PARKDALE
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT



PARKDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Contents

MESSAGES

- From the Board Co-Chairs 3
- From the Academic Director 4
- From the Co-Directors 6

YEAR IN REVIEW 8

- Housing Rights 9
- Workers' Rights 10
- Migrant Rights 12
- SAVAH 14

AWARDS

- Dorothy Leatch Award 16
- Frederick H.Zemans Prize in Poverty Law 17

BOARD, STAFF, AND STUDENTS 19

MESSAGES

PARKDALE
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CO-CHAIRS

Ian McKellar & Sarah Robicheau

As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful for the commitment and perseverance of the staff, law students, and community members who make the work of Parkdale Community Legal Services possible. In the face of ongoing challenges related to housing, income security, workers' rights, and immigration status, PCLS has continued to provide vital legal services while advocating for broader systemic change.

This year marked an important leadership transition for the clinic. We were pleased to welcome Tenzin Tekan back to PCLS as Clinic Director and to introduce a new joint leadership model, with Tenzin serving as Clinic Director alongside John No, who continues in his role as Director of Legal Services. We are excited about the opportunities this collaborative leadership structure brings and are especially grateful to John for his steady guidance, commitment, and stewardship throughout the transition.

Finally, we extend our sincere gratitude to our funders and supporters, including Legal Aid Ontario, Osgoode Hall Law School, and individual donors. Their support enables the PCLS to continue its vital work. Most importantly, we thank the members of the Parkdale community whose resilience, leadership, and advocacy inspire and strengthen our work every day.

MESSAGE FROM THE ACADEMIC DIRECTOR



Fathima Cader

As Academic Director at Parkdale Community Legal Services, I run the seminar that law students take as part of their clinical placement at PCLS. In keeping with PCLS' commitment to combating injustice within and despite the law, the seminar engages students in a wholistic study of law's purposes and its violences. It is a study grounded in material reality, with a particular focus on law's complicities in colonization and capitalism.

We study together as a means of deepening our commitments to collective struggle. This means that, as legal workers, we must be honest that the law is itself a key source of injustice. Often, our fight is against the law itself. A key theme in the seminar is how we can sharpen our role as legal workers who are operating within systems of legalized extraction and inequity. This was a point underscored at different points by moving guest lectures by Parmbir Gill and Prasanna Balasundaram.

Indeed, this past year alone, we have seen the provincial government attack tenant rights (Bill C-60) and reduce social assistance (amendments to Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program). As well, the federal government has enacted xenophobic new immigration laws (Bill C-12).

State violence is a reminder of the importance of community organizing. This is a central element of the PCLS vision. So I am proud of how enthusiastically some students take up this commitment to organizing outside class time and casework.

One example of this is the block party / art-build that PCLS held in September 2026. To my knowledge, this was the first time PCLS has had a party of this kind. Organizing it took a year and many hands. It started as a small suggestion I made in class in September 2025 that we paint a mural. PCLS students Angel Xing, Leah Gray, Miha Sanjida, Rebecca Jin, and Robin L worked to shepherd that idea into its ultimate form of a community banner-making day. As the day of the party approached, Miha and Robin worked especially tirelessly to spearhead the gathering.

The party was wonderful. It was a celebration of struggle and service. We had approximately 20 volunteers, some from PCLS, others from the neighbourhood, and others who came in from outside Toronto. Their efforts are why we had food and music, street medic services and face-painting. For me, some of sweetest moments included seeing how our neighbours kept coming back to the party. Seeing them return—and return again—felt like the clearest affirmation of what this gathering was meant to be: respite amid the class war that continues to ravage our neighborhood. By the end of the afternoon, people had collectively painted two striking banners for PCLS. Those banners have already adorned demonstrations across the city. Keep an eye out for more appearances at other actions!

A few weeks later, I ran into even more PCLS community at the Rama First Nation's annual Anishinaabe Law Camp. Getting to spend time at that powerful gathering with so many PCLS members was an important reminder of how PCLS's work is deeply intertwined with Indigenous resurgence—both in Parkdale and across the country.
I share these vignettes as examples of how PCLS is an important site of connection. Across struggle and across space, so many of us keep coming back here. I myself articled at PCLS many years ago, and it has been a deep joy and honour to spend the last few years as its Academic Director. So if there is one thing I want to do in this role, it is to help instill in PCLS students the same love for this clinic and this neighbourhood that keeps others like myself returning—and returning again. May the sweetness of our time together make our bonds stronger. May it make us braver, as we face down the long fight still to come, inside and outside the law.



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS





Tenzin Tekan
Clinic Director

John No
Director of Legal Services

This year has been one of growth, stability, and renewal for PCLS. We are especially pleased to be writing this message together as Co-Directors. Tenzin's return to the clinic and the introduction of the Co-Director structure have marked an exciting new chapter for PCLS, creating opportunities to draw on our complementary strengths as we work together to support the clinic's staff, students, and community.

Following several years of significant transition, including funding challenges, relocation, the pandemic, and leadership changes, we have continued to build organizational capacity while remaining grounded in our commitment to community. We are proud of the work carried out by our staff and students, whose dedication, skill, and compassion are reflected throughout this report.

Every day, our staff and students support community members facing complex and often interconnected challenges, including housing insecurity, precarious employment, barriers to income supports, discrimination, immigration-related concerns, and other forms of systemic injustice. While the issues confronting our communities continue to evolve, our commitment remains constant. We believe that access to justice means more than legal representation. It means standing alongside community members, supporting collective action, and working toward meaningful and lasting systemic change.

We are deeply grateful to our Board of Directors for their leadership and guidance. We also extend our sincere thanks to our core funder, Legal Aid Ontario, and to Osgoode Hall Law School, with whom we have maintained a longstanding and valued partnership.
We invite you to read this report and celebrate the achievements of the many people who contribute to PCLS. The stories and accomplishments highlighted in these pages remind us that, while much work remains to be done, there is also much reason for hope.

Year in Review

PARKDALE
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, PCLS continued to work alongside community members to advance housing security, workers' rights, migrant justice, income security, and access to services. Through legal representation, community organizing, public education, and systemic advocacy, we supported thousands of community members facing complex challenges. At the same time, we pursued broader legal and policy reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty, displacement, exploitation, and inequality. The highlights below reflect both the individual successes and collective achievements made possible through the dedication of our staff, students, community members, and partners.

2025-2026 By the Numbers

Community Members Assisted

>1500

Summary Advice Files Opened

1,154

Full Representation Files Opened

283

Tenants Reached Through Outreach initiatives

584

Recovered for Workers

> $706, 000

Referrals

329



HOUSING RIGHTS

The Housing Rights Division continued to support tenants facing displacement while advancing collective efforts to preserve affordable housing. Through legal representation, organizing support, public legal education, and partnerships with community organizations, we worked with tenants to resist evictions, challenge unlawful landlord practices, and improve housing conditions.

This year, PCLS prevented 53 evictions through our ongoing service partnership with the City of Toronto's Eviction Prevention in the Community Program (EPIC). We referred these clients who faced eviction for non-payment of rent to EPIC. We also provided legal advice and representation to these clients while EPIC provided case management services and financial assistance.

We also expanded outreach to tenants living in buildings that had recently been sold or listed for sale, reaching hundreds of residents with information about their rights and strategies for collective organizing.

The Housing Division achieved a number of significant legal victories. We successfully represented tenants at the Divisional Court and Landlord and Tenant Board in cases involving retaliatory evictions, disability-related discrimination, illegal lockouts, and attempts to remove affordable rental housing through bad-faith eviction applications.

These cases preserved housing for tenants and reinforced important protections under Ontario's housing and human rights laws.

PCLS maintains a particular focus on representing tenants with disabilities facing eviction arising from landlords' failure to meet their duty to accommodate under the Ontario Human Rights Code. In one notable case, a



landlord sought to evict tenants based in part on behaviours related to their mental health disabilities while refusing to engage in an accommodation process. PCLS brought a tenant application that was heard alongside the eviction application. The Landlord and Tenant Board dismissed the eviction application, found that the landlord had engaged in discriminatory conduct, ordered the landlord to participate in an accommodation process, and awarded compensation to the tenants.

Community organizing remained central to our work. We supported tenant groups who successfully pushed back against rent increases, protected storage facilities in a Toronto Community Housing building, and resisted displacement in multiple Parkdale communities. Through public legal education, training sessions, and outreach initiatives, we continued to strengthen tenants' ability to advocate collectively for safe, affordable, and secure housing.

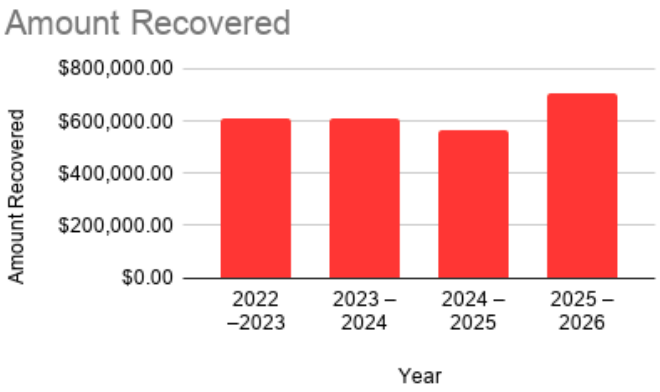
WORKERS' RIGHTS

The Workers' Rights Division continued to support low-wage, precarious, and migrant workers facing wage theft, unjust dismissals, discrimination, and barriers to employment benefits. Through legal representation, strategic litigation, public education, and organizing campaigns, we worked to improve working conditions and advance workplace justice.



In 2025-26, the division recovered more than $706,000 in unpaid wages, wrongful dismissal damages, human rights compensation, and other employment entitlements for workers, the highest amount recovered in the past four years.

Year	Amount Recovered
2022-2023	$607,524.01
2023-2024	$612,682.85
2024-2025	$564,189.47
2025-2026	$706,689.90



Some of our more noteworthy successes in include:

A successful court decision that imposed liability on a director of a corporation pursuant to an oppression remedy under the Business Corporations Act.

Nine settled human rights claims, with settlements as high as $30,000.

Five concluded Small Claims Court actions, with settlements as high as $17,500.

Twelve concluded Employment Standards Act claims, eleven of which resulted in Orders to Pay issued or favourable settlements, the highest of which was $71,005.60.

A successful appeal to the Social Security Tribunal, which allowed a worker who received a settlement for human rights damages to retain her Employment Insurance benefits.



Alongside casework, PCLS remained deeply involved in law reform and worker organizing initiatives. PCLS partners with the Workers' Action Centre (WAC) to improve wages and working conditions. In October 2025 we released a 94-page report documenting wage theft in Ontario, exposing the gaps in workers' protections and pushing for change. Over $80 million dollars of unpaid wages from Orders to Pay went uncollected over the past 10 years. Workers then took this message to the Ministry of Labour by demonstrating in front of their offices.

We also partnered with Justice for Truck Drivers and West Coast Trucking Alliance to survey over 400 truck drivers and release a report on wage theft in the road transport sector. Following a Globe and Mail exclusive on Justice for Truck Drivers, the federal government has increased proactive inspection in the federally regulated trucking sector.

PCLS law students and alumni continue to participate in our community lawyering work with WAC in bi-weekly Workplace Justice sessions. This work includes supporting workers in understanding their Employment Standards Act rights, calculating wages owed, developing demand letters and telling workers' stories for ESA claims. Through this work, over $124,000 was recovered for low-waged and undocumented workers in 2025-26.

In the face of economic uncertainty and job loss from the Trump trade war with Canda, we organized for a Tariff-ready EI system for unemployed workers. We made multiple submissions to the government throughout the year. While we won some temporary measures to improve access to EI, they do not go far enough to provide accessible, adequate and fair employment insurance.



MIGRANT RIGHTS



The Migrant Rights Division continued to provide legal services, community education, and advocacy to migrants, refugees, undocumented individuals, and families navigating Canada's increasingly complex immigration system. Throughout the year, we assisted community members seeking temporary and permanent status, family reunification, protection claims, citizenship, and remedies for immigration-related injustices.

A significant focus of our work was family reunification. We successfully reunited families who had been separated for many years, including parents, spouses, and children who were finally able to build their lives together in Canada after prolonged periods of uncertainty. We also obtained permanent status for long-time undocumented community members and secured work permits for migrant workers facing workplace abuse and exploitation.

Among the division's notable successes this year were several complex family reunification cases. These included helping a mother reunite with her children after nine years of separation, assisting a father in joining his wife and children in Canada after eight years apart, and securing permanent residence for a former caregiver who had experienced workplace abuse, allowing her to reunite with her family after more than six years of separation. We also successfully overturned two spousal sponsorship refusals before the Immigration Appeal Division, reuniting couples who had each been separated for over a decade.

We achieved other important legal victories, including obtaining refugee protection for a client and her infant child, securing citizenship for a long-term resident through a successful waiver application, obtaining open work permits for vulnerable workers facing abuse and discrimination, and helping a community leader who had lived undocumented in Canada for more



than twenty years obtain permanent resident status. We also brought judicial review and mandamus applications in Federal Court to challenge unfair decisions and lengthy processing delays, helping ensure greater accountability within Canada's immigration system.

Beyond individual casework, the division remained active in local and national migrant justice campaigns. We worked with the Migrant Rights Network and other community partners to oppose Bill C-12 through public education, advocacy, and coordinated national actions. Although the legislation was ultimately passed, we continue to work with sector partners to monitor its implementation, educate affected communities about its impacts, and advocate for policies that protect the rights of migrants with precarious immigration status.

We also continued to advocate for pathways to permanent residency and supported campaigns led by migrant workers and care workers. We participated in public education, community forums, media outreach, and policy advocacy aimed at strengthening protections for migrants and advancing a vision of status and rights for all.

PCLS remains engaged in broader efforts to advance migrant justice. This year, we contributed to the legal research team supporting the Permanent People's Tribunal examining Canada's treatment of migrant workers and participated in collaborative efforts to develop a Declaration for the Rights of All Migrants. Through these initiatives, as well as continuing partnerships with community organizations across Toronto and Canada, the division works to advance lasting systemic change while supporting migrants in securing status, safety, and dignity.



Collage made by the winter 2025 students

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ANTI-VIOLENCE AND HEALTH (SAVAH)

The SAVAH team continued to provide legal services, advocacy, community development, and organizing support to community members facing poverty, barriers to income security, discrimination, violence, and complex health related challenges.

SAVAH represented clients in matters involving Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program at the Social Benefits Tribunal, as well as providing advice and representation in relation to other income support programs. Through this work, we successfully challenged benefits denials, secured new hearings for clients whose cases had been wrongly decided, and obtained positive outcomes for individuals facing significant barriers to accessing essential supports.

We also continued to expand our work in human rights law. This year, we represented clients experiencing discrimination in services and achieved successful outcomes through advocacy, mediation, and strategic legal interventions. Our team also supported clients navigating education, health, housing, and other systems that impact community well-being.

Community development and organizing remained a core part of the division's work. We offered system navigation and wrap around care for clients through warm referrals with healthcare providers and other social services, opportunities for both internal and external case conferencing, advocacy for resident/clients with institutional service providers and building partnerships. Building partnerships has been crucial to identifying other processes or alternatives in addressing gaps in service delivery, moving people through interconnecting systems to provide continuity of care and to ensure providers are coordinated with the care and service.

We continued to play an active role in campaigns calling for higher social assistance rates, defending harm reduction services, challenging increased police presence in schools, and supporting community members while advancing broader efforts to address poverty, inequality, and systemic discrimination. As social and economic pressures continue to intensify for many residents in our catchment, SAVAH remains committed to supporting both individual advocacy and collective action to build healthier, safer, and more equitable communities.

Awards

PARKDALE
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES

DOROTHY LEATCH AWARD

Paterson Hodgson

Dorothy Leatch was a much-beloved receptionist at Parkdale Community Legal Services for more than 30 years. She took an active interest in the clients and in the community, as well as being very actively engaged in her own church and family community. Dorothy passed away in 2011, and we felt there was no better tribute than to honour in her memory individuals who embody Dorothy`s own approach to community.

This year, we are extremely excited to honour Paterson Hodgson.



Paterson Hodgson is a longtime Parkdale tenant at the 103-105 West Lodge Avenue buildings. Since 2020, Paterson has been organizing with their neighbors at West Lodge against evictions, to improve housing conditions, and to develop programs organized by and for West Lodge tenants. In 2021, Paterson and their neighbors occupied a vacant unit in the buildings which they transformed into the West Lodge Tenant Space. The Space is home to the West Lodge Tenant-Run Food Bank, a clothing bank, weekly Neighbor Nights, and regular tenants organizing meetings. Paterson's outstanding commitment to their neighbors at West Lodge and in Parkdale sets a high standard we can all aspire to. Paterson is also a well-known artist and illustrator whose work is regularly featured in tenant organizing materials such as posters, flyers, and newspapers in Parkdale.

FREDERICK H. ZEMANS PRIZE IN POVERTY LAW

The Zemans Prize was created to honour the contributions of Professor Fred Zemans, the founding Clinic Director of Parkdale Community Legal Services. The prize is awarded to law students who have performed at a high level of excellence in all aspects of the Program, including legal work, community work, and academic work.

This year, for the first time in its history, **four students are being awarded.**



Aditi Priya



Gabriella Zepeda-Ayala



Joseph Maziarz



Robin L

Board, Staff, & Students

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BOARD

Andrea Vitopoulos
Austen Metcalfe
Danielle Bisnar
Emina Gamulin
Harry Myles
Ian McKellar
Mark Bondy
Nadia Rajaram
Nemica Raneethran
Newsha Zargaran
Parmbir Gill
Patricia McMahon
Sarah Robicheau
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Ahmad Ezzedine
Brianna Robinson
Butterfly Sabrina
GoPaul
Cole Webber
John No
Karen Dick
Kristen Lloyd
Lindsay Blair Holder
Luisa Ortiz-Garza
Mary Gellatly
Naomi Murray
Phyllis Abrahams (on leave)
Rose Nabwire
Samuel Mason
Sheleca Henry
Tenzin Tekan
Tracy Yu
Vic Natola
Wendy Atkinson

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR

Fathima Cader

CLEANING SERVICES

Irme Trotman

STUDENT CASEWORKERS

Aditi Priya
Adam Parravani
Angel Xing
Arted Yzeiri
Bea Serdon
Chika Duru
Coleman Camps
David Lia
Dominique Goolsarran
Dylan Moorehead
Emma Cavacuiti
Esrah Akasha
Gabriella Zepeda-Ayala
Gigi Yang
Jasmine Bates
Jensen Brehaut
John Nyman
Jonah Georgis-Yap
Joseph Maziarz
Julie Han
Kat Duff
Keaton Landry
Leah Gray
Madelaine McDonagh
Mark Bondy
Meryum Hassan
Miha Sanjida
Minhwan Son

STUDENT CASEWORKERS

Nisha Iqbal
Peter Gatti
Rebecca Jin
Robin L.
Sabrin Saide Abu Ganem
Sabrina Teklab
Sara Raoufi
Sophia Klymchuk
Stephanie Gyimah
Stephanie Wang
Sylvana Poon
Tashema Harlow McIntosh
Tegan Hore-Kelman
Vincent Barzetti
Youdon Tenzin

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS!

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AIDE JURIDIQUE ONTARIO

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Cardboard Portrait of Director of Legal Services: **Alys Shee**