



BAFFLEGAB

Semi-Annual Newsletter of the COMMUNITY ADVOCACY & LEGAL CENTRE

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Chinese Legal Aid Lawyers Visit Our Clinic

Clinic staff welcomed 14 Chinese legal aid lawyers and senior officials to our Belleville office on October 17. The lawyers were in Canada as part of a study tour sponsored in part by the federal government and the Canadian Bar Association. Clinic lawyer Deirdre McDade helped organize the visit.

China first launched a small pilot legal aid program in 1994, which has now grown to 3,000 legal aid centres. The purpose of this study tour was to introduce the Chinese visitors to Canadian ideas about how to increase "access to justice" through quality legal services to the poor and vulnerable.

Speaking through two Mandarin interpreters, clinic staff

explained what Ontario legal clinics do, how we provide our services and gave a virtual tour of our innovative website. We also stressed the importance of "holistic and preventative advocacy" as the best approach to legal problems, and spoke about efforts to improve access to justice locally, provincially and nationally.

"I think that because of the fact the clinic system in Ontario is unique in Canada, we thought it was very important to visit a clinic like Belleville's," said Diane Elkas, who co-ordinates the project on behalf of the Canadian Bar Association.

The group had been spending two weeks visiting sites in major

(Continued on Page 2)



Pictured in the foreground, from left: delegate Sang Ning, Diane Elkas of the Canadian Bar Association and Michele Leering, the clinic's executive director.



"Cycles of Homelessness" Forum - November 22, 2007

Understanding eviction prevention to prevent homelessness

More Legal Help for Workers

Did you know that we provide legal advice and help to people who have experienced problems while at work?

We help by holding employers accountable for fair and just workplace practices; we

educate workers about their rights; and carry out law reform and community outreach activities.

If you have been injured at work, have lost your job or if you feel that you are not being

treated fairly by your employer, we may be able to help. Call us.

We are hosting a special roundtable forum on the rights of low income workers on December 4, 2007. See page 11 for more details.

Our Employment Law Clients



Vulnerable workers are workers whose work patterns do not fit nicely into our traditional definitions of permanent or full-time work. They are especially “vulnerable” to lay-offs, unsafe work conditions and poor pay. Vulnerable workers most often work through a temp agency, as “independent contractors”, in short-term or casual jobs.

An interesting picture of our local labour force emerged from a January 2007 report produced by the local East Central Ontario Training Board. Among its findings:

- The average employment income in our area is about \$29,000 and is only three-quarters of the provincial average.
- Self-employment income is less than half of employment income. Self-employment income is often a substitute in our area for paid employment.
- Women’s employment income is about two-thirds that of men—and their self-employment income (average \$7,500 per year) is only about half of that of men.
- Women had to rely on employment insurance and social assistance about twice as much as men.
- Youth wages (18-24) are less than half of the local average wage, and only about one-third of the average provincial wage.

The report paints a picture of precarious employment in our

community. Retraining options are very limited for those needing a career transition—and the options for middle-aged workers are especially limited.

This bleak picture matches what we see here in the trenches. We talk to many workers who choose to stay in their jobs because they have no other option. Perhaps they do not force their employer to pay for statutory holiday pay. They may not report a workplace injury. They work overtime at regular pay. They may accept that they are “independent contractors” when really they are employees.

These are the workers that we aim to serve.

David Little, Clinic Lawyer

Chinese Legal Aid Lawyer Visit

(Continued from Page 1)

centres, so Belleville was a refreshing change. "We thought that it was important for them (Chinese delegates) to see the legal aid delivery in places other than bigger cities...at a grassroots level, essentially. And this clinic does an exceptional job, so it

makes a perfect location to showcase."

Speaking through a Mandarin interpreter, delegate Sang Ning said he would be bringing an impressive amount of "specific" information back to his homeland.

Michele Leering said having an international tour take an interest in the clinic was very fulfilling for staff. "Our work is overwhelming, and it never ends...so to have a group of this calibre come and take such an interest in the work we do is incredibly uplifting."

With files and photo from Jeremy Ashley, Belleville Intelligencer.

Start Making Your Plans for February 18, 2008!

The October 11, 2007, election returned the Liberal government to power. A day later, the government filed a regulation creating a new public holiday - Family Day - which will fall on the third Monday in February.



Non-unionized workers will have the day off with pay, like other public holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Whether unionized workers will get the benefit of the holiday depends on the wording of the collective agreement.

The re-election of the Liberal government also means that the increases to minimum wage will continue as planned. On March 31, 2008, the minimum wage will go up to \$8.75 per hour.

David Little, Clinic Lawyer

**New
public
holiday,
“Family
Day”
begins next
February**

I've Been Fired - Do I Sue or Go to the Ministry of Labour?

One of the toughest questions we are asked is whether someone who has been wrongfully fired should sue in court for wrongful dismissal or file a claim to the Ministry of Labour for termination pay. In Ontario, you can't do both.

The advantage to suing in court is that the fired employee is likely to get more money in "damages" for the wrongful dismissal. There is no "rule of thumb" for how much an employee should sue for. However, we often use one month's notice per year of service as a starting point. However, you should always get legal advice about your own situation.

Usually the claim for a low wage earner is less than \$10,000, so you can use

Small Claims Court. Depending on your level of income, the fees to file a claim (\$75) and to set the claim for trial (\$100) can be waived.

There are disadvantages in going to court. There is a long delay in getting the case heard. Many employees are not keen to face their ex-employers in court. Finally, what you recover will be offset by what you may have earned if you quickly found another job. You also have to prove that you looked for work after you were fired.

Filing a claim to the Ministry of Labour is faster and cheaper (there is no cost), but what you get is very limited. Usually, termination pay is limited to a week's pay for each year of service. That

usually doesn't add up to much. However, it doesn't matter if you found another job the day after you were fired -- you are still entitled to termination pay.

Because of this limited recovery at the Ministry of Labour, the court remedy may be better for some workers. Get legal advice before you decide. We have a helpful Wrongful Dismissal Kit that you can use to bring your case to court. It is available on our website's employment page (www.communitylegalcentre.ca/Employment.htm) or you can call us for a copy if you don't have internet access.

David Little, Clinic Lawyer

Rent Increase Guideline for 2008 set at 1.4%

The Ontario government sets the amount by which landlords may increase the rent that they charge. The Rent Increase Guideline is expressed as a percentage, and applies to most residential units. In 2007, the guideline increase is 2.6%.

What does this mean? For most tenants, your landlord may increase your rent by 1.4% in 2008. Landlords must apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for permission to raise the rent by more than the guideline.

Guideline increases to your rent can only be taken once every 12

months after you move in or, for tenants who have lived in the unit for over a year, 12 months after your last increase. Your landlord must give you a Notice of Rent Increase form at least 90 days before the rent increase is to take effect.

Since the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) took effect on January 31, 2007, the Rent Increase Guideline also determines the amount of interest that your landlord owes you on your last month's rent deposit.



Prior to the RTA, landlords were required to pay 6% interest annually to tenants on their last month's rent deposit. As of February 1, 2007 the interest payable on your last month's rent deposit is the same as the guideline amount. This means that your landlord must pay you 1.4% interest on your deposit for the year January 1, 2008 to December 1, 2008.

Article reprinted, with permission, from the Peterborough Community Legal Centre newsletter, September 2007 edition.

"The Rent Increase Guideline also determines the amount of interest that your landlord owes you on your last month's rent deposit."

All-Together Affordable Housing Corporation



This summer, the Bricks & Mortar Task Force of the Affordable Housing Action Network helped to support the creation of the All-Together Affordable Housing Corporation (ATAHC).

ATAHC is a nonprofit charitable corporation whose objectives are to build and/or obtain affordable rental units for low income individuals and families. The founding members of the Board of Directors are Richard Ferriss (Community Advocacy & Legal Centre), Reta Sheppard (Hastings Housing Resource Centre), Bob Cottrell (United Way of Quinte), and Rahno Godfrey (Three Oaks).

ATAHC was inspired by and modeled after Homegrown Homes in Peterborough – a nonprofit housing corporation that is making tremendous progress in meeting the housing needs of low income people in Peterborough. The task force made several visits to Homegrown Homes to see how they were addressing the affordable housing crisis and this led to the task force’s decision to back the creation of ATAHC. Their experience taught us that addressing the problem of affordable housing requires a broad-based community response – as ATAHC’s name suggests we

can only solve this problem if we do it “all together”.

ATAHC will be asking local municipalities, the business community, and everyday members of the community for various forms of support in the near future. We expect that we will make a difference when we work all together. Hear more on CJBQ December 18. Call us if you want to help.

Richard Ferriss, Clinic Lawyer

Generally, heat must be maintained at 20 to 21 degrees Celsius.”

Hot Tips for Tenants: Heat

Is your landlord responsible for providing heat to your rental unit? Heat must be provided according to your local property standards by-law (or, if there is no by-law, the *Residential Tenancies Act*). Generally speaking, heat must be maintained at 20 to 21 degrees Celsius (68 to 70 Fahrenheit).

What should you do if your rental unit is not warm enough?

Call your municipality to see if they have a by-law covering heat in your

area and what the requirements are.

If there is a bylaw:

- Ask for it to be enforced by your municipality.

If there is no by-law:

- The requirements are that heat must be maintained at 20 degrees between September 1 to June 15. Call the Investigations and Enforcement

Unit at 1-888-772-9277 and report the problem.



In either case, contact your landlord in writing and keep a copy of the letter outlining your concerns regarding the heat.

If you are unable to complete any of these steps or do not understand any of the above information, you should contact us.

Jessica Michael, Clinic Lawyer



New Look for Bafflegab After 19 Years

As you can see, we are experimenting with a new format for the newsletter. We needed to simplify producing it and also wanted to make it easier to read. Let us know what you think about the changes. Are you reading an electronic copy or a printed copy? Is it easier to read? What did you like best about it? What did you like least? You can email us at bafflegab@communitylegalcentre.ca or leave a message for Carolyn at ext. 24.

Preventing Homelessness in Our Community

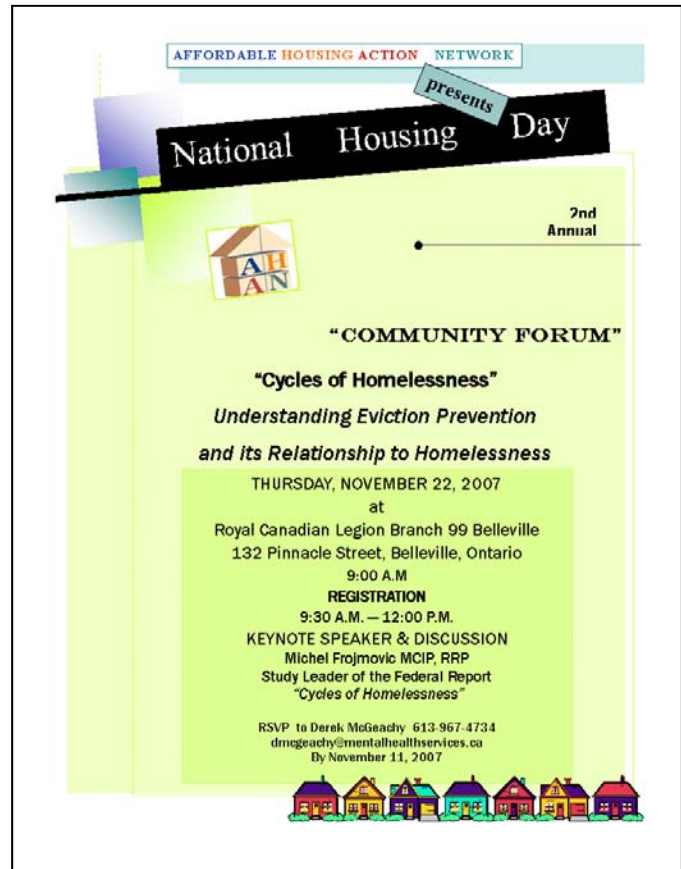
Do you want to find out more about what you or the agency you work for can do to prevent homelessness? Please consider attending a special forum organized by the Affordable Housing Action Network (AHAN). Tenants and landlords are especially invited to come.


The keynote speaker will be Michael Frojmovic, study leader of the national report, "Cycles of Homelessness: Understanding eviction prevention and its relationship to homelessness."

This forum will take place on Thursday, November 22, 2007, at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 99 Belleville, 132 Pinnacle Street, Belleville. Registration is at 9:00 a.m. Please RSVP to Derek McGeachy by phone at 613-967-4734 or email dmcgeachy@mentalhealthservices.ca.

Jessica Michael, Clinic Lawyer

**Are you a landlord in our community ?
Be sure to attend the National Housing Day forum to receive your Landlord Information Package.**



 **Are you a tenant that thinks they have been placed on a bad tenant list by landlords ? Call us for information on what you can do.**

Supplements to Help You Pay Your Rent

There are two programs providing assistance to low income tenants in Hastings County with paying market rent.

1. The first program provides up to \$210 per month to help pay rent for the unit the tenant is **currently** residing in. These supplements have largely been taken up, but they are putting people on a waiting list because as people who have the supplement move into social housing the

supplement becomes available for someone else.

2. The second program provides up to \$210 per month to help pay the market rent for a **new unit** the tenant will be moving into. There are still spots available on this one.

NOTE: You need to be low income (including Ontario Works & Ontario Disability recipients) and eligible to be on the social housing

waiting list to receive help from either of these programs.

Contact the Hastings County Housing Programs Branch at 613-968-3465 for details.

Unfortunately, no similar program exists in Prince Edward or Lennox & Addington Counties.

Richard Ferriss, Clinic Lawyer

“Up to \$210 is available to low income tenants from Hastings County to help you pay your rent.”



Education Law Update

There are some significant changes coming to the *Education Act* in February 2008. Rules around suspensions and expulsions are changing. For a list of the amendments, see the Justice for Children and Youth newsletter available online from our website at: www.communitylegalcentre.ca/PDF/JFCY_Newsletter_Sep2007.pdf.

Examples of changes are:

- No teacher suspensions; only principals can suspend students.
- Principals can no longer expel students; all expulsions must be referred to the school board for a hearing before trustees.
- All expulsions can be appealed to the Child and Family Services Review Board.
- All students suspended for more than 5 days, as well as students who are expelled from all schools in the school board, must be assigned to a program.
- School boards are required to re-admit students after they have completed the expulsion program.

Gina Cockburn, Clinic Lawyer

“Beginning in July 2008 the Ontario Child Benefit will be a monthly payment.”

Don't Forget to File Your Income Tax

In July 2007, low-income families received a non-taxable one-time payment of \$250 for each child under the age of 18 years.

Beginning in July 2008 the Ontario Child Benefit will be a monthly payment. The amount of the benefit a family will receive is dependent on family income and

the number of children in the family.



To be eligible for these benefits you must have registered your children for the Canada Child Tax Benefit and filed a 2006 income tax return.

In 2008 social assistance rates for families with children will

be restructured to take into account the Ontario Child Benefit. If you do not file your income tax you cannot get these benefits.

For more information look at the Income Security Advocacy Centre's website at www.incomesecurity.org.

Deirdre McDade, Clinic Lawyer



Disability Appeals at All Time High

We have doubled the number of clients we are helping to get Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits in 2007, due to an overwhelming increase in demand. Staff are opening about 30 new files a month, without any increase in resources. We are collaborating in new ways to manage this incredible influx.

Community legal worker Marianne Langer, responsible

for the ODSP appeals project, noted, "People with physical or mental health issues cannot survive in today's workplace. We need to continue helping these clients get on disability benefits so that they can live with some dignity."

Supervising lawyer David Little noted, "We are working more closely with the Ontario Works staff to help people get disability

pensions more quickly and more often. We call it an early intervention initiative – to avoid unnecessary appeals."

If this trend continues, we will be forced to cut back on other services or refer more people out to the private bar and legal aid.

Michele Leering, Executive Director and Clinic Lawyer

Collection Agencies - Your Rights

We get many calls from people who are being harassed by collection agencies. It is important that everyone know their rights, so that they can deal with these situations should they arise.

Collection agencies are regulated by consumer protection law in Ontario. If a collection agency wants to pursue you for payment, they have to tell you the name of the collection agency, who they are trying to collect money for, and the amount owed. They must provide this information in writing.

A collection agency cannot contact you more than three times in a one week period, and they cannot call you Sundays before 1 p.m. or after 5 p.m. Collection agencies are not allowed to threaten you or swear at you. They should not lie to you or mislead you.

Income from welfare, ODSP disability pensions and government pensions is

protected from garnishment by collection agencies and other creditors. If your income is from one of these sources, you should tell the collection agent. You can also contact us to get advice. We can write a letter to your bank so that your account is not garnished.

You should never give personal information to a collection agency such as your bank account number.

Article reprinted, with permission, from the Peterborough Community Legal Centre newsletter, September 2007 edition.

Tips On Dealing With Collection Agencies

If you are contacted by a collection agency, you should ask for documents to prove that you owe money and to show how they have calculated the amount owing.

If you pay money to a collection agency, make sure that you have proof that you paid them (money order, receipt, etc).

If you are being harassed by a collection agency:

- Make a complaint to the collection agency in writing and keep a copy;
- If the harassment does not stop, you can make a complaint to the Ministry of Government Services at 1-800-889-9768.

Human Rights Settlement on Closed Captioned Movies

Nancy Barker, Scott Simser and Gary Malkowski filed complaints against film exhibitors and distributors, about lack of accessibility of movies to the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing community. In a settlement, AMC Entertainment International Inc., Cineplex Entertainment LP and Rainbow Centre Cinemas Inc. have agreed to install new closed captioning systems in many Ontario theatres.



According to the media alert released by the Ontario Human Rights Commission:

“19 theatre complexes across Ontario will have the new technology in place by the end of 2008 plus seven further theatre complexes and every newly opened theatre complex between 2009 and 2013.”

Theatres must provide visible signs about the availability and schedules of movies with closed captioning.

In a another settlement, Universal Canada has agreed to continue to provide both open and closed captioning. Complaints against Paramount Canada have not yet been resolved.

More information is available on the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca>.

Deirdre McDade, Clinic Lawyer

Excerpted from original article by Laurie Letheren, Staff Lawyer at ARCH Disability Law. Reprinted, with permission, from ARCH Alert, September 2007.

“Theatres must provide visible signage regarding the availability and schedules of movies with closed captioning.”

Energy Contracts - Door-to-Door Sales Tip Sheet



With the partial deregulation of the energy market in Ontario, local residents must be cautious when choosing electricity and gas providers. Here are some tips to remember:

- Private energy companies go door-to-door to get residents to sign contracts for their services.
- In some cases, it actually costs a lot more money to lock into a contract.
- It can be difficult and very expensive to get out of a contract, so you should be sure that it is something you want.
- Before agreeing to any contract, read the information and the contract carefully so that you know what you are agreeing to. Take a few days to think about it before you sign any contract.
- The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) also has rules about energy contracts to protect

consumers. Any energy seller who comes to your door should provide you with their name and their company's name and contact information.

- Do not show your heat or hydro bill to people who come to your door. Ask everyone for identification even if they say that they are from your utility company.
- If you sign an energy contract as a result of door-to-door sales or telemarketing, the company must contact you 10 to 60 days after you sign the contract to confirm that you want the contract. At this point, you can cancel the contract without having to pay any fees.
- If you sign a contract through the internet because of a direct mail campaign or because you contacted the company yourself, you only have 10 days to cancel the contract without penalty. If your contract is coming to an end, you must take steps to

cancel it or it could be automatically renewed.

- If you cancel a contract, keep proof that you have done so.

If you have a complaint about an energy company, you should make your complaint to that company. You should contact the OEB if:

- The complaint is not resolved,
- You have been signed up for a contract without your permission,
- You were pressured by a salesperson, or
- You were not provided information about what you were getting into.

Contact the OEB, toll free, at 1-877-632-2727 or online at:

www.oeb.gov.on.ca/html/en/consumers/complaint/index.htm

Article modified and reprinted, with permission, from the Peterborough Community Legal Centre newsletter, September 2007 edition

“Before agreeing to any contract, read the information and the contract carefully...”

The Clinic now hosts the Hastings County Law Association Website.

Pro Bono Corner

Members of the local bar continue to be interested in, and supportive of, pro bono initiatives at the clinic.

In October, family law lawyers participated in a domestic violence training session organized by the Legal Aid Area Office and the clinic.

We are now hosting the Hastings County Law Association webpage on our website. The page will post upcoming HCLA events and meeting dates. You can find this page online at www.communitylegalcentre.ca/HCLA.

Early in 2008, several local lawyers will be helping with a new employment law video series.

Gina Cockburn, Clinic Lawyer

Know Your Law Project

In our last newsletter, we told you about our hopes for the new Know Your Law project - a mini-community law school concept. A quick update on recent developments...

The good news is that a Steering Committee met about how to increase legal literacy in our community. We are developing a four-part short video series on employment law with the help of our law intern, Todd Buchanan. Our

Housing Team has developed an interactive "game" to help people learn about landlord and tenant law.



Our website, www.communitylegalcentre.ca, has become the cornerstone for our new strategy. We're also

developing a mini-workshop on how to use the website efficiently and quickly as a portal to legal information. The not-so-encouraging news is that we have not been successful in getting the new funding necessary to develop the

community law school concept. So we are stretching a bit to continue to work on this without added resources.

Stay posted for more news through our website and the Spring 2008 newsletter.

Michele Leering, Executive Director and Clinic Lawyer

Complaining to the Ombudsman: Making a Difference

On June 27, 2007 the Ombudsman, André Marin, released his annual report. The Ombudsman's office investigates complaints about provincial government offices or practises. The following are two case summaries from the Ombudsman's report:

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (ODSP)

A woman with significant mental health problems was at risk of having her ODSP benefits cut off because she refused to meet with program staff. She had received an eviction notice and was on the verge of becoming homeless. The Ombudsman's office explained to ODSP staff that the complainant had special needs and was unable to fully understand the consequences of

refusing to meet with ODSP staff. The ODSP office agreed to waive the requirement for a meeting, reinstated the woman's benefits and arranged to pay her rent directly to her landlord in order to prevent her from being evicted.

HYDRO ONE

A recipient of ODSP benefits had accumulated an outstanding hydro bill of \$1,947. When she came to the Ombudsman for help at the end of October 2006, she had been given a deadline of mid-November to pay the bill plus all arrears, which she was unable to do, given her limited income. The Ombudsman's Office contacted Hydro One and explained the woman's circumstances. After a



number of discussions with her and the Ombudsman's Office, Hydro One agreed to a repayment plan.

If you have a complaint about treatment by a provincial government office you can contact the Ontario Ombudsman's Office by calling 1-800-263-1830 (TTY: 1-866-411-4211) or using the online complaint form on their website at www.ombudsman.on.ca.

Deirdre McDade, Clinic Lawyer

"If you have a complaint about treatment by a provincial government office, you can contact the Ontario Ombudsman's Office."

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

Clinic Changes Its Day of Operation in Satellite Offices

Staff will now be attending the **Bancroft** office (1 Manor Lane, Suite 020) for scheduled appointments on **Tuesdays** instead of Mondays. Also, effective December 5, 2007, the **Picton** office will

be open on **Wednesdays**, instead of Tuesdays. Always contact our Belleville office, toll free, at 1-877-966-8686, ext. 0, to make an appointment (as we are not open every satellite day).



Staff Changes

We welcome new staff members Patty Chard and Todd Buchanan.

Thanks to summer students Dennis Buchanan and Craig Munday!

New Law Intern Post - Trenval Funding

The clinic received funding from Trenval Business Development Corporation to hire a Law Intern beginning in July of 2007. I was grateful to have been selected for this position, and to date it has provided me with a number of unique and fulfilling learning opportunities.

One such opportunity occurred on September 19, 2007, when I attended a forum on Living Wages

hosted by Family Services in Toronto. The forum brought with it a panel of speakers, workshops and insights from local grassroots movements from all over Canada, who are working towards living wages and fairness for vulnerable workers. The forum allowed for shared stories of successes, failures and lessons learned about outreach, organizing and sustaining living wage campaigns. It also shed light

on the importance of making community connections to achieve fairness for vulnerable and low income workers.

It is my hope that some of the ideas and approaches discussed at the forum can be transferred to areas surrounding employment law here at the clinic.

Todd Buchanan, Law Intern



Web Corner - Almost 1,000,000 Hits in 2007

We continue to update the website to keep it as current as possible.

As we add more and more to the website it becomes more complex and finding what you want may be a little difficult. We are doing our best to make it as easy as possible to navigate, but suggestions are always welcome.

If you are looking for legal information, click the "legal information" button on the left hand side of our home page. Here you will also find links to our

newsletter, job and volunteer opportunities and information about us and our services.

We also have a "latest news" link on the right hand side of the home page. Here you'll also find latest news buttons for specific areas of law. You can scroll down this column to click buttons for news on ODSP, housing or law reform. Upcoming events and press releases are also found here.

Recent stats show our site usage is increasing! To the end of

September 2007 we have had 926,246 total hits (72,195 page hits). This is a marked increase over total hits of 368,352 (32,223 page hits) during the same time period in 2006.

Visit us online at www.communitylegalcentre.ca

If you do not have a computer of your own, most local libraries offer internet service free of charge.

Carolyn Hamilton, Webmaster

**Come
visit us
online!**

Annual General Meeting - December 4, 2007

Please join the staff, Directors and members of the clinic for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on December 4, 2007, at the Belleville Public Library located at 254 Pinnacle Street, 3rd floor.



You are welcome to join us at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and a chance to speak

to our board and staff. At 7:00 p.m., participate in “**Living on a Low Wage - the Low Paycheque Reality Cheque,**” focusing on the rights of low income workers. We will be joined by other community partners in a roundtable forum on the challenges facing low wage earners in locating and keeping sustainable

employment. Our AGM follows at approximately 8:15 p.m.

If you require interpretation services for the Deaf or free childcare services please contact Lynda Morgan at ext. 25. For more information on our AGM check our website.

Board Members Needed

The Board of the clinic has 10 members elected at each annual general meeting from the communities served by the clinic. We try to have representation from areas within Hastings, Prince Edward, and Lennox and Addington counties.

In order to ensure the Board functions effectively, we try to include a range of skills, including finance, strategic planning

and human resources management, as well as generic skills such as group decision-making and communication.

The Board elects from among its members a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary. Each member of the Board is expected to sit on at least one of the committees: Executive, Programme and Planning, Finance, Personnel, and Governance. The

Board is not responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the clinic. However, it does play a role in policy development, financial management, and planning and evaluation.

If you are interested in becoming a Board member, please contact Lynda, ext. 25.

One Board Member’s Experience

A little over a year ago, I got a call about running for the Board of Directors of the clinic. I was told they were specifically looking for someone with a financial background, to take over from the retiring Treasurer. Although I knew next to nothing about the clinic, a Board member persuaded me, in his eloquent manner, that it is a dynamic and worthwhile organization, and that I could make a useful contribution as a member of the Board.

I attended the Annual General Meeting in November, met several of the Board members and staff, and was elected to the Board.

Several months on, I’m still on the “learning curve,” absorbing as much as I can about the clinic and its mission and activities; but I can sincerely say that I am very glad I joined. It has given me the chance to work with a group of highly interesting, engaging, and engaged people.

The Board comprises quite a diverse set of backgrounds and skill sets among its members, but we all seem to share the same finely-honed “social conscience,” if I can put it that way. There is a good mix of visionaries and pragmatists; strategists and tacticians; esoteric and plain thinkers. Our meetings

are always lively, even a bit boisterous, and at the same time efficient and productive (which, of course, appeals to a financial type like me!). Plus, they serve snacks...

And the staff – Michele, Lynda, and the rest – are great – professional, committed, knowledgeable, and engaging.

It has been a terrific experience for me, and I look forward to a long and enjoyable tenure on the Board.

Rick Helman, Board Member

“I am very glad I joined. It has given me the chance to work with a group of highly interesting, engaging, and engaged people.”

BAFFLEGAB is published semi-annually by:



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E-mail (for Deaf clients only): calcgen3@lao.on.ca

If you would prefer to receive future newsletters electronically, please contact us at bafflegab@communitylegalcentre.ca

If you would like to support the clinic by becoming a member please contact Lynda, ext. 25, or visit our website at http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca/About_Us.htm

The information in this newsletter is not meant to be taken as legal advice. If you have a legal problem in any of the areas of law mentioned in the newsletter, you should contact the clinic in your area.

We're on the web!

www.communitylegalcentre.ca

Hear Us on the Radio



Staff continue doing monthly CJBQ radio shows. Staff will discuss legal issues affecting people living on a low income or in poverty or give information about upcoming events the clinic is hosting.

Tune in to Steve Marlin at 12:30 p.m. on CJBQ (800 on your AM dial).

The next scheduled shows will be:

Nov 27 - Michele Leering (Low Wage Workers)
Dec 18 - Jessica Michael (All-Together Affordable Housing Corporation)

Join us **December 4, 2007** to participate in “**Living on a Low Wage - The Low Paycheque Reality Cheque**,” a forum focusing on the rights of low income workers. See page 11 for more details.

Volunteers at the Clinic

The clinic's Volunteer Task Force is pleased to announce Dorothy Watts has joined us as a part-time volunteer receptionist. Dorothy hopes that this experience will further her career ambitions as a law clerk.

The clinic appreciates past volunteers and placement students and thanks them for their hard work and dedication. A Volunteer Task Force made up of clinic staff and Board members is exploring developing a larger volunteer program. Current volunteer placements available include: part-time receptionist, volunteer program developer, housing student, general volunteer, and a media studies student.

If you require more information about volunteer placement opportunities please check the clinic's website at www.communitylegalcentre.ca/volunteer_and_placement_opportunities.htm or email us at clinicoutreach@communitylegalcentre.ca.