



Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Message from the Chair

Two years ago the theme of the Kensington-Bellwoods AGM was “Will KB still be here in a year? We were. But last year at the time of the AGM there was some doubt as to whether KB would continue to exist much longer. A lot has changed on that front in the intervening year.

Throughout the Fall and Winter of 2014-2015, the Board with the help of its friends and staffer Tim Maxwell worked hard to convince people that acceptance of the Vision Report meant the death of the 14 clinics. Some highlights:

- We issued a series of responses in November and December 2014 to Communiqués from the Working Group of the GTA Transformation Project exposing flaws in their analysis.
- We met with representatives of our funder Legal Aid Ontario on November 25, 2014 to explain our position regarding “transformation” and learn something of their position.
- We organized (on a shoestring) a full-day Toronto General Service Community Legal Clinics conference on transformation which we held on January 17, 2015. It became evident during and after the conference that most of the clinics present did not support what amounted to the closure of their clinics.
- We prepared and widely circulated a post-conference report “The Transformation of Community Legal Clinics And The Pursuit of Justice” which ended with discussions of “Emerging Issues and Ideas” and “The Way Forward”. Many thanks to Tim and Karishma for their timely work on this!

By the time of the reconvening of the Steering Committee of the GTA Transformation Project on February 25, 2015, thirteen out of fourteen Toronto clinics indicated that they did not support the Project’s “Vision Report”, and in particular the move to close the local clinics.

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January Conference of Clinics and Communities



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While the Transformation Project attempted to move forward, Legal Aid Ontario requested a “work plan” that would justify the ongoing existence (and funding from LAO) of the Project. That work plan never materialized, so in June LAO withdrew funding for the Project, and it has been abandoned. Shortly after becoming aware of this, Kensington-Bellwoods sent out the following statement to our friends and colleagues in the clinic system:

We feel that the way forward for community legal clinics entails ongoing dialogue and development of initiatives especially around the areas of community engagement with local clinics, and systemic change in the legal system. This is important for each clinic that has been part of the Transformation Project. In addition, collaborative relationships that have been stimulated amongst clinics in the GTA through the Transformation Project need to continue and to grow. At the same time, stronger links are needed between all general service community legal clinics in the province as well as the specialty clinics. Many exciting initiatives are on or close to the horizon. Some have already been undertaken. We must all strive, with assistance from ACLCO and other transformation projects around the province, to capitalize on our existing resources and the increased funding across the system to build on the great work that has been accomplished by the clinic system over the last 40 years.

I would like to thank our community and our friends for their support in this fight. Moving forward the Kensington-Bellwoods Board has been able to direct its focus to our work in our community over the spring and summer, and now into the fall.

We held a Board-Staff “Advance” on June 6, 2015 where we spent most of our time discussing Community Development. This led to our new Community Development Strategy 2015-2017 which we are now implementing. One of the main goals of the Strategy is to implement at least one forum and/or campaign in each of the following general areas:

- Tenants’ Rights (forum held September 23, 2015)
- Workers’ Rights (forum held June 15, 2015)
- Income Maintenance (forum in the works for Nov/Dec 2015)
- Immigration
- Access to Justice
- Civic Engagement
- Social and Economic Justice.

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Tenant Rights Forum with St. Stephen’s Community House and Advocacy Centre for Tenants of Ontario



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And the forum following tonight's AGM (in partnership with University Settlement) is on the **Present State of Democracy and Justice in Canada** which spans a few of our general areas of concern.

We are striving to work with our neighbouring legal clinics and community partners as we implement our CD Strategy.

During the past year Kensington-Bellwoods staff have continued their excellent work "in the trenches" representing community members and providing summary advice and appropriate referrals as well! On behalf of the Board, I would like to express our thanks to all of our committed staff.

KBCLS Staff

- **Isabella Meltz** (Clinic Coordinator)
- **Mindy Lopes** (Community Legal Worker)
- **Rosa Tavares** (Support Staff on Leave)
- **Lee Tenenhouse** (Staff Lawyer)
- **Barb Hurd** (Community Legal Worker)
- **Nina Hall** (Staff Lawyer)
- **Emma van Leusden** (Staff Lawyer on Leave)
- **Laura Mulder** (Support Staff)
- **Tim Maxwell** (Community Initiatives and Communications)
- **Moira Daly** (Staff Lawyer)

In keeping with our new practice of having live music performances at all our events, I'd like to thank **Laura Fernandez** for her performances tonight.

And finally, I would like to thank the staff and board members of University Settlement for working with us to make this evening's AGM and Community Forum possible, in particular Board President **James Roy**; Executive Director **Patricia Jacobs**; and Program Manager **Tarik Bacchus**.

Gary Newhouse, Board Chair

October 1, 2015

THE STAFF WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THOSE WHO SERVED ON THE 2014-2015 KBCLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Simone Bern
Kevin Lee
Gary Newhouse

Andrew Cox
Ana Lewis
Karishma Prasanna

Rebecca Glass
Sophie Liao
Zachary Tucker-Abramson

Please join us for our OPEN HOUSE
Thursday, December 10th, 2015
2:00 to 6:00 pm
489 College Street, Suite 205, west of Bathurst

Community Forum on the Present State of Democracy and Justice in Canada

The Panel of the National Parties' Candidates in Spadina-Fort York and The Panel of Community Partners

Please note:

This is a Community Forum on specific, although admittedly broad, topics of national importance. It is not meant to be an "All-Candidates Meeting", although all local candidates of nationally represented parties were invited to participate. The Conservative Party candidate, Sabrina Zuniga, declined our invitation and therefore will not be on the panel of Candidates.

THIS EVENT HOSTED AND MODERATED BY



University Settlement
Founded 1910

ORGANIZED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



ADAM VAUGHAN, Liberal Party

Member of Parliament for Trinity-Spadina, and Liberal Party Candidate for the new riding of Spadina-Fort York. Adam was previously a City of Toronto Council Member.



OLIVIA CHOW, New Democratic Party

Olivia served as Member of Parliament for Trinity-Spadina from 2006-2014. Olivia also served as a Metro and City of Toronto Council Member.



SHARON DANLEY, Green Party

For decades Sharon has been a social justice advocate for housing, disability, equality and Co-facilitator of Survivors of Medical Abuse. She is an active community leader and volunteer.



AVVY GO

Director of **Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic**, Avvy is a Bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada and a Member of the Order of Ontario, the province's highest official honour for excellence.



GARY NEWHOUSE

Chair of the **KBCLS** Board, Gary is a practicing lawyer, an author of legal texts, and a recipient of the Ron Ellis Award from the Ontario Bar Association for his leadership and contributions to law and advocacy for working people.



JANE HILDERMAN

Executive Director of **Samara Canada**, Jane has planned and executed Samara's innovative research, including Democracy 360. Jane interned on Parliament Hill for both government and opposition benches.



JUNE MACDONALD

June has served many years on **Fair Vote Canada's** National Council as well as with the Toronto Chapter. June is an enthusiastic advocate of proportional voting as a better form of democracy for Canadians.