be working on a systemic way of bringing forward representative appeals through the appeals process in early September.



# WSIB Update

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We have also been working on our cases. One success was a partial success. We were able to successfully represent a worker at a Canada Pension Plan disability hearing and at the same time win partial benefits at the Appeals Branch at the WSIB. In total we were able to get this injured worker over \$100,000 in arrears of benefits and an increase in his monthly income to almost \$4200 per month. This partial win will make this particular injured worker better able to withstand the long and sometimes grueling appeal process that the WSIB forces injured workers to endure.



# ODSP Update

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This team works to support anyone who has a disability to access disability benefits and supports. We work closely with individuals who need this support to ensure they access the benefits they need. Here are some examples of successes:

- In conjunction with the HLO team, a client whose elderly parents had been issued an overpayment by ODSP of \$21,781.32. The clients had come to Canada as refugees 10 yrs. ago and had been issued this overpayment when they transitioned from ODSP to Old Age Security and GIS. The clients had disabilities and language barriers. We assisted them in appealing the overpayment at the Social Benefits Tribunal and ultimately the Tribunal ordered that collection of the overpayment would cause financial hardship to the clients and so ordered that the amount was uncollectible.
- Similarly, we assisted a client who had experienced trauma and war in her home country with the appeal of an overpayment of \$15,600 from O.D.S.P. She was issued this overpayment through a system error which had provided her an extra payment that continued for several years. She didn't know she was receiving a benefit she wasn't entitled to and had used this money to survive as a single mom. We successfully argued at the Social Benefits Tribunal that she should not have to repay this debt because it was created due to an error by ODSP and would cause financial hardship for her to repay as she was still receiving ODSP assistance. The SBT ordered that the overpayment was uncollectible.

Our team partners with McMaster Family Health Team. Essentially, through this partnership we attend monthly clinics where doctors and residents who work with the Shelter Health Network meet with patients who do not have a family doctor to complete O.D.S.P. applications. We review applications, provide brief legal advice, and let clients know about our services to help them if their ODSP application is denied.



# Community Based Work

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# Community Development

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Working with older adults: An important focus this past year has been working with older adults: HCLC has offered “Justice Circles” - public legal education sessions on housing, income and the importance of wills and powers of attorneys. The sessions given in caring and elder-focused settings, provided ample time for discussions, questions and answers. Justice Circles for older adults were offered in person and online. HCLC is also now part of the Hamilton Council on Ageing, the Age Friendly Senior’s advisory group, and Patient and Family Advisory. This initiative is to continue through 2024.

We not only work with our minds: While having deep conversations about justice, we have facilitated a two day session with seniors to talk about the importance they play in making their communities better. These sessions were facilitated by our partner “Righting Relations” and a local artist.

## **Newcomers and Migrants**

The City of Hamilton is experiencing a large number of migrants, refugee claimants and newcomers choosing this city as their home. This poses a challenge for this population in terms of already stretched services and lack of affordable housing.

HCLC is part of a citywide working group that gathers all agencies supporting this population. This group strategizes on referrals, services and outreach activities. With the support of the income, housing, immigration and employment teams, HCLC offers public legal education sessions so newcomers are aware of their rights and know where to find services and supports.

In terms of law reform, HCLC is also part of networks that advocate and support better working conditions of migrant and undocumented workers such as Migrant Rights Network and Justice for Migrant Workers. At a local level, HCLC Chairs the Emergency Support Committee for Refugees and works closely with the Canadian Council for Refugees that financially supports family re-unification of large refugee families separated by the migration process. On a very important note, HCLC facilitates sessions for newcomers that create friendship, awareness and solidarity with indigenous nations.

# Community Development

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## Law Reform

Hamilton Heat Bylaw: HCLC's Executive Director, along with many local and provincial organizations delegated to support the creation of a bylaw that could be the first in Canada requiring landlords to provide air conditioning during extreme heat: council will likely vote on bylaw next year to set a maximum heat standard for indoor spaces.

## Partnerships

It is impossible to work for community without community. HCLC is part of many City Coalitions, Committees, and advisory groups. HCLC supports and participates in diverse campaigns, actions, delegations and anything to support community based change. We thank all the organizations, grass-roots groups, and all community that makes change possible. As we continue to work with community, we are also part of Hamilton Solidarity, a newly formed grass-roots group supported by local unions to continue fighting against all forms of hate.



# No Hate in the Hammer

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We continue to support this citywide coalition and are proud to be part of making Hamilton a city without hate. As we continue to create safe spaces for all, we invite all Hamiltonians to learn about this important collective effort:

## **The Belonging Pledge**

We all cherish the feeling of belonging—being part of a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community. It warrants our collective time, energy, and commitment.

Hate divides us when we discriminate against members of our community. A community-wide, collective response is necessary to eliminate and prevent hate and all forms of racism, discrimination, and oppression. We all have a role to play, as individuals, organizations, faith groups, institutions, and leaders.

## **This “Belonging Pledge” is a commitment to:**

- be part of a movement for change,
- take a stand against hate in all its forms, and
- take action to nurture an inclusive Hamilton.

Learn about what this means in the Anti-Hate Toolkit:

[NoHateInTheHammer.ca/pledge](https://NoHateInTheHammer.ca/pledge)



# Hamilton Legal Outreach

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Hamilton Legal Outreach (HLO) has had an innovative year! With a new team forming in December 2022, we have now resumed in-person services at several sites and continue to seek new ways in enhancing accessibility to our services by meeting people where they're at.



Our team consists of Pamela Bhattacharjee (Staff Lawyer), Merima Menzildzic (Community Development Worker) and Gopal Banerjee (Systems Navigator/Social Worker).

## **HLO has resumed in-person services at the following Outreach Sites:**

1. ACORN (Mobile Tenant Outreach)
2. Good Shepherd Venture Centre
3. Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (Ottawa Street location)
4. Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (Drop-In Centre)
5. McMaster Family Practice
6. Native Women's Centre
7. Notre Dame House
8. St. Matthew's House

We are in the process of establishing partnerships with further Outreach Sites and expect to be back at full capacity by fall 2023.

# Hamilton Legal Outreach

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## **Power of Attorney Drafting Pilot Project**

HLO has commenced a pilot project in providing Power of Attorney (POA) drafting services for financially eligible Indigenous community members. These drafting services include POA for Property for those living off-reserve and POA for personal care for those living on and off reserve.

This project originated in hopes of highlighting the importance of having a POA in place for vulnerable persons and in providing security from potential abuse if or when a person no longer has the capacity to make personal and financial decisions. We are working alongside our Indigenous Justice Coordinator, Lyndon George, in spreading awareness via public legal educational sessions regarding these newly available services.

## **PRC Financialization**

The SPRC, ACORN Hamilton and the HLO team are amplifying the voices of renters facing the brunt of displacement in the City of Hamilton. This partnership arose out of an ongoing demand to understand the ways in which the process of financialization has not only compounded the frequency and impact of displacement on made-precariously housed renters, but has created a new set of tools for displacement to be effected.

We are currently working on producing a written submission to the Federal Housing Advocate on the implications of financialization on Hamilton renters by analyzing current data sets related to the housing market for gaps and shortfalls. Following these submissions, we will continue this work by strategizing with renters, organizers and allies to collect, synthesize and analyze data that is currently not being tracked by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Landlord Tenant Board (LTB). The spirit of this collaboration is to develop a community-driven understanding of displacement mechanisms and trace the implications of financialization and displacement through all levels of government in order to address gaps in the response to the housing crisis here in Hamilton.

# Hamilton Legal Outreach

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## Systems Navigation/Social Work

Throughout the year, HLO has continued its commitment to mentoring aspiring social work students from Mohawk College and York University. These students have been paired with HLO's Social Worker, fostering a nurturing environment and providing practical hands-on learning in the field. By doing so, we actively contribute to developing skilled social workers for the future. Our outstanding placement students this year were Juhainah Hussein and Jennifer Le.



HLO has also been leading two projects. Firstly, we have undertaken the development and presentation of a Public Legal Education (PLE) focused on educating youth about the responsible usage of social media. This project is powered by our awesome summer law students, Nicholas Mitchell, Rachel Wickham and Sarah Dawson. The PLE will be delivered to Youth Service Providers in the fall of 2023.



Additionally, we have collaborated with Legal Aid Ontario's Duty Counsel in criminal court for an essential research project. The primary objective of this project is to find innovative solutions that facilitate individuals in navigating the complex criminal justice system more effectively. Once research is complete, we aim to finalize a report for January 2024.

# Together We Rise

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This year has been an incredible year for Together We Rise/ S'élever ensemble, the Black Justice Program at the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic. Throughout the year, we have successfully supported Black community members in all areas of law and connected them to accessible legal support at the clinic and in the community. We have supported multiple community initiatives such as SACHA's Take Back The Night, worked on successful campaigns such as Hamilton For All and the Hamilton Islamophobia city wide campaign. Throughout this, it has been the priority of TWR to ensure accurate and appropriate representation of the diverse and brimming Black community in Hamilton. We also have hosted a successful Black History month event during February and connected with many Black community organizations and leaders to advocate and work towards a community free from anti-Blackness. This year's AGM is focused on Belonging. At the base of our work at Together We Rise, our goal is to foster belonging for all Black community members in Hamilton, in every walk and intersection of life.



# Queer Justice Project

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Over the past year, the Queer Justice Project (“QJP”) has sought to further expand its services and increase its engagement with the community, while addressing pressing local and national Queer issues.

In light of the easing of pandemic restrictions, as of April 20, 2023, we have been happy to re-open the monthly Trans ID Clinic to allow for primarily in-person appointments. However, we remain committed to continuing to offer our services using virtual options so that they remain as accessible as possible. The ID Clinic occurs every third-Thursday of the month and is staffed by our dedicated team of volunteer lawyers and peer support workers. Financial assistance remains available to clients in need of such support.

Additionally, the QJP has continued working in conjunction with Yén:Tene to provide several Two-Spirit-focused positive space trainings that also seek to educate on Queer identities, issues, and terminology more broadly. We were extremely fortunate this year to provide these trainings to several local organizations. We continue to seek out opportunities to reach more organizations.

This year has seen a rise in hate movements and politicians targeting Queer communities. The QJP is committed to speaking out against these movements, countering their narratives, and supporting those affected. There is no place for hatred and discrimination in Hamilton or elsewhere. Queer individuals of all ages have the right to be free and live their lives as their true authentic selves.

Finally, the QJP continues to assist Queer community members who reach out to us on a variety of topics with whatever advice we can provide, referrals, or assistance with system navigation. We continue to be involved in several other community advocacy or education events as they arise. We also continue to network and partner with other organizations and service providers on projects, to further community advocacy, and to further our own education.

# YEN:TENE

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YEN:TENE continues to walk the journey and be a strong advocate for our relatives who have suffered great harm and even death: The first, Patrick Tomchuk, brutally beaten by HPS officer and the second, Heather Winterstein, a young Indigenous woman who died trying to access health services at Niagara Health Care Emergency Services.

Patrick Tomchuk's charges were dropped and the HPS officer charged. We connected Patrick to a lawyer to represent his legal case further. With respect to Heather Winterstein, the matter is currently proceeding on many different levels. We afforded space at the Southwest Regional Community Legal Clinic conference for community legal clinic staff to witness the harm done to Heathers family and Heathers story be told. Community healing and memorial dances in Niagara have been happening and will continue.



YEN:TENE was successful in co-creating a new Indigenous Consulting Circle for the City of Hamilton called the Circle of Beads. The Circle represents the voices of Indigenous community members living in the city of Hamilton. This is direct action was taken because of the harm done to Patrick Tomchuk. The Circle is engaged on matters involving the City of Hamilton, health care services, education institutions and the local police.

We will be participating in the Canadian Indian Residential School Gala happening on September 30th, 2023 at the Museum of London, Ontario. YEN:TENE with Indigenous Justice Coordinators of St Thomas and Kitchener have been working with community partners since the beginning of the pandemic to bring a gala to support and acknowledge Canadian Indigenous Residential School Survivors in the Southwest as not only survivors but as Indigenous Heroes. Collectively we have raised around 30,000\$ dollars for the gala.

# YEN:TENE

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We are organizing a Two Spirit Ceremony “No one is left behind” (coming out, rites of passage) that is scheduled for the fall 2023 or spring 2024. There has not been Two Spirit ceremony in Southwest Ontario for an estimated 100 years or more. YEN:TENE has raised just under 25,000\$ for this event/ceremony through community partners.

YEN:TENE facilitated three workshops at the Southwest Community Legal Clinic conference: The Plenary (the Heather Winterstein Story), the Drag Queen Story Telling and the Indigenous Justice Coordinator community work.

YEN:TENE and The Queer Justice Project continue to unite skills and deliver Queer safer space training to various organizations/agencies/communities. Recently started to train staff at all the Aboriginal Health Center sites in the region. Our training is different from other forms of training as we provide the history of Two Spirit Indigenous Queer to participants.

YEN:TENE along with community partners constructed and delivered a Welcoming Ceremony for the new Indigenous Liaison Officer for Hamilton Police Services.

YEN:TENE along with the Indigenous Justice Coordinators of St Thomas and Kitchener coordinated legal services at the annual Little Native Hockey Tournament in Mississauga. Community legal clinic staff from Toronto, Halton, Kitchener, Niagara, Hamilton, Brantford, St Thomas, London, Stratford, Kitchener, Guelph and Mississauga brought their skills and expertise to the tournament and provided legal services to Indigenous people from across the province of Ontario. The Indigenous Human Rights team also joined us.



# French Language Services

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- We were involved in the promotion, organization and celebration of Franco Fest, Franco-Ontarian Day, Black History Month and National Francophone Immigration Week events, primarily virtually.
- We have established a partnership with the city of Hamilton to increase FLS in municipal services across the city and a steering committee for FLS will be created soon.
- The FLS Team delivered several French public legal education sessions both virtually and physically as focusing primarily on housing and immigration. We also promoted an Employment law session offered by AJEFO (L'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario) which is a legal community of expertise in French with more than 1,000 members and a session about the active offer in collaboration with the Law Society of Ontario and the University of Ottawa.
- We co-chair the Francophone Interagency Committee and participated in the Interagency sub-committees
- We participate in the meetings of the Advisory Committee for the "Welcoming Francophone Community" project and were again designated as spokesperson for the committee and sat on the regional and provincial committee in charge of implementation. We are also taking the lead on some of the activities.
- We continue to participate in the coordination of FLS in the SW Region. As noted elsewhere, Clinique bilingue de Windsor facilitates support to regional clinics that have no French speaking staff when they receive requests for service in French. We are part of the roster of French clinics able to assist. We also help to identify professional training needs of FLS staff in the SW.





# French Language Services

- We participate on the FLS list serve and “Le Reseau” -a francophone immigration network that brings together nearly 300 partner organizations and institutions who work in Francophone and Acadian communities to attract, recruit, welcome and integrate French-speaking newcomers.
- To optimize the accessibility of the Clinic’s FLS resources, the Team continued to update the folder “Francais” after gathering all resources and organizing them in one location.
- We offered opportunities to Clinic staff to improve their French, such as lunchtime conversation circles and French classes on site.





Call to make an appointment  
before you visit the clinic.

**Landmark Place**

Southwest corner of Main  
St. E. and Catharine St. S.  
100 Main Street East  
Hamilton, ON L8N 3W4



Phone Number

**905-527-4572**



Website

**[www.hamiltonjustice.ca](http://www.hamiltonjustice.ca)**



