

Annual Report 2016-2017

35 Years
In Pursuit of Justice
For Low Income
People

1982 - 2017

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**Kensington-Bellwoods
Community Legal Services**

Report from the Chair

Gary Newhouse



There have been many changes since our last Annual General Meeting where we discussed the need for better tenant protection and to improve the lot for working people.

Changes at the clinic include: Isabella Meltz our long-time Clinic Coordinator retired in July. (See Zachary's article on page 4). Isabella was replaced by Wendy Atkinson. Wendy had been the Office Manager at West Toronto Community Legal Services.

Rosa Tavares, our senior Administrative Support staffer returned to the clinic in April following a leave of absence of about a year and a half. During her leave, Rosa was a Program and Litigation Assistant with the Health Justice Program run out of St. Michael's Hospital in partnership with a number of community legal clinics.

All of the staff have had to contend with the implementation of a new information management computer program called CIMS. It is now clear that CIMS is causing significant problems in the clinic system overall. Our clinic has experienced our share of those problems including an impact on the delivery of client services because of time lost due to data management difficulties. Kudos to all staff for their perseverance with CIMS!

Changes in laws and changes in the community that we serve have been significant. Thanks to the ongoing work of ACORN, ACTO and the Federation of Metro Tenants Associations, supported by community legal clinics and local tenant associations, the City of Toronto brought in a form of landlord licensing, forcing landlords to pay for a system of regular inspections and enforcement of maintenance standards; and the provincial government finally provided rental control to previously exempt units built after 1991 and has made it harder for landlords to get Above Guideline Increases in rent if buildings are in disrepair. Tenant will also get a standard form lease and a bit more protection from bogus "Landlord's Own Use" eviction applications.

The Fight for \$15 and Fairness has also seen great success with the introduction of Bill 148 which includes, among other things:

- A \$15 general minimum wage within 18 months
- Equal pay for part-time, casual, temporary and contract workers
- An extra week's paid vacation (after 5 years of service)
- 10 emergency leave days for all workers, two (2) of which will be paid and no doctor's note will be required for any worker taking emergency leave

Of course, the bosses are fighting hard against the implementation of these changes so we need to continue to support the \$15 and Fairness Campaign.

In June we held a community forum with **University Settlement** on immigration and refugee law where we discussed the need to fight proposed cuts to legal services to refugees. The efforts of the **Refugee Lawyers Association**, the **Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario** and many others have proven successful with the recent announcement that legal services to refugees will not be cut – *this fiscal year*. So, we'll have to keep an eye on this in the New Year.



On the issue of Citizenship, the federal government has introduced the following changes:

- **Revocation:** Dual citizens convicted of terrorism, spying or treason will face the Canadian justice. No one can strip their citizenship.
- **Intent:** Applicants are no longer required to express intent to continue to live in Canada after receiving citizenship.
- **Physical presence:** Permanent residents will have to be physically present in Canada for three out of five years before applying. Previously it was four out of five years. Another rule, requiring applicants to be in Canada for 183 days each year, is being scrapped. Permanent residents will now be allowed to go abroad to study, work or for family reasons without losing access to citizenship eligibility.
- **Prior days:** Time spent in Canada before becoming a permanent resident will now count toward the physical presence requirement, up to one year.
- **Knowledge and Language:** Only applicants between the ages of 18-54 will be required to take and pass a citizenship knowledge and language test.

(Source <http://www.metronews.ca>)

In the area of social assistance, we definitely need to continue the fight to raise social assistance benefit rates. However, we have seen a significant increase in allowable assets and child support payments that recipients can retain. As well, OW applicants no longer have to pursue child support in order to receive benefits.

With the recent release of 2016 Census data by **Statistics Canada**, we have learned that, in the seven City of Toronto neighbourhoods that we serve, there are more than 30,000 low income people in our community. (See map of service area on page 5) The prevalence of low income is greatest in the Bay Street Corridor, Kensington-Chinatown, and University with an increase in the prevalence of low income (by both LICO and LIM After Tax measures) in all three neighbourhoods since the 2011 Census.

We have also seen a significant increase in young people, 16 to 24 years of age, as well as an increase in seniors in the poorest areas. So we will be looking to work with our community partners and other legal clinics on outreach initiatives focused on low income youth and seniors. According to the 2016 Census, the dominant non-English language in our community is Mandarin, supporting the continuation of our Mandarin Mini-Clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays staffed by Fei Kuo.

Looking forward, there will be a Provincial election on June 7, 2017. Legal Aid Ontario, the funder of the Community Legal Clinic system, which includes our clinic, is largely funded by the Provincial Government. At election time, it is vital that the Clinic and our community remains vigilant to ensure that funding for clinics remains stable and continues to increase as it has over the last few years. All candidates and parties should be educated by us about the value of Community Legal Clinics; the need to maintain already promised funding increases; and the value of tying funding increases to objective indicators such as the Cost of Living Index—that way we can ensure that whichever party wins the next election, Community Legal Clinics will still be here!

PICS FROM
ISABELLA'S PARTY



Thanks to Isabella

By Zachary Tucker-Abramson

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

Harriet Tubman

Isabella Meltz was the co-ordinator at Kensington-Bellwoods for over 30 years. She started at the clinic in 1986 and retired on July 28 this year. The Tubman quote reminded me of Isabella. It reminded me of her leadership in a fight for a better world that inspired me to stay involved in the anti-poverty movement for the last seven years. Seven years ago I was looking for a placement as a Masters of Social Work Student and I came across Kensington-Bellwoods. With limited poverty experience they agreed to take me on as a student and demonstrate to me the amazing work this clinic does and clinics do in advocating on an individual and social level for marginalized communities in poverty. I was able to see the range of activities such as case work, research, and systemic advocacy that happens at the clinic. I was able to see firsthand how Isabella brought passionate and committed leadership and dedication to both the clinic and the greater cause.

Shortly after my placement Isabella showed her faith in me by asking me to join the board. It was with no previous board experience they decided to have me on the board. All too often people are not given chances to thrive and succeed but Isabella had a fundamental belief that if people are given an opportunity to thrive they can. It is this attitude and practice that is so important in the work we do. This is especially true for clinics that are committed to working with marginalized communities and committed to grassroots processes. We need to believe in communities that are too often tossed to the fringes of society and who too often are excluded from civic participation. Yet Isabella fundamentally believed if you're committed and have a strong set of principles and morals you could make a fundamental difference in your community.

Isabella has provided the board many years of visionary leadership that has inspired me to remain involved. It was her push and leadership that got us to lead the fight against the potential closure of our clinic and against a system that would take away the local community clinic model. Some at first would have called her a dreamer for urging the board to fight this. The odds were against us but it was through her patience, passion and strength we were encouraged to keep fighting even when we were faced with an uphill battle. This principled fight and commitment to social change and commitment to the system defines Isabella. It has been an honour to work with a dreamer who provided the passionate leadership and strength that has inspired me to continue to fight for a better and more equitable world with less poverty.



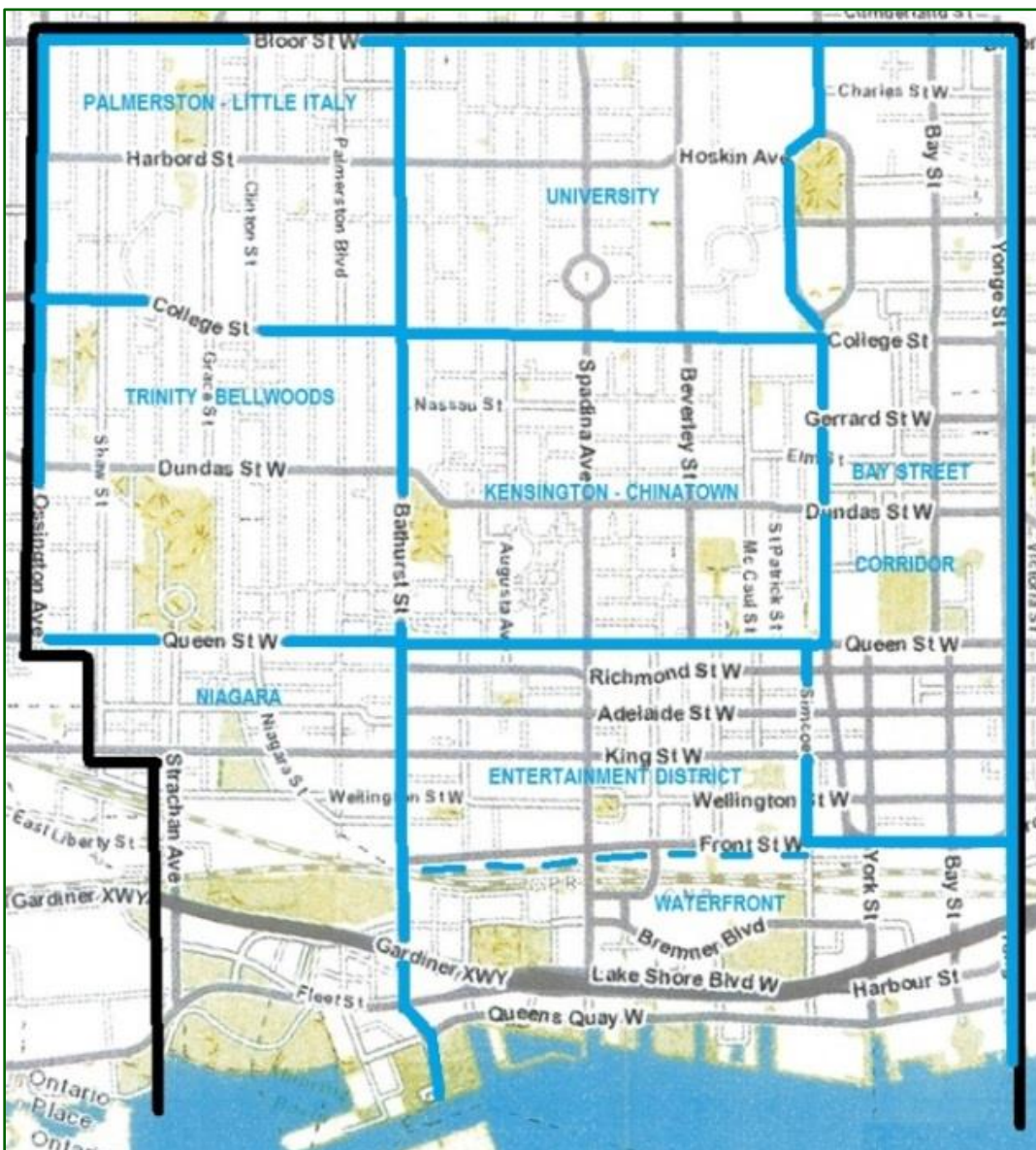
PHOTO DISPLAY GIFT BY MINDY LOPES

Our Community

We serve the neighbourhoods south of Bloor Street east of Ossington and Strachan Avenues and west of Yonge Street. We are run by a Board of Directors elected by our members who live or work in this community and agree with our principles. For more information about our services and how to become a member, please call us at 416-924-4244.



Map of Neighbourhoods Served





Financial Report

for the year ended March 31, 2017*

Revenue	2017	2016
Legal Aid Ontario		
Direct Receipts	861,581	856,792
Indirect Receipts	38,071	27,806
City of Toronto	15,356	
Other Income	55	4,757
	<u>915,063</u>	<u>889,355</u>
Expenses		
Salaries	578,872	598,344
Benefits	108,098	116,770
Professional Dues	6,019	6,182
Membership Fees	3,948	3,948
Travel	2,853	4,327
Communications	7,896	6,457
Accommodations	101,590	90,948
Equipment	6,144	5,949
Library	2,295	2,051
Supplies & Services	9,406	10,552
Indirect Payments	25,342	27,806
Audit Fees	3,867	3,347
Legal Disbursements	6,184	6,909
Amortization	4,517	1,601
	<u>867,031</u>	<u>885,191</u>
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	48,032	4,164
Interfund Transfer		
Refund of funding to LAO		-5,900
Funds balance (deficit), beginning of year	-18,188	-16,452
Funds balance, end of year	<u>29,844</u>	<u>-18,188</u>

*This is an unaudited Statement. Full audited Statements are available on request.

**KBCLS BOARD MEMBERS
2016-2017**

Chair
Gary Newhouse

Vice-Chair
Karishma Prasanna

Treasurer
Ted Brook

Secretary
**Zachary
Tucker-Abramson**

Jacque Chic

Rev. Maggie Helwig

Kevin Lee

Morli Shemesh

Jenny Shen

KBCLS STAFF MEMBERS

Wendy Atkinson
Clinic Coordinator

Esther Cerrato
Administrative
Support Staff

Nina Hall
Staff Lawyer

Melissa Jean-Baptiste
Staff Lawyer

Mindy Lopes
Community Legal Worker

Tim Maxwell
Community Initiatives and
Communications

Isabella Meltz
Clinic Coordinator
(Retired)

Rosa Tavares
Administrative
Support Staff

Lee Tenenhouse
Staff Lawyer

Fei Kuo
Mandarin Mini-Clinic
MCIS Interpreter

Marcia Richards
Tara Rawski
Clinic Support Workers





Our Principles

Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services is committed to providing legal assistance to low income persons in the area bounded by Ossington Avenue /Strachan Avenue, Yonge Street, Bloor Street and Lake Ontario. This includes providing summary advice, representation and assistance, as well as referral on non-legal matters of concern to clients; community outreach; community organizing; community education; and organizing law reform activities aimed at improving the legal and economic status of low income persons in Ontario.

Our goal is to work towards the elimination of poverty in our society, and to ensure equality before the law. To that end we are committed to working with other individuals and groups who share that goal, and to community organizing to bring about changes in the law that improve the legal and economic status of low income people in Ontario.

Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services is committed to a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship and/or disability.

Our Legal Services

Include:

Residential Tenants' Rights

Immigration and Refugee Law

Workers' Rights

Income Security
ODSP, CPP, OAS

Criminal Injuries
Compensation

Information and Referral for Victims of Domestic Violence

Affidavits and Statutory Declarations

PLEASE NOTE

THAT WE DO NOT PROVIDE LEGAL ADVICE ON THE FOLLOWING MATTERS:

Aboriginal Rights, Child Welfare, Correctional Law, Criminal, Family Law,
Public Services, Environmental Law, Healthcare or Wills and Estates.

HOWEVER, WE CAN REFER YOU TO OTHERS WHO MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.

**For more information or to book an appointment, please call:
416-924-4244**