

Neighbourhood Legal Services

Serving the Community Since 1973

ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022

Presented to:
Annual General Meeting
February 15, 2023



NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Community Legal Clinic | Serving the Community Since 1973 | Barristers & Solicitors

101–163 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario M5A 1S1

www.nlstoronto.org



www.facebook.com/nlstoronto



[@nlstoronto](https://twitter.com/nlstoronto)

We recognize that we live, work and play on treaty land. Toronto is in the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory'. The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect. We recognize the role we must play as actors in the legal system to confront colonial harm to Indigenous peoples, and we continue to learn and work in order to play our part in honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action and the Calls to Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry.

Introduction

Neighbourhood Legal Services is a non-profit corporation registered in Ontario and a registered charity (CRA BN/Registration#11888 7090 RR0001). In 2021–2022 we received funding from Legal Aid Ontario, the City of Toronto, the Canadian Red Cross (in kind), the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law (in kind), the Lincoln Alexander School of Law (in kind); the University of Ottawa and MITACS (in kind), and the St. Michael's (St. Mike's) Hospital Academic Family Health Team (in kind).

Our Mission, Vision & Values

Our Mission

Neighbourhood Legal Services is a non-profit and independent community legal clinic that has been serving the downtown east community of Toronto since 1973. We provide free legal services and assistance to low-income individuals who live within our catchment area and qualify for our services.

Our Vision

We believe that the low-income residents of our community have a right to access to justice through effective legal representation, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to direct their own destinies. We work with the community to address the root causes of poverty and systemic legal problems facing low-income people.

Our Values

We are committed to confronting and combating racism, ableism, heterosexism, classism and other forms of oppression. We are committed to the promotion of the values contained in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#).



This painting occupies pride of place at our front desk. The artist is Maryam Hassan, a longtime St. Jamestown resident; budding criminal lawyer; NLS board member, and past law student contributor to our work. This painting symbolizes NLS working alongside local residents in the St. Jamestown community.

Statement on Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression

We recognize that Anti-Black and Anti-Indigenous racism lie at the foundation of our legal system. Harmful racial stereotypes and burdens of inequity impact our clients daily and impede their pursuit of justice. We acknowledge the role we play as actors in that system. In 2021–2022, we continued to work on our Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression (ARAO) Action Plan. It has been integrated into our Strategic Plan and makes equity a leading focus for our organization.

To that end, NLS is building a culture where our staff have the right supports, training, and tools to deliver equitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and other structurally marginalized community members. In 2021–2022 this included:

1. Undertaking significant ARAO training, for both staff and board. This covered such topics as:

- Racial trauma
- Traumatic brain injuries and the legal system
- “Beyond de-escalation”
- Working with trans and gender expansive clients
- Working with crystal meth users
- STOP Harm training (provided as an in-kind donation by St. Mike’s)
- EDI fundamentals for clinics boards
- Working with clients with common psychiatric conditions
- Participating in Indigenous-led activities for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Black Legal Action Centre training on poverty law

2. Building ARAO performance indicators into staff reviews. To help us do this, we have amended our client satisfaction survey to include questions about the cultural competency of our service, and whether we identified and advanced arguments regarding discrimination.

3. Setting aside protected work time once a month for a staff study group around anti-Black racism.

Internally, we strive for a workplace with a high quality of work life for Black staff and others from traditionally marginalized communities. That means a culture that is free of racism and oppression, where all staff can thrive. In 2021–2022 this included:

4. Working with an ARAO consultant and policy consultant to do a full review of our policies, including the creation of an ARAO policy; updating our anti-discrimination and accessibility policies, and updating our conflict resolution measures. We ensure staff understand and practice these policies.

5. Working in collaboration with other community legal aid clinics to retain a pay equity consultant, who produced a **Pay Equity Handbook** to guide us on ensuring we close wage gaps for female-dominated jobs. This is a guiding document for us as we push Legal Aid Ontario to fund our pay equity commitments. In 2022-23 we will seek funding to review our own internal pay equity compliance.

In terms of our ongoing commitment to understand the systemic legal issues faced in our community, we have started tracking demographic data and take steps to work with Black and Indigenous-led groups. In 2021–2022 this included:

6. **Receiving training in order to ask clients for ethno-racial data.** We now collect this information where available so that we can better understand the legal needs of our community to target our interventions.
7. **Participating in numerous community networks,** including the St. Jamestown Service Providers' Network; the St. Mike's Family Health Team's Social Determinants of Health Committee, the Ontario Project for Inter-Clinic Community Organizing (OPICCO), and the Regent Park Executive Directors' Network. We strive to have more community-based connections.

We also recognize our pressing responsibility to recruit, engage, and retain Indigenous, Black, and other structurally marginalized persons at all levels of the organization. In 2021–2022 this included:

8. **Recruiting a diverse and representative board slate, elected at our AGM in November 2021.** We continue to develop our outreach work in order to build our membership and create a board recruitment strategy.
9. **A commitment to creating legal placements for Trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit students.**

At NLS we have a lot of work to do, and we're looking forward to doing this work together with our team. As the Board of Directors and ED, we hold ourselves directly responsible for this work and to be accountable to BIPOC and other structurally marginalized staff, volunteers, and clients.



Josh Vandezande, Board Chair



Jennifer Stone, Executive Director

Key Highlights from 2021–2022¹

The Numbers

Further to how clinic law is defined in Ontario’s *Legal Aid Services Act* and the strategic priorities set by our Board of Directors, NLS provided legal services in **994** matters in the areas of:

- housing law (451 cases),
- income security law (208 cases),
- immigration law (136 cases),
- employment law (48 cases), and
- affidavits/notarizing (51 cases).

Included in these matters, through our partnership with the St. Michael’s Hospital’s Academic Family Health Team, we assisted **273** low-income patients navigate legal systems relating to these and a wide range of other legal issues. In addition, we provided **283** referrals for community members to appropriate legal resources. This shows our commitment to a “no wrong door” approach to facilitating access to justice for our community members. Further information about our casework is detailed in the pages that follow.

In 2021–2022, 743 or 75% of NLS clients had never used our services before. We see this as an indicator of reaching new people in our community. Much of this is attributable to our Health Justice Program, a legal referral service embedded in the St. Mike’s Family Health Team, which has proven during the pandemic to be an especially important access point.

A summary of key issues from the 2021–2022 year includes:

Continuing to Provide Services During COVID-19

This year was very challenging, for us as individuals and as a team, and for the clients we work with. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to dominate our lives for a second year, we were tested time and again. The year started with the third provincial Emergency and Stay-at-Home Order in April 2021, with schools once again shuttered to try to stem the infection rate.

We never stopped providing our legal services throughout the pandemic, providing phone and online intakes, but we had to innovate time and again to adapt to the repeated lockdowns. This included shifting to a paperless office; improving our technology; and increasing our regular communication and collaboration with community partners.

¹ Note this Annual Report covers our fiscal year of April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022.

We were also committed to providing in-person services as much as possible while keeping clients, staff, and volunteers safe. We continued to observe the negative impact that “virtual everything” had on our clients, who are among the most marginalized in the city. Many of our clients do not have phones or the technology needed to participate in virtual hearings before the Social Justice Tribunals.

We started the year with one drop-in day per week, which we gradually increased to five days a week by December 2021. Then the Omicron variant hit, COVID case numbers spiked once more, and we temporarily went down to two days a week with continued COVID safety protocols in place. We reopened for walk-ins fully in the spring of 2022.

The number of clients served listed above is significantly less (about 50%) than we normally serve in a year due to the extraordinary continued circumstances of the pandemic:

- A provincial Emergency Stay-at-Home Order was in place from April – June, 2021.
- During this time, once again enforcement of residential evictions was halted except for limited circumstances.
- There was a rent freeze in place until January 1, 2022.
- Toronto Community Housing continued to notify their staff that rent-geared-to-income affidavits would not be required to calculate rental subsidies. This free service we provide in community normally accounts for 400–500 cases per year but was paused due to COVID-19.
- Immigration processing continued to be very delayed at visa offices worldwide, and at the Immigration and Refugee Board and Federal Court of Canada.
- Other Social Justice Tribunals such as the Social Benefits Tribunal paused hearings for a time, and then resumed them only virtually; the pause meant many matters were significantly backlogged. In the Social Justice Tribunals 2021/22 Annual Report they acknowledge a backlog of 67,000 cases as of March 31, 2022.

Nonetheless, we did not in any way slow down this year. Although we saw somewhat fewer individual clients, we continued to tackle greater systemic issues and considerably increased our networks and outreach. We took many measures to adapt to the extraordinary circumstances and to stay connected to our community, including:

- We continued to receive intakes by phone, online, through the Health Justice Program partnership with the St. Mike’s Family Health Team, and through our drop-in hours.
- We conducted numerous online workshops on the rapidly changing rules for tenants, social assistance recipients, workers and immigration applicants. Most of these were done in partnership with other local community agencies and are detailed in our Area of Law Reports below.
- We updated our website regularly with the changing COVID-19 rules related to the areas of law we practice and continued a quarterly newsletter for clients, members, and community partners.

The pandemic was an opportunity to continue to strengthen our connections with community partners through the Regent Park Executive Directors Network, the St. Jamestown Service Provider Network, the Toronto Employment and Social Services Managers' Network, and the St. Michael's Hospital's Academic Family Health Team's Social Determinants of Health Committee. Through our regular participation in these networks, we cultivated links with other local service providers that often facilitated referrals to our services.

Advocating for Housing & Income Security as COVID Benefits Ended

There were several cases referred of seniors on Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) getting the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), and then having both CERB end, and GIS cut off and not having enough income for basic necessities. This also impacted Rent Geared to Income (RGI) calculations and meant that some clients fell into arrears. Our income security and housing team worked together on a number of files that involved these facts. Creative solutions were found in the form of rapid ODSP applications for many. Our team was also part of a larger legal clinic campaign to ask the Federal government to issue payments to those seniors who fell into this situation; this advocacy was successful. Further, the Provincial government directed ODSP workers not to consider this payment as income.

Strengthening Our Organization to Be More Focused & Effective

The unequal impact of the pandemic on front-line workers, on people living in congregate settings such as shelters and inter-generational households, and on people with disabilities clarified the urgency of our work in community. This year we continued to strengthen our organization in order to be more focused and effective in our work.

As mentioned above, we started the year with updated Operational and Governance Policy manuals, and an ARAO committee focused on implementing a Three-Year Action Plan. We also:

- drafted a Trust Account policy
- introduced a centralized Tickler System for case deadlines
- completed an interactive Standard Operating Procedures manual to ensure institutional clarity around our processes
- updated our Canada Helps page, and linked it to our public-facing platforms
- honed our staff and volunteer onboarding and offboarding procedures
- received training on the new *Ontario Non-Profits Corporations Act* in order to prepare for adherence by 2024.

NLS Staff, Volunteers & Board Members

In 2021–2022, the NLS community was served by the following staff, students and volunteers:

Staff

Geraldine Thompson (Office Manager), Kathleen Castillo (Reception and Legal Administrative Assistant), Marcello Ferrara (Legal Administrative Assistant – Health Justice Program), Halima Hussein (Cleaner), Daniel Bastien (Paralegal and Community Legal Worker – Income Security), Nazareth Maynes (Staff Lawyer – Housing and Social Assistance until May 2021), Heath Soave (Paralegal and Community Legal Worker – Income Security from June 2021), Linette King (Staff Lawyer – Housing until summer 2021), Brendan Jowett (Staff Lawyer – Housing), Victoria Peter (Contract Lawyer – Housing from summer 2021), Shibil Siddiqui, Scott Byers and Lindsey Tulk from Progressive Barristers (Service Contract Lawyers – Housing covering a parental leave), Molly Churchill (Contract Lawyer – Housing), Jack de Klerk (Contract Lawyer – Housing), Asiya Hirji (Senior Staff Lawyer – Immigration, and Intake Team Manager until June 2021), Damey Lee (Articling Student – Immigration until June 2021), Natasha Manning (Senior Staff Lawyer – Immigration, and Intake Team Manager from June 2021), Nadia Nadeem (Articling Student – Immigration from July 2021), Tristan Yeom (Legal Administrative Assistant), and Jennifer Stone (Executive Director).

Our administrative team was supported by clerical support funded through the City of Toronto’s Investing in Neighbourhoods Program, and we specifically acknowledge Judith Norris for her contributions to our work in 2021–2022.

Our work is also supported through TEEILS (Toronto East Employment and Immigration Legal Services), a partnership with four other east-end community legal clinics called led by Don Valley Community Legal Services. Through this partnership we benefit from the employment law services of Andrew Langille for a half-day a week.

Volunteers & Law Students

In 2021–2022 our work was generously supported by:

- Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) and we acknowledge the dedication of the following law student volunteers this year:
 - » Tyrone Davis and Junghi Woo, who did placements with our Health Justice Program’s Wills and Powers of Attorney Program.
 - » Arshad Aukbarallee, who did a placement with our Intake team.
 - » Tatyana Gudge and Jenna D’Aurizio, who did placements with our Housing team.
 - » Olivia Dooley, who did a placement with our Health Justice Program.

- The University of Toronto Faculty of Law's Health Law Program, and we acknowledge the dedication of Madeleine Thomas, who was our Health Law Extern this year.
- The Lincoln Alexander School of Law at Toronto Metropolitan University, and we acknowledge their funding summer student Carol MacLellan in 2021.
- The University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law and MITACS, and we acknowledge their funding summer student Caitlin de Simone to work with our Health Justice Program in 2021.
- Tim Wun, a University of Toronto LLM student, generously volunteered with our immigration practice this year.

Special thanks also goes to Edgar Montigny who continued to work with our Health Justice Program this year, by training and supervising students for our Wills and Power of Attorney clinic pro bono.

We estimate NLS and the Health Justice Program benefited from at least 1000 hours of volunteer time.

NLS' Board of Directors

NLS was governed by the following community members and allies in 2021–2022:

Aadil Mangalji (Board Chair, until November 2021), Mary Boushel (Vice-Chair, until November 2021), Michelle Bashir (Secretary, until November 2021), and Nisha Anand (until November 2021). These four board members dedicated years of volunteer service to governing NLS through many transitions. We give them our heartfelt thanks for their countless contributions to our organization!

In November 2021, our membership elected the following board slate: Josh Vandezande (formerly a Director, became Board Chair), Debbie Hill-Corrigan (formerly Interim Treasurer, became Vice-Chair), Habib Adbullahi (formerly a Director, became Treasurer), Maryam Hassan (formerly a Director, became Secretary), Hayley MacPhail, Diana Mavunduse, Walied Khogali, Kumsa Baker, Ambaro Guled, and Kevin LaForest. Soon after, we welcomed Sean O'Connor and Hanae Davis to the NLS board as well. We thank this Board for their volunteer stewardship of NLS on behalf of the community we serve. We are deeply grateful for the expertise and perspective that each member brings to their role.

We estimate our board volunteers at least 363 hours of time to NLS each year.

A final note on our staff, students, volunteers and board members – we have worked through significant change at NLS these past few years, and the pandemic has challenged us in ways we could not have imagined. This is human-serving work and you are at the heart of it! THANK YOU for everything you do to work alongside downtown east community members to strive for justice!

The Community Legal Clinic System

NLS is part of the Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) community legal clinic delivery system, a network of 70+ independent geographically based, racially focused and specialty-oriented community legal clinics. The former provides services mainly in landlord and tenant disputes, income security, employment law and immigration law while the latter provide legal services related to workers' health and safety and injury compensation, elder law, children's law, HIV/AIDS related law, housing and income maintenance, disability law, environmental law and public legal education, as well as a host of other civil law issues to low-income Ontarians.

The community legal aid clinic system complements other ways by which Legal Aid Ontario funds legal services for low-income Ontarians:

- Private bar lawyers working on legal aid certificates mostly in the areas of criminal, mental health, refugee and family law;
- LAO staff lawyers and staff offices providing services in criminal, family and refugee law; and
- Duty counsel offices in local court houses offering services mostly in criminal and family law.

Clinics provide legal aid services to people throughout Ontario who qualify. They are amongst the poorest in Ontario. We receive our funding from LAO, which, while operating at arms-length from the government, is in turn funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) and the Law Foundation of Ontario.

NLS is a proud member of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO). The ACLCO plays an important role in helping to build and maintain the clinic movement. The result is a much wider and a much better understanding in the community and in government of the work that clinics are engaged in on a daily basis.

The ACLCO continues to advocate for the clinic system for more funding for clinics, for improved recognition within LAO and MAG for the unique work clinics do for clients in improving their economic wellbeing, while also empowering our clients. Clinics help create social capital in a way that few other sectors do because they work on legal issues, legal rights and social engagement.

The ACLCO is also a leader in learning and training for the clinic system. Their resources have supported training conferences in all Ontario Regions including the GTA and carry out regular trainings for clinic staff, managers and boards.

This year the ACLCO was invaluable in analyzing and helping us understand the new *Legal Aid Services Act (LASA) 2020* which came into effect October 18, 2021, with new Service Agreements signed with Legal Aid Ontario.

Areas of Law Reports

Housing Work

Our housing law team in 2021–2022 consisted of Brendan Jowett, Linette King, and Victoria Peter. Linette articulated at NLS and was a committed housing lawyer with us for many years before she decided to pursue a new career path. We thank Linette for her service to tenants in the downtown east! We were pleased to welcome Victoria Peter as a new housing lawyer colleague this year.

Our housing practice this year was also assisted by several lawyers who stepped into serve NLS' clients regarding their housing matters during Brendan's parental leave and following Linette's departure from NLS. We acknowledge and thank Molly Churchill, Lindsey Tulk, and NLS alumni Shibil Siddiqui, Scott Byers, and Jack de Klerk who lent their expertise to our busy housing practice during the summer and fall of 2021.

Together, our housing team provided legal advice, brief services, or full representation on **451 matters** over the year (amounting to 89% of the volume we would normally serve). The scope of NLS' housing work is broad, with the majority of our work traditionally focusing on eviction prevention.

Highlights of our housing advocacy in 2021–2022 include:

Defending Downtown Rooming Houses

We continue to organize with tenants and community groups to preserve affordable housing stock in our community on a large-scale, systemic level.

In July of 2019, we began working with a group of tenants at the Inglewood Arms, a rooming house on Jarvis Street which is home to over 90 tenant households. A developer was trying to purchase the building and knock it down to build a 36-storey condo complex. We formed a coalition with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants of Ontario to defend this important affordable housing stock.

The tenants do not oppose the development of the property. They want to have a right to return to the building once it is completed, at their previous rents, and they want to have an acceptable interim relocation plan. They also want to ensure that these affordable housing units are maintained as affordable housing.

There are a number of legal issues that arose in this case. The first is that the landlord claimed the tenants are not tenants at all, but more like hotel guests – meaning they don't have legal rights. We disagreed. Our main client has been living in his unit for 10 years, and many other tenants have been in their units for more than five years. The tenants do not have any other home; this is their primary residence. Many of their rents are paid directly by ODSP. To assert that the tenants

are indeed tenants, we brought an application to the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) confirming that the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) applies. This was adjourned due to COVID-19 shutdowns but was finally heard over three days in the summer of 2021 and **a decision was issued October 7: the LTB found the applicants to be tenants with full protection of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. The approximately 90 tenants of the Inglewood Arms are now secure in the knowledge that they enjoy the same protections as other tenants under the RTA, including rent control and protection from arbitrary eviction.**

We continue to represent residents of the Inglewood Arms at the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) in defending an Official Plan Amendment requiring developers to maintain rooming house units as affordable housing, and to allow original rooming house residents to return to the new development at their previous rent rate.

The organizing efforts of the tenants alongside NLS have pushed **two** multi-billion-dollar developers out of the redevelopment project of this property.

Novel Advocacy for Tenants' Rights

With support from our housing lawyers, two NLS clients initiated significant tenant rights applications against the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) which resulted in judgments and settlements in the tens of thousands of dollars.

We have been pioneering processes and arguments to force disclosure of privileged information from criminal prosecutions to defend clients at the LTB in so-called "illegal act" evictions. This advocacy is particularly pressing when racialized tenants are targeted.

We co-counselled with the Community Justice Collective to successfully restore an evicted tenant organizer from the "Keep Your Rent" movement back to her unit using novel arguments around the creation of a new tenancy.

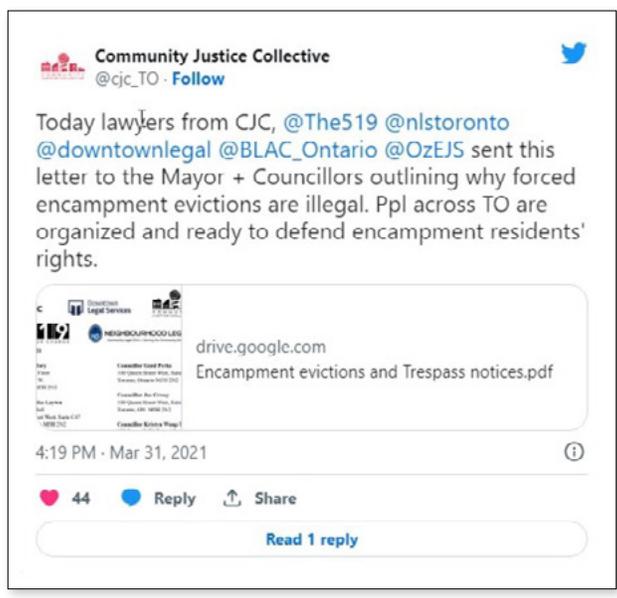
Encampment Evictions

In our last Annual Report, we described litigation whereby we represented 14 homeless encampment residents in Moss Park to challenge the City's eviction notice. These litigants argued that it would violate their *Charter* rights to forcibly remove them from encampments or to destroy their tents and survival supplies while they are sheltering in place without individualized accommodations for their particular needs. This decision – [Black et al v. City of Toronto](#) – released October 21, 2020, was unsuccessful. We know however that we built trust with our homeless neighbours who were able to assert their interests as rights-holders in a legal system that too often marginalizes them.

City Mrs Miller Posted on March 31, 2021

Lawyers say Toronto's plan to clear homeless encampments from parks next week is illegal

In 2021–2022, COVID outbreaks and deaths in the homeless shelter system continued. In coalition with other legal aid service providers, we continued to assert to the City that evicting homeless encampment residents violated their human rights.



Nonetheless, we saw heavy police violence marshalled to evict unhoused people from Lamport Stadium (below right; Evan Mitsui/ CBC), Trinity Bellwoods Park (below left) and other City parks during the summer of 2021. This was a dark period of time for Toronto.



Throughout 2021–2022, wherever possible we continued to advocate a human rights-based approach to homelessness prevention, including through:

- Our participation in a consultation with the Maytree Foundation on the City of Toronto’s creation of a Housing Commissioner; and
- Our participation with other community organizers at Streethealth, Regent Park Community Health Centre, and All Saints Community Church in recommending an equitable approach to the City’s new digital-only subsidized housing waitlist system.

Income Security Work

Our income security law team in 2021–2022 consisted of Nazareth Maynes, Daniel Bastien, and Heath Soave. Nazareth articulated at NLS and was a committed housing and income security lawyer with us for many years before she decided to pursue a new career path. We thank Naz for her service to NLS clients! We were pleased to welcome Heath Soave as a new colleague this year, as an income security paralegal and community legal worker with deep roots and knowledge of the downtown east.

Our income security team provided legal advice, brief services, or full representation on **208 matters** over the year (amounting to 128% of the volume we would normally serve). As the pandemic wore on, and pandemic-related benefits ceased, many community members faced new and painful cuts to their income, which required legal advocacy to protect or reinstate.

Highlights of advocacy from our income security team in 2021–2022 included:

Fighting for Low-Income Seniors

Our team took a leadership role among community legal aid clinics provincially on issues resulting from loss of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) in July 2021 for those seniors who had received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB).

Testimonials from Clients

“Brendan Jowett was a strong advocate during a very stressful time. I found myself manipulated by a landlady who wanted to increase the rent to new tenants. Brendan helped me strategize and find the best outcome. He negotiated with my landlady’s legal representative on my behalf. I am truly grateful.”

“Victoria was a great help in making me feel more confident and well-equipped after being pushed into an unfair situation by my landlady.”

“Victoria Peter is a first-rate lawyer. Thanks so much.”

“Brendan was excellent, he was God sent to me to assist me ... thank you.”

- Our team assisted seven impacted local seniors with fulsome legal advice and support to ensure their monthly income was secured. They assisted four of those clients with rapid reinstatement to ODSP in order to top-up their income.
- Further, our team successfully advocated for updated provincial policy clarification when a local ODSP office refused rapid reinstatement for one client.
- Our income security team also secured over \$3,000 retroactively for one client after the local ODSP office made a mistake on rapid reinstatement.
- Eventually, our team assisted with securing Extended Health Benefits through ODSP once several clients were reinstated onto the GIS in July 2022.

Almost 90,000 seniors facing guaranteed income supplement cut for accepting pandemic benefits



Parliamentary Budget Officer says scrapping clawback of GIS would cost \$438 million

Peter Zimonjic - CBC News - Posted: Nov 05, 2021 4:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: November 5, 2021



A couple walks in a park during an autumn morning. Low-income seniors who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit are seeing their guaranteed income supplement payments clawed back for accepting the benefit that was supposed to help them weather the pandemic. (ivica Drusany/Shutterstock)

Advocating Against Collection of Unfair Overpayments

We represented on several successful appeals of overpayments:

- Two were overpayments of \$15,779.92 and \$9,376.02 respectively – in both cases, the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) found that ODSP committed administrative errors by not acting on information provided by the elderly recipients (living with cognitive disabilities and language barriers).
- Two others were overpayments of \$13,512.07 and \$16,221.10 respectively – The SBT determined that the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19, which caused the recipients with disabilities to be stuck overseas for over 30 days, rendered almost all the overpayments uncollectible. In these cases, the SBT found that the appellants' mobility disability, vulnerability to COVID infection, and COVID travel restrictions were relevant factors.
- In another case, our team helped a client who was facing intimate partner abuse to disclose the nature of the relationship to ODSP and avoid a "spouse in the house" overpayment.

Advocating for Continued Disability Benefits on Medical Review Appeals

Many ODSP applicants are granted the benefit for a short period of time only, with "medical reviews" ordered a few years later. Sometimes these reviews end the benefits. Our team successfully represented many clients on their medical review appeals.

- Several of these cases entitled the appellants to three years of retroactive payments, or roughly \$15,000 per appeal.
- One successful ODSP medical eligibility appeal with date of grant over four years old resulted in nearly \$20,000 retro-payment.

Due to the high volume of income security cases, we see, our work often involves legal coaching.

- In one case we helped prepare a client to self-represent at his SBT appeal hearing of the denial of his eyeglasses benefit and he won his case. ODSP was ordered to pay him \$730 to cover special lenses and necessary testing, which he needed to deal with his cataracts.

Advocating for Trans & Gender Expansive Inclusivity

Our team has developed a *Working with Trans Clients* handbook on how to update names and gender identity/pronouns with the SBT, Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) of MCCSS, OW, ODSP. This initiative came out of our casework, assisting several clients with name and gender updates as part of ODSP appeals. The barriers clients faced identified the need for better processes.

Public Legal Education & Information

Our income security team regularly provides workshops for local healthcare and other social service providers to understand the complex intersecting rules around social assistance. In 2021–2022 this included:

- A workshop for injured workers with specialty legal clinics IAVGO & Injured Workers Clinic on social assistance, focusing on ODSP (August 2021)
- A workshop entitled, “ODSP Applications 101” for clinicians at the St. Mike’s Family Health Team (November 2021)
- Training for new Income Security Health Promoters at the St. Mike’s Family Health Team (July 2021)
- A workshop for legal aid clinic caseworkers, entitled *Getting to Know the Disability Tax Credit (DTC)*, led by our summer student Carol MacLellan, and Anu Bakshi from the Income Security Advocacy Centre, as well as developing resources for healthcare providers around the DTC (July 2021)
- Information-sharing between WoodGreen’s Financial Empowerment Services and NLS, and solidifying a working relationship for cross-referrals (ongoing)

Testimonials from Clients

“My case worker Heath was very experienced, responsive, well communicative, cooperative and they are very helpful. Their sincere efforts made my case positive. I am very happy for their work.”

“Overall, Heath was incredible, they were supportive and helpful every step of the way.”

“I was very impressed with the timeliness and help that I received, Daniel. Thank you so much for your assistance.”

In addition to co-Chairing the Social Assistance Advisory Committee, NLS' Heath Soave coordinated all trainings for a Toronto Study group of income security advocates as well as one provincial training this year, on:

- Municipal politics and processes
- Judicial notice and utilizing affidavits in hearings
- Train the Trainer workshop with CLEO on social assistance
- ODSP and Prescribed Classes
- Accessing and understanding government benefits

Immigration Work

Our immigration law team in 2021–2022 consisted of Asiya Hirji, Damey Lee (articling student), Natasha Manning, and Nadia Nadeem (articling student). Asiya joined NLS in 2018 and was a talented immigration litigator, benefitting many in the NLS community before she decided to pursue a new career path.

We thank Asiya for her service to NLS clients! We were pleased to welcome back Natasha Manning as our Senior Staff Lawyer for Immigration and also Intake Team Manager. Natasha articulated at NLS many years ago and returns with a wealth of experience from throughout the legal clinic system. Damey was a super articling student who achieved great results for clients in her short time with us. We were pleased to welcome Nadia as our immigration articling student this year.

In 2021–2022, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a major impact on our immigration practice. Closures of visa offices worldwide at the beginning of the pandemic caused a major backlog in immigration processing. The backlog of applications reached a high of over 2.5 million files. The backlog affected the length of time Immigration files were open and increased the amount of correspondence required for each file. Nonetheless, our Immigration team provided summary advice, brief legal services, or full representation on **136 cases**, representing 85% of usual volume.

In 2021–2022, our immigration practice continued to focus on our three priority areas of family reunification, regularization or maintenance of legal status, and overcoming barriers to citizenship. We provided a range of services as needed, such as representation regarding permanent residence (PR) and temporary residence applications; submissions relating to inadmissibility; judicial reviews, and motions to stay deportations. Our immigration law team provides these services to clients from over 40 countries of origin.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) this year introduced yet another online application portal for clients. The ability to submit applications electronically is helpful, however not always efficient for NLS' clients who do not often have knowledge of or access to technology. As with our housing and income security legal work, the digitalization and transition to virtual immigration hearings during the pandemic has remained and poses an obstacle for many of our clients.

We have assisted many clients with Humanitarian and Compassionate (H&C) applications, and many refugees with obtaining permanent residence, many of whom have included their family members overseas on those applications. A reoccurring issue this year was with renewing permanent resident cards for those without a passport from their country of origin. In fact, a Judicial Review on this matter was settled for a client who had lived in Canada for 40 years, had lost his foreign identification in a fire, and had no means of currently obtaining identification from his country of origin.

Other highlights of advocacy from our immigration team in 2021–2022 included:

Advocating for Family Reunification

- A refugee client's overseas family members' file was closed for failure to communicate regarding his two minor children, and for a third child it was closed because DNA testing showed he was not the biological father. We successfully petitioned for the two biological children's applications to be reopened. A Judicial Review was settled regarding the non-biological de facto child so that the Applicant is again in process.
- A client had previously been denied a visitor visa three times to visit her terminally ill father who is a Canadian Citizen. She had submitted these applications on her own without legal assistance. Once she came to NLS we assisted the client with filing a new, more detailed application which was approved for her and one of her children.
- We assisted a grandmother with extending her visitor status for a third time so that she could assist her daughter, a domestic abuse survivor, with getting back on her feet. The childcare she is providing has allowed the mother to attend school and work part-time as she rebuilds her life.

Testimonials from Clients

"Hello Natasha, I hope you're doing well. Just wanted to say thanks once again. I can't express what it means to me and what my level of gratitude is. What NLS has done is something that I will never forget. You gave me my second birthday on April 5, 2022. I think it was a destiny that we worked together. I wish you all the best and hope to meet you in future in person to express my genuine gratitude."

"Thank you very much for your patience, love and help! It's a great help for our whole family! I'm sure when my daughter grows up she will be grateful for your help during this special time in our lives!"

"We are so thankful for all your help. You and your team are of amazing. You have helped us and we are so grateful. Your team and organization are the only one who took interest and helped me. I will be forever grateful. Thank you for your patience and compassion. I will definitely keep the number and referrals all my friends to your services."

Advocating for Permanent Residence for Non-status People

- A settled Judicial Review for a H&C Application where the best interests of the child were not considered despite the client being a minor when the Application was submitted.
- A client's marriage dissolved, and his sponsorship application was withdrawn leaving him with no status in Canada. We submitted a strong H&C Application that was ultimately denied. Our assessment of the decision was that it contained several legal errors. Nadia Nadeem argued her first Judicial Review before the Federal Court and a positive decision was rendered based on the best interests of the children.
- A successful H&C application for a client with a disability. He is a hardworking and skilled man whose biggest obstacle in Canada was his lack of status. He obtained skilled employment within a week of his H&C approval.

Public Legal Education

Our immigration team has regularly participated in speaking engagements in the community over the last year:

- Our Immigration Team delivered a webinar on Pathway to PR for Healthcare Workers at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT). (May 2021)
- Our team delivered a training to the Junior Refugee Lawyers Network on motions to stay deportations. (May 2021)
- Our Immigration Team delivered a webinar on new Permanent Resident (PR) processes to clients of the Mennonite New Life Centre. (September 2021)
- We delivered a webinar for staff and clients of CCVT on family reunification and processing of applications during the COVID-19 pandemic (August 2021), and on H&C applications versus refugee claims. (September 2021)
- Along with members from the Inter-Clinic Immigration Working Group (ICIWG) members, we delivered a webinar on H&C applications and temporary resident permits for the Lincoln Alexander School of Law's Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL) Chapter. (February 2022)

Systemic Advocacy & Law Reform

Throughout the year, our immigration team shared immigration law knowledge with colleagues through the Inter-Clinic Immigration Working Group (ICIWG) and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. We also assisted with advocacy initiatives through ICIWG such as writing letters to Minister Fraser in support of the Access to Justice Campaign. Natasha is currently the ICIWG Chair.

We also continue to participate in the *Family Separation Litigation Working Group*, coordinated through the Canadian Council for Refugees with an intention to make improvements to the processing time for dependents of refugee applications. The working group is in the grassroots/ planning phase, and we intend to contribute more substantively in the upcoming year.

Our Executive Director Jennie Stone, who was NLS' Staff Lawyer for Immigration for many years, works with our immigration team on files from time to time. She also serves as the Co-Chair of the Canadian Council for Refugees' Legal Affairs Committee. The CCR regularly initiates or intervenes in impact litigation to pursue and protect migrants' rights and through this role, we are able to bring forward the perspective front-line serving community legal aid clinics to impact litigation.



In June 2021, Jennie along with colleagues from the University of Ottawa published a peer-reviewed article, drawn from years of research borne out of casework at NLS and supported by the CCR, laying out the barriers to citizenship faced by refugees and family class sponsored immigrants. This paper is titled, *Aiming at Civic Integration? How How Canada's Naturalization Rules are Sideline Refugees and Family-Class Immigrants*.



Honouring Francisco Rico-Martinez May 10, 1958 – August 13, 2021

This year we lost a dear friend and fierce advocate for the rights of refugees, Francisco Rico-Martinez. Along with his life partner Loly Rico, they founded the FCJ Refugee Centre which has helped countless displaced people rebuild their lives. We will never forget Francisco and commit to honouring his life's work to walk with uprooted people.

Employment Work

NLS continues to be a partner clinic to the *Toronto East Employment and Immigration Law Services Program*. Although we do not make use of the immigration resources of TEEILS, through TEEILS NLS community members receive the services approximately one half-day per week of employment lawyer Andrew Langille.

Andrew provides legal advice and representation to clients of the TEEILS clinic partners (Willowdale Community Legal Services, Don Valley Community Legal Services, West Scarborough Community Legal Services, and Scarborough Community Legal Services). Andrew also consults regularly with clients of the Health Justice Program and supports us to be able to help clients navigate remedies related to rights at work. In 2021–2022, Andrew provided employment law summary advice, brief legal services or full representation to **48 clients**, representing 57% of our usual volume in this area of law.

TEELS work at Neighbourhood Legal Services in 2021–2022 has continued to cover all areas of workplace law (employment insurance, labour law, human rights, employment law, taxation law, etc.) and has included appearances or representation on behalf of NLS clients at the Labour Program, Service Canada and the Employment Insurance Commission, Canadian Industrial Relations Tribunal, the Ontario Labour Relations Board, Canada Revenue Agency, the Social Security Tribunal, the Ontario Court of Justice, and the Human Rights Tribunal

of Ontario. Andrew's work resulted in awards or settlements and employment insurance benefits secured for clients through formal and informal interventions with Service Canada.

Andrew and DVCLS appeared as intervenor at the Supreme Court of Canada in April 2021 in a case known as *Horrocks*. The Court ruled that an employment discrimination dispute involving a unionized worker should be settled by a labour arbitrator appointed under the collective agreement, not by a human rights adjudicator. This facilitates better access to justice for unionized workers.

The Health Justice Program

The Health Justice Program (HJP) is an embedded legal referral service in the St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team.² This unique health justice partnership in a large urban Family Health Team, launched in late 2014, is the first in Canada to adopt a poverty law and social justice lens.

The logo for the Health Justice Program features a stylized blue icon on the left consisting of three interlocking loops. To the right of the icon, the words "HEALTH JUSTICE PROGRAM" are stacked vertically in a bold, sans-serif font. "HEALTH" and "JUSTICE" are in blue, while "PROGRAM" is in a darker blue.

St. Michael's
Inspired Care.
Inspiring Science.

This partnership is comprised of St. Michael's Hospital's Academic Family Health Team, Unity Health Toronto, Neighbourhood Legal Services (taking the administrative lead) and three collaborating legal clinics: Aboriginal Legal Services, ARCH Disability Law Centre, and the HIV and AIDS Legal Clinic of Ontario (HALCO). Each organization involved in the program has complementary expertise working with vulnerable populations. We continue to develop and deliver legal support to address the legal issues of vulnerable individuals around their social determinants of health, stabilize clients' situations, and where possible, prevent cascading problems.

² Patient population approximately 55,000 (30% of whom live under the Low-Income Measure) over five health clinic sites across the downtown east side of Toronto, with approximately 180 clinicians including physicians and allied health care providers.

The continued goals of the HJP are threefold:

- 1. To improve** social determinants of health where a legal remedy exists for low-income patients of St. Michael's Hospital's Family Health Team, and in turn improve the access to justice ("legal health") of this population through preventative, stabilizing interventions before they become crises. The direct service offered is the cornerstone of the program and helps to inform education and systemic advocacy initiatives.
- 2. To support** and cultivate clinicians' abilities to recognize and smartly refer legal issues that impact their patients' health. As such, our education program continues to strengthen the capacity of Family Health Team & related primary healthcare community to provide services with a knowledge of their patients' rights within the healthcare system and how to navigate appropriate legal resources in the community. In turn, the HJP aims to improve legal partners' ability to deliver service within a trusted primary care setting.
- 3. To identify** and take action on collaborative systemic law reform issues that impact low-income patients' social determinants of health, and to bring together the legal aid and medical partners in advocating for positive change for the betterment of the populations we jointly serve.

General Overview & Highlights

The HJP's functional "home base" is Neighbourhood Legal Services (NLS). During this past year, the HJP was served by **Marcello Ferrara** (HJP's full-time Legal Administrative Assistant), **Jennie Stone** (HJP Manager and Executive Director of NLS), and **Geraldine Thompson** (NLS Office Manager), and the following NLS-HJP caseworkers: **Heath Soave** (Income Security Paralegal); **Victoria Peter** (Housing lawyer since September 2021); **Brendan Jowett** (Housing lawyer; on parental leave from September 2021); **Linette King** (Housing lawyer until August 2021); **Molly Churchill** (Housing lawyer from November 2021–2022); **Asiya Hirji** (Immigration lawyer until June 2021); and **Natasha Manning** (Immigration lawyer since June 2021). From time to time **Judith Norris** (File Administration Assistant) also assisted with HJP intakes.

We also had several law students contribute to the HJP this year: **Carol MacLellan** from the Lincoln Alexander School of Law spent summer 2021 with the HJP on a fellowship through her law school; **Madeleine Thomas**, University of Toronto Health Law Extern spent one day per week during the academic year working on various initiatives including intakes for the HJP. We also ran the PBSC-HJP Wills & Power of Attorney Clinic again this year with the incredible volunteer support of **Ed Montigny**, who trained and supervised **Junghi Woo** and **Tyrone Davis** from Osgoode Hall Law School's Pro Bono Students Canada program throughout the year.

St. Michael's Hospital amalgamated with St. Joseph's Hospital and Providence Healthcare to form Unity Health Toronto in the previous year. A new permanent Memorandum of Understanding between NLS and the St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team is drafted and was awaiting signatures by year end.

Status of Outcomes: Expanding & Increasing Client Services

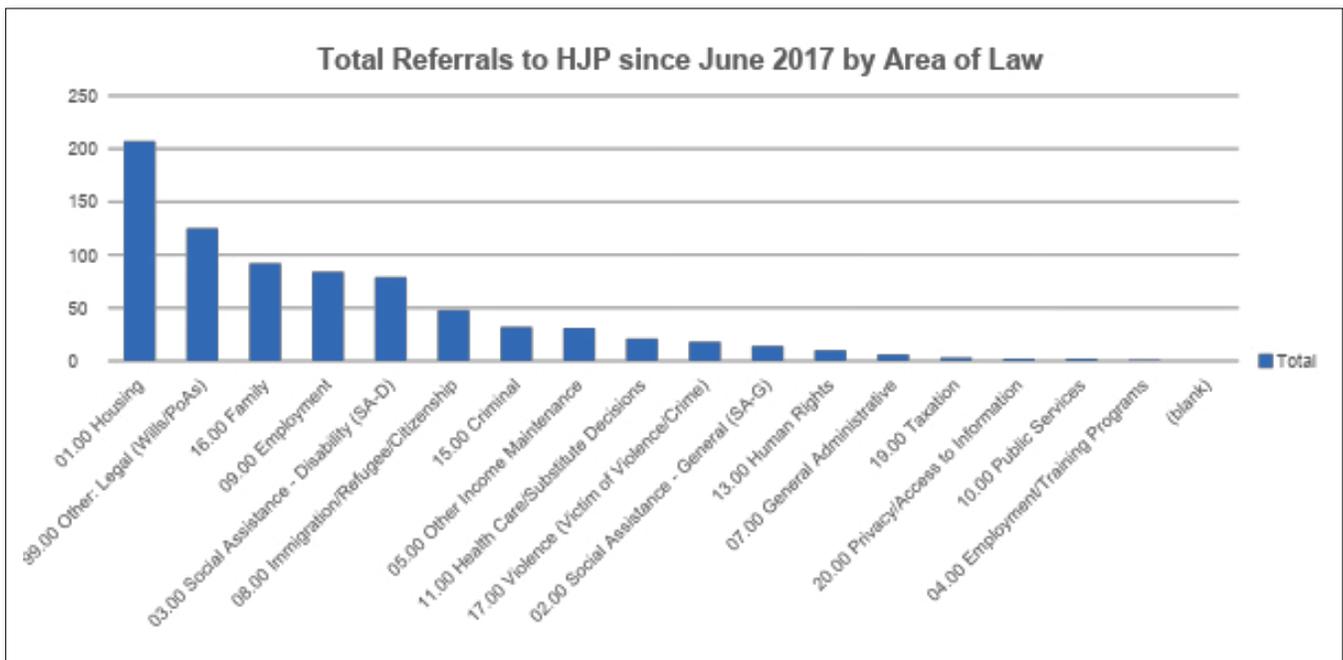
1. Direct Service. Our goal is to continue and expand the provision of enhanced services to clients via St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team. We aim to serve 350 people a year.

The trajectory of **direct service** intakes **continues to demonstrate expanded areas of law**, and the number of patients we assisted this year was consistent compared to the year prior. Since the launch of the community legal clinics' new Client Information Management System database (CIMS) which took place in late Q1 of 2017, intakes have averaged about 24 per month. Last year (2020-2021) we saw 276 intakes, about 23 per month. **This reporting year (2021–2022) we saw 273 intakes, again at about 23 per month.**

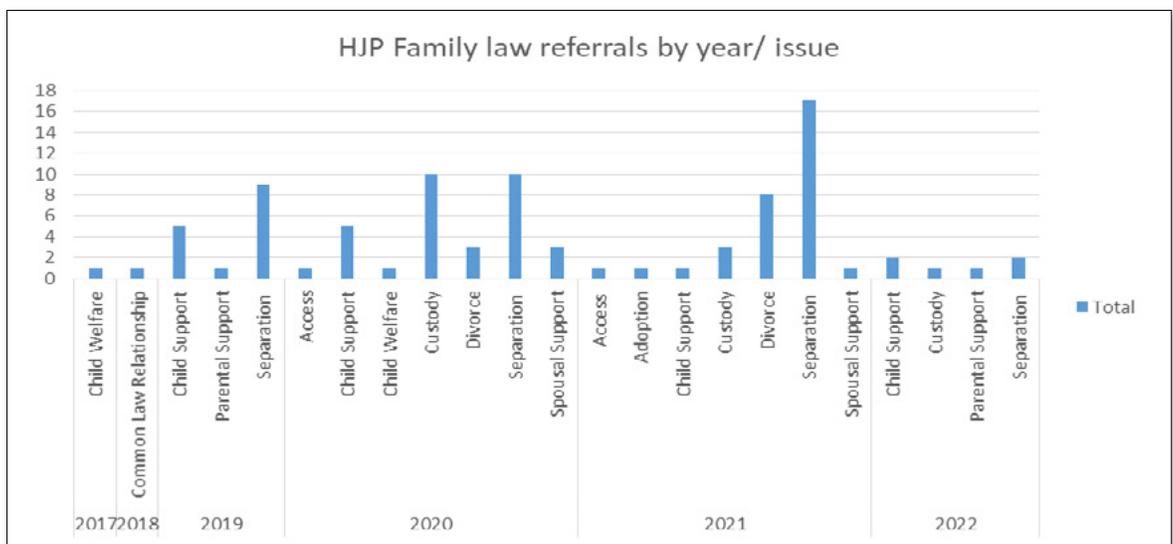
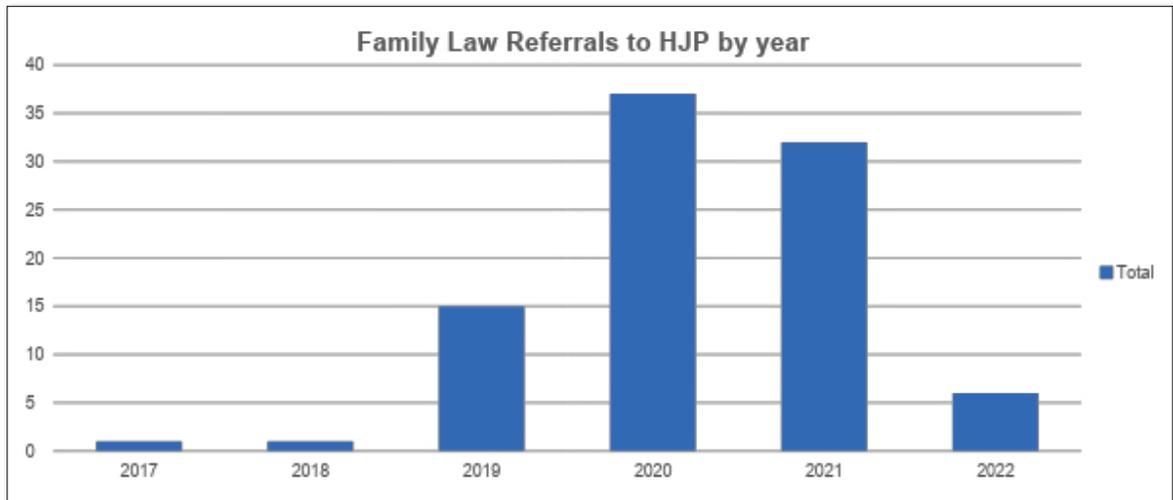
- Neighbourhood Legal Services, pre-pandemic, normally served about 1800 clients per year. The past year saw us serving only 1000 clients. Of these, 27% of our cases come through the Health Justice Program. This echoed our numbers during the first year of the pandemic, when again almost a third of NLS' legal matters came by way of the HJP. This speaks to the great importance of this access point for low-income community members. When the pandemic was in its second year, this partnership still proved to be an effective means of accessing legal services so long as people remained connected to their primary healthcare providers at St. Mike's.

HJP Areas of Law 2021–2022 <i>Please note: Top issues bolded; non-clinic italicized</i>	Percentage of overall cases
Health/Estates/PoA – 43	16%
<i>Privacy/Access to Information – 2</i>	<1%
Employment – 36	13%
<i>Criminal – 8</i>	<1%
Income Security – 44	16%
<i>Violence (Victim of Violence/Crime) – 8</i>	<1%
General Administrative – 4	<1%
Housing – 84	31%
Family – 30	11%
Immigration/Refugee/Citizenship – 12	<1%
Taxation – 1	<1%
273	

- Our services continue to cover all the “I-HELP”³ Factors (income, housing, employment, immigration, and personal safety/stability such as family law and violence), but also include expanded areas of law (highlighted in yellow). For the areas of law that fall outside of our legal clinic expertise, we make connections across various legal services such as for wills/ estates law, criminal law and others.
- An important story to tell about the 2021–2022 (and the 2020–2021) years is around the increase in family law referrals. The below tables present a picture of the increased demand for family law services during the pandemic. This trend reflects what has been called the “shadow pandemic” of domestic violence in light of people being required to stay at home. Patients referred to the HJP for family law system navigation are often in crisis. Our intake staff and students need proper crisis response training in order to handle the system navigation well, and for their own wellness. We are also exploring a fundraising initiative to try to hire a family lawyer on a per diem to help us with these cases. Family law falls outside community legal clinics’ expertise, and we believe the burden on intake workers is not sustainable without more support.



3 www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6506975



Case highlights from 2021–2022 include:

- A patient was denied a legal aid certificate for her custody and child support matter. She had received a settlement for pain and suffering after being in a car accident years ago, and although she is on ODSP (where her award is exempt as an asset), LAO stated that she must spend down this asset before she can be eligible for state-supported representation. We helped her appeal this decision, since she has been in an intractable family law dispute for many years and her ex had stated his goal was to make her spend down her nest egg on legal fees. At the time of writing, we are still awaiting a decision.
- A very ill and elderly patient faced eviction into homelessness for rental arrears. He was not on the lease; the family member who was on the lease was estranged and not contactable. A number of roommates living in the unit had fallen behind on their rent during the pandemic and this led to the eviction proceedings. Our housing lawyer was able to work with the patient's social worker to secure him supportive housing where his medical-related needs would be met instead.

- A patient wanted her partner to leave the family home, but he refused. He was exerting control over her and was emotionally abusive. Our legal team brainstormed a creative solution, for her to seek a special priority transfer from Toronto Community Housing and to also get legal advice on custody and support.
- A patient experienced trauma after the police raided her home in error (they were looking for her neighbour). She and her children sought a housing transfer due to this traumatic incident. We warmly referred them to the Black Legal Action Centre for advocacy.
- The now-defunct Criminal Injuries Compensation Board settled a Judicial Review of their decision relating to a HJP client who had experienced a life-altering assault. The CICB agreed to award her the highest possible monetary remedy.

2. Education. Our goal of education, to ensure clinicians are well-armed to identify legal issues, ideally “upstream”, and make smart referrals, as well as ensuring lawyers are better informed about how to deliver legal services within a health care setting, underlines our work at many points and in the reporting year took multiple forms.

Education highlights from 2021–2022 include:

- In May 2021 our outgoing PBSC student Jamie Ahn, after conducting considerable research and casework on this issue, delivered an online training module for Child Support Payors ageing onto old age benefits (posted on our [website](#) and social media account)
- Working together with Dr. Rami Shoucri, the Clinical Champion for the HJP and select members of the Education Sub-Committee, we signed a contract with University of Toronto (U of T) Press to produce a textbook on health-harming legal needs for primary healthcare providers. We have recruited co-chapter leads from the legal and health fields for 13 chapters to assist primary care professionals identify and address health harming legal needs. The outlines for the chapters were completed by end-March and the first drafts are to be completed by end-June 2022. The manuscript is to be delivered to U of T Press in the spring of 2023.
- At the end of March 2022, HJP staff together with colleagues from Aboriginal Legal Services (Caitlyn Kasper and Cassandra Fitzgibbon), a lawyer in private practice (Louis Alexiou), and Michael Adia from the FHT’s social work team delivered Grand Rounds on family law system navigation. We were able to highlight a number of intersectional issues in these cases that call for interprofessional collaboration. A key takeaway for healthcare providers was to ensure patients seek out legal advice before they enter into any child protection agreements.

3. Our goal of pursuing **Systemic Law Reform as it relates to Health Justice** continues. To date, this work has been reactive and broad-based, to reflect the many areas of law the HJP encounters.

Notable advocacy highlights for 2021–2022 include:

Fresh Start Coalition Campaign

NLS and the Health Justice Program are part of the “Fresh Start Coalition”, a community of about 85 civil society organizations that are calling for reform of criminal records, which hampers many of our clients. freshstartcoalition.ca

The issue: In 2015, Canada elected a federal government that promised comprehensive reform to our criminal justice system. In January 2016 the Minister of Public Safety announced that the government would consider meaningful reforms to the *Criminal Records Act*. It is 2022 – and we are still waiting for the promised changes. And in the meantime, tens of thousands of Canadians have continued to carry the unnecessary burden of an old criminal record. It stops them from getting further education, jobs and stable housing. It widens the net of systemic discrimination, deepening inequality. And it prevents people from moving on and rebuilding their lives, harming individuals, families and communities.

The Canadian government needs to support people in their efforts to move beyond their past. We are calling on the government to transition to a spent regime – automatically removing the burden of a criminal record for access to basic employment and housing if individuals have successfully completed their sentence and lived in the community for years without new criminal convictions. It would make our communities safer, and increase stability, community connection and hope for tens of thousands of people across the country.

Canada Child Tax Benefit for All Campaign

Eligibility for CCTB is currently dependent on parents' immigration status in Canada. This situation puts many children and women in Canada at harm's way, reduced to poverty. Many are forced to stay in abusive relationships in order to be eligible for this income. Many are issued overpayments because they had to leave abusive relationships.

Currently, our sister clinics the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC) and ISAC are engaged in litigation over this issue; however, there is room for continued community pressure and advocacy.

NLS and the Health Justice Program are part of this campaign. We are seeking to educate our partner organizations and ask them to support. We also continue to press the government to respond to this through petitions and speaking with MPs.

HJP Role in SDOH Advocacy Subcommittee

HJP staff are actively involved in the FHT's Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Committee. In 2021–2022, NLS' ED & HJP Manager Jennie Stone was co-chair of the SDOH Committee's Advocacy Subcommittee, and NLS' Community Legal Worker Daniel Bastien is also on this Subcommittee. Through this role Jennie currently co-facilitates the process for any requests to the department to sign onto advocacy statements or positions. Jennie also co-facilitates the bi-annual process to attract, vet, and vote on a one- to two-year departmental advocacy project.

A proposal selected by the Department of Community and Family Medicine (50% of staff must support per the Advocacy Framework) further to the April General Staff meeting is entitled, "Accessibility for All" which sets out a plan to have the FHT be a leading healthcare provider on an inclusive process to develop and implement (and go beyond) the AODA's Healthcare Provider Accessibility Standards.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

March 31, 2022

HILBORNLLP

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Directors of Neighbourhood Legal Services

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Neighbourhood Legal Services (the "Organization"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2022, and the statements of operations, funds balance and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organization as at March 31, 2022, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the ability of the Organization to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process of the Organization.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

Independent Auditor's Report (continued)

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements (continued)

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control of the Organization.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the Organization to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.



Toronto, Ontario
September 15, 2022

Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2022

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Cash	-	2,043	-	19,301	21,344
Accounts receivable	9,509	-	-	8,108	17,617
HST recoverable	12,951	96	-	-	13,047
Prepaid expenses	71,573	-	-	-	71,573
	94,033	2,139	-	27,409	123,581
Capital assets (note 3)	-	-	139,556	-	139,556
Total assets	94,033	2,139	139,556	27,409	263,137
LIABILITIES					
Current Liabilities					
Bank indebtedness	47,004	-	-	-	47,004
Accounts payable	10,159	-	-	-	10,159
Inter-fund payable (receivable)	(783)	(6,922)	-	7,705	-
	56,380	(6,922)	-	7,705	57,163
FUNDS BALANCE	37,653	9,061	139,556	19,704	205,974
Total liabilities and funds balance	94,033	2,139	139,556	27,409	263,137

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

Approved on behalf of the Board:

habib abdullahi

Director
Neighbourhood Legal Services

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2021

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Cash	7,664	7,461	-	14,995	30,120
Accounts receivable	9,509	-	-	-	9,509
HST recoverable	11,221	58	-	4,883	16,162
Prepaid expenses	37,677	-	-	-	37,677
	<u>66,071</u>	<u>7,519</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19,878</u>	<u>93,468</u>
Capital assets (note 3)	-	-	166,199	-	166,199
Total assets	<u>66,071</u>	<u>7,519</u>	<u>166,199</u>	<u>19,878</u>	<u>259,667</u>
LIABILITIES					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts payable	1,681	-	-	-	1,681
Inter-fund payable (receivable)	(4,605)	152	-	4,453	-
	<u>(2,924)</u>	<u>152</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,453</u>	<u>1,681</u>
FUNDS BALANCE	<u>68,995</u>	<u>7,367</u>	<u>166,199</u>	<u>15,425</u>	<u>257,986</u>
Total liabilities and funds balance	<u>66,071</u>	<u>7,519</u>	<u>166,199</u>	<u>19,878</u>	<u>259,667</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Operations and Funds Balance

Year ended March 31, 2022

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
Revenues					
-direct receipts	1,149,921	7,000	-	-	1,156,921
-indirect receipts (note 4)	68,450	-	-	-	68,450
City of Toronto	-	-	-	24,530	24,530
Donations	-	-	-	4,056	4,056
	<u>1,218,371</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>28,586</u>	<u>1,253,957</u>
Expenses					
Salaries	772,318	-	-	22,650	794,968
Benefits	126,958	-	-	1,657	128,615
Professional dues	13,766	-	-	-	13,766
Professional services	23,880	-	-	-	23,880
Travel	1,297	-	-	-	1,297
Communications	16,889	-	-	-	16,889
Accommodation	168,516	-	-	-	168,516
Equipment	5,580	-	-	-	5,580
Library	1,884	-	-	-	1,884
Supplies and services	13,483	-	-	-	13,483
Audit fees	5,374	-	-	-	5,374
Indirect payments (note 4)	68,450	-	-	-	68,450
Legal disbursements	-	5,306	-	-	5,306
Amortization	-	-	26,643	-	26,643
	<u>1,218,395</u>	<u>5,306</u>	<u>26,643</u>	<u>24,307</u>	<u>1,274,651</u>
Excess of revenues over expenses (expenses over revenues)	(24)	1,694	(26,643)	4,279	(20,694)
Return of funding to Legal Aid Ontario	(31,318)	-	-	-	(31,318)
Funds balance, beginning of year	68,995	7,367	166,199	15,425	257,986
Funds balance, end of year	<u>37,653</u>	<u>9,061</u>	<u>139,556</u>	<u>19,704</u>	<u>205,974</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Operations and Funds Balance

Year ended March 31, 2021

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
Revenues					
-direct receipts	1,117,463	4,490	-	-	1,121,953
-indirect receipts (note 4)	47,646	-	-	-	47,646
The Toronto Foundation	-	-	-	71,802	71,802
Donations	-	-	-	96	96
Recovered from clients	-	200	-	-	200
Other income	-	-	-	1,462	1,462
Temporary wage subsidy	15,125	-	-	-	15,125
	<u>1,180,234</u>	<u>4,690</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>73,360</u>	<u>1,258,284</u>
Expenses					
Salaries	736,634	-	-	-	736,634
Benefits	126,514	-	-	-	126,514
Professional dues	11,861	-	-	-	11,861
Professional services	25,358	-	-	-	25,358
Travel	5,823	-	-	-	5,823
Communications	9,742	-	-	-	9,742
Accommodation	139,332	-	-	-	139,332
Equipment	5,308	-	-	-	5,308
Library	564	-	-	-	564
Supplies and services	18,675	-	-	65,777	84,452
Audit fees	4,854	-	-	-	4,854
Indirect payments (note 4)	47,646	-	-	-	47,646
Legal disbursements	-	5,513	-	-	5,513
Project expenses	-	-	-	315	315
Amortization	-	-	30,311	-	30,311
	<u>1,132,311</u>	<u>5,513</u>	<u>30,311</u>	<u>66,092</u>	<u>1,234,227</u>
Excess of revenues over expenses (expenses over revenues)	47,923	(823)	(30,311)	7,268	24,057
Transfer to Capital Fund	(4,452)	-	10,477	(6,025)	-
Funds balance, beginning of year	25,524	8,190	186,033	14,182	233,929
Funds balance, end of year	<u>68,995</u>	<u>7,367</u>	<u>166,199</u>	<u>15,425</u>	<u>257,986</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Excess of revenues over expenses (expenses over revenues) for year	(20,694)	24,057
Return of funding to Legal Aid Ontario Item not affecting cash	(31,318)	-
Amortization	26,643	30,311
	(25,369)	54,368
Changes in non-cash working capital		
Increase in accounts receivable	(8,108)	(2,221)
Decrease (increase) in HST recoverable	3,115	(4,965)
Increase in prepaid expenses	(33,896)	(12,471)
Increase (decrease) in accounts payable	8,478	(20,572)
Increase in bank indebtedness	47,004	-
Decrease in deferred revenue	-	(124)
	(8,776)	14,015
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of capital assets	-	(10,477)
Net change in cash	(8,776)	3,538
Cash, beginning of year	30,120	26,582
Cash, end of year	21,344	30,120

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements

March 31, 2022

Neighbourhood Legal Services (the "Organization"), is incorporated without share capital under the laws of the Province of Ontario and is a registered charitable organization. The Organization was formed to provide equal access to quality legal services for the low-income citizens of the Don Valley East area and is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario.

The Organization qualifies as a not-for-profit organization under the Income Tax Act and is exempt from corporate income tax.

1. Significant accounting policies

a) Fund accounting

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and are in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. The Organization follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions whereby all contributions are recognized as revenue of the applicable fund when received or receivable. All the funds described below, except as noted, are restricted as to use by various agreements between the Organization and Legal Aid Ontario ("LAO") and title to the Organization assets vests with the funder.

i) General Fund

These funds are used to provide a range of legal and paralegal services, including information, advice and representation, to low-income individuals and families.

ii) Legal Disbursements Fund

These funds are used to provide for certain direct expenses incurred in representing organization clients in legal proceedings. Disbursements recovered from clients are recorded in revenue when received.

iii) Capital Fund

This fund holds the capital assets of the Organization that have been funded by LAO.

iv) Non-LAO Fund

These funds are received from non-LAO sources and are used to fund expenditures as approved by the Board of Directors and as per project funding agreements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

March 31, 2022

1. Significant accounting policies (continued)

b) Government assistance

In addition to its regular program funding the Organization may also receive non-program specific government assistance. Government assistance is recognized as revenue when the related expenses are incurred or when there is reasonable assurance that the Organization has complied with or will comply with all conditions of the assistance, and collection is reasonably assured. During the year, the Organization received \$nil (2021 - \$15,125) under the Temporary Wage Subsidy Program as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and this amount is recorded as revenue in the General fund. The amount is not subject to any specific future terms or conditions. However, the Canada Revenue Agency may require additional reporting in a future period to verify the Organization's eligibility and compliance with the terms and conditions of the subsidy.

c) Capital assets

The costs of capital assets are capitalized upon meeting the criteria for recognition as capital assets, otherwise, costs are expensed as incurred. The cost of a capital asset comprises its purchase price and any directly attributable cost of preparing the asset for its intended use.

Capital assets are presented at cost less accumulated amortization and accumulated impairment losses.

Capital assets are tested for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that its carrying amount may not be recoverable. If any potential impairment is identified, then the amount of the impairment is quantified by comparing the carrying value of the capital assets to its fair value. Any impairment of capital assets is charged to operations in the period in which the impairment occurs.

An impairment loss is not reversed if the fair value of the capital assets subsequently increases.

The Organization provides for amortization using methods at rates designed to amortize the cost of the capital asset over their estimated useful lives. Amortization is provided on a straight-line basis, over the following periods:

Computer equipment	- 3 years
Telephone equipment	- 8 years
Leasehold improvements	- over the term of the lease

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

March 31, 2022

1. Significant accounting policies (continued)

d) Financial instruments

i) Measurement of financial instruments

The Organization initially measures its financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value adjusted by, in the case of a financial instrument that will not be measured subsequently at fair value, the amount of transaction costs directly attributable to the instrument.

The Organization subsequently measures its financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost.

Financial assets measured at amortized cost include cash and accounts receivable.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include bank indebtedness and accounts payable.

ii) Impairment

Financial assets measured at amortized cost are tested for impairment annually for indicators of possible impairment. When a significant adverse change has occurred during the period in the expected timing or amount of future cash flows from the financial asset or group of assets, a write-down is recognized in the statement of operations and funds balance. The write down reflects the difference between the carrying amount and the higher of:

- the present value of the cash flows expected to be generated by the asset or group of assets;
- the amount that could be realized by selling the assets or group of assets;

When the events occurring after the impairment confirm that a reversal is necessary, the reversal is recognized in the statement of operations and funds balance up to the amount of the previously recognized impairment.

2. Financial instrument risk management

The Organization may be exposed to various risks through its financial instruments including credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk (including interest rate risk, currency risk and other price risk).

Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that the counterpart to a financial instrument will fail to discharge an obligation that is entered into with the Organization. The Organization is not exposed to significant credit risk.

Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Organization will not be able to meet a demand for cash or fund its obligations as they come due. The Organization is not exposed to significant liquidity risk.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

March 31, 2022

2. Financial instrument risk management (continued)

Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value of or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk is comprised of interest rate risk, currency risk, and other price risk. The Organization is not exposed to significant market risk.

- i) Interest rate risk arises from the possibility that changes in interest rates will affect the fair value of financial instruments.
- ii) Currency risk is the risk that the value of a financial instrument will fluctuate due to changes in foreign currencies.
- iii) Other price risk is the risk that the value of financial instruments will fluctuate as a result of changes in market prices, other than those arising from interest rate risk or currency risk, whether those changes are caused by factors specific to the individual financial instrument or its issuer, or factors affecting all similar financial instruments traded in a market.

The organization is not exposed to significant market risk

Changes in risk

There have been no changes in the Organization's risk exposures from the prior year.

3. Capital assets

Capital Fund	2022		
	Cost \$	Accumulated Amortization \$	Net \$
Computer equipment	20,715	17,223	3,492
Telephone equipment	5,833	5,833	-
Leasehold improvements	226,774	90,710	136,064
	<u>253,322</u>	<u>113,766</u>	<u>139,556</u>

Capital Fund	2021		
	Cost \$	Accumulated Amortization \$	Net \$
Computer equipment	20,715	13,730	6,985
Telephone equipment	5,833	5,360	473
Leasehold improvements	226,774	68,033	158,741
	<u>253,322</u>	<u>87,123</u>	<u>166,199</u>

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

March 31, 2022

4. Indirect payments

Legal Aid Ontario administers and makes payments on behalf of the Organization for the following expenditures:

General Fund	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Pension and group insurance	100	441
Supplies and services	68,021	46,801
Library expenses	329	404
	<u>68,450</u>	<u>47,646</u>

5. Lease commitments

The Organization is committed to lease its premises until June 30, 2028. Minimum lease payments including operating costs and realty taxes are as follows:

2023	\$	151,335
2024		152,772
2025		154,690
2026		156,607
2027		158,524
Thereafter		<u>200,671</u>
	\$	<u>974,599</u>

HILBORN

LISTENERS. THINKERS. DOERS.