CLG
CALGARY
LEGAL
GUIDANCE

2023/24 Annual REPORT

clg.ab.ca

MESSAGE
FROM THE CHAIR

WHAT A YEAR!

The last year has been eventful and has brought about momentous change. Change is scary, but it can also be for the better. I am confident that the direction CLG is facing will make the organization stronger and more impactful as we move into our next 50 years of existence.

As I enter into the 25th year of volunteering for CLG--and I do realize how old that makes me--and my first as the Chair for Calgary Legal Guidance Board of Directors, I can't help but be thankful for the staff and volunteers that have made this incredible organization what it is. The time that I have spent with CLG is a testament to the organization, the work being done at CLG, and the incredible people that CLG attracts as staff and volunteers. It is easy to want to be a part of the important work CLG does to improve access to justice in our city and province. It is also easy get behind the incredible staff and volunteers at CLG who turn strategic plans into tangible results for vulnerable Albertans.

The work CLG does is difficult and has its toll on the people in the organization; but it is also impactful, memorable, and most of all necessary. The work we do brings about change for people who truly need it. The tangible rewards and the visible outcomes we can see from our clients make the effort worthwhile.

During my four plus years on the Board, I have witnessed CLG develop to become a truly trauma-informed organization which greatly impacts for the better how we serve clients and interact with one another. The way CLG understands trauma and how it impacts the people involved is truly incredible. It becomes integral to the fabric of what the organization is, and how it assists our grateful clients.

The future is before us. The legal landscape before us demonstrates how we are needed more than ever.

The chasm between those who can afford legal services and those who cannot continues widen. Inflation, increased housing costs, and the legal issues that come with economic strain are growing and are disproportionately impacting those who are least able to bear it. CLG will become even more vital to serve our community as we move forward.

A special thanks to our Board of Directors who have been nothing short of incredible in what has been a very challenging year. The staff is nothing short of amazing. They have embraced the significant changes with an unbridled enthusiasm to move the organization into the future - to be better than ever and fully embrace our goal of guiding vulnerable Albertans through the legal system.

Lastly, for our wonderful volunteers who are already involved, I extend a hearty thank you. For those who are not yet involved or are trying to consider how best to assist, we have an entire spectrum of opportunities available. Anything from evening clinic volunteers, putting on presentations or offering training, working with committees (we are always looking for people), or even making a financial contribution to the organization would all be welcomed. Just reach out to a current staff member, volunteer or board member and we will help you find your place - we are inclusive after all. Whatever you have to share, we can find a way for it to make a difference at CLG.

Michael J.M. Hokansen, KC C.Med C.Arb
Chair, Board of Directors

OUR IMPACT

Calgary Legal Guidance has made a profound impact on the community. Our efforts continue to bridge the gap for those in need, ensuring access to justice and making a meaningful difference in countless lives.

18K

Number of Calls Received

98%

Of our clients understand and follow the legal advice given

225

Volunteers in 2023/24

40

Social Agency Partnerships

3,200

Hours of free legal advice

2,400

People received legal advice from CLG specialized legal programs.

3,000

People received legal advice from a volunteer lawyer via the Summary Legal Advice Program

1,100

Attended our Public Legal Education webinar series in 2023

MESSAGE
FROM LEADERSHIP

AS WE LOOK BACK IN THE PAST YEAR,

We are filled with gratitude for the incredible impact the team at CLG has made in our community. In 2023, our staff legal programs helped more than 2,400 people navigate legal challenges like domestic violence, immigration issues, and housing disputes. 225 volunteer lawyers from all walks of life donated over 3,200 hours of their time providing summary legal advice to more than 3,000 people. And over 1,100 people participated in CLG's public legal education sessions, empowering themselves and others with knowledge about their rights. Together, we continue to provide a full range of services at CLG that helps ensure every Albertan, especially those facing economic and social hardships, can access the legal support they need.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our funders and individual donors; your support is crucial in dismantling barriers to justice and working towards a more equitable society. Together, we are making a significant impact in Alberta's access to justice sector, and we look forward to what we can accomplish together in the coming year!

Gabriel Chen
Melina deKoninck
Natalie Simpson
Sheila Pahl

Leadership Team
Calgary Legal Guidance

Together, we are making a significant impact in Alberta's access to justice sector, and we look forward to what we can accomplish together in the coming year!

- CLG Leadership Team

HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

*Ryan is Ojibway and he has been experiencing houselessness since he was a youth. He had been working with a social worker at the drop-in center when they reached out to the Homeless Outreach Program to take Ryan as client. Ryan has a brain injury and suffered significant trauma during his life including struggles with substance addiction. Ryan was charged with assault, uttering threats and failure to attend charges, resulting from an incident at a store. He explained that he went into the store because he had to use the washroom and he knew that there were washrooms available to the public. Three loss prevention officers (LPOs) zeroed in on him immediately when he walked into the store and approached him before he was able to use the washroom, asking him to leave stating that he was harassing other patrons. When Ryan told them he needed to use the washroom, the loss prevention officers handled him roughly, with one officer alleging that Ryan assaulted and uttered threats towards him.

After taking the case, the Homeless Outreach Lawyer was able to negotiate with the crown by drawing attention to charter issues and issues with the crown's case. Subsequently all Ryan's criminal charges were withdrawn. Ryan is now in temporary housing and we are assisting him with tickets and provincial charges that he obtained while he was houseless.

Ryan's brain injury and substance abuse made it very difficult for him to work with Legal Aid Alberta because it is very difficult for him to keep appointments. Ryan needed more flexibility when it came to meetings, such as the time we meet and sometimes where we meet. We were able to facilitate a client meeting with him virtually while he was at the hospital and accommodate sudden changes in schedule. As a result, Ryan's case has helped CLG build trust with other organizations and clients from this vulnerable population.

- Homeless Outreach Team

**Name has been changed.*

Thank You to Our Funders

Alberta LAW FOUNDATION

ALBERTA LOTTERY FUND

Calgary

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada
Canada

United Way Calgary and Area

fcss family & community support services

STORIES
FROM THE FRONT LINE

To Calgary Legal Guidance,

I was a client of the Social Benefits Advocacy Program, to get help with AISH. Throughout the many months, my CLG advocate has helped me with getting me the right information for my case for AISH, but also giving me the steps to prepare for what could be next. I was denied AISH multiple times in the past and so I was referred to CLG from my Independent Living Support worker to hopefully get the information I need to have AISH approve me.

Through this process, my CLG advocate has been nothing but kind and patient with me as I dealt with my own anxieties of what could happen and the possibility of being denied once again.

I am happy to say that I now have been approved by AISH. My CLG advocate was a big part in helping me throughout this process. He helped me to calm down and continue to fight, when there were times that I wanted to quit. I am very grateful to all the help that CLG has given me. Thank you very much and I would recommend CLG to anyone I know that would need assistance with AISH as well.

- ***CLG Client***

IMMIGRATION LAW PROGRAM

One of CLG's clients contacted the Immigration Law Program to assist with the refusal of their child's sponsorship application. The child was at risk of remaining overseas in a war-torn country with no support, as the rest of the family had been approved to immigrate to Canada. The Program made substantial submissions arguing why the child should be allowed to come to Canada, which were successful. The family is looking forward to reuniting in Canada and creating a new life together in this country.

- ***Immigration Law Program Team***

SAHWOO MOHKAAK TSI MA TAAS

Paul came to the Sahwoo Mohkaak Tsi Ma Taas program at age 19 with a serious charge but no criminal record. He had some friends who weren't very good influences on him, and his relationship with his mom was complicated and rocky. The program got him into Indigenous court where he was paired with two or three different workers until we found someone who connected well with him. At first the client was uncommunicative and would sometimes disappear. He backslid a couple times and acquired some more charges. But then he started to connect with CLG, to take the counselling required by his healing plan, and voluntarily quit drinking. He started going back to school, he started working, and he even got recruited to be a model. Finally, he was doing so well that it was time to report to the Indigenous court that he'd had a successful healing plan and is almost ready for graduation. Using some skillful advocacy, the program articling student told the court that this young person did not need a criminal record hanging over his head. The Court agreed: Paul will be on probation for 18 months but after that the charges will be withdrawn. If it wasn't for Indigenous court and the program, Paul would likely have ended up with a criminal record, and he easily could have followed a different path into criminalization.

"Growing up I never had access to my culture. There was a lot of racism and shame."
– CLG Client

"If I'm going through that and I'm advocating and know police policy... If there are enough of us, it can be healing to be heard and validated."
- CLG Client

VOLUNTEER
RECOGNITION

15 Years

Joshua Wasylciw

10 Years

Alex Norris
David Taylor
Erika Gordon
Renee Short

5 Years

Giva T Balasingam
Jennie Han
Jennifer Joss
Sarah Harvey
Sophie Purnell
Tiana Knight
Laura-Marie Berg
Melvin Marin
Rabie Ahmed
Rowan Fisher
Sarah Miller
Shantel Lockett

3 Years

Helen Ross
Adam Marofke
Arielle Sie-Mah
Boritse Mene
Funke Fasunon
Kristin Smith
Kyle Hofman
Laura Onia
Matthew Prieur
Melika Mostowfi
Michelle Pocock
Rick McKee
Sola Adenekan
Wayne Weber
Zoya Konoff

Thank You
for your service

"Excellent customer relations, patience and understanding of both my situation and the legal issues.

After speaking with various lawyers regarding the complex issues I'm dealing with, I was extremely impressed and encouraged by the level of professionalism, respect and empathy by my volunteer lawyer! He sets a high standard of excellency as a legal representative. Thank you."
- CLG Client

TREASURER'S REPORT

2023/24

The past fiscal year has brought significant changes and a renewed optimism for the organization going forward.

CLG's experienced a growth in grant revenues this past fiscal year. FY2024 revenues increased to $4.24 million (prior year total: $4.09 million) and was primarily comprised of funding from the Alberta Law Foundation ($3.09 million or approximately 73% of funding). The balance of funding was received from the City of Calgary; Government of Canada; Solicitor General Victims of Crime Fund; United Way; and, other sources, which included funding from a Grant from an Anonymous Donor, fundraisers and individual donations.

FY2024 expenses of $4.40 million (prior year total: $4.17 million) increased due to inflation and rising costs which impacted rent, human resource costs, office costs. Expenses also grew in tandem with increases in grants.

CLG's current asset base is comprised of cash, receivables, deposits and prepaid expenses of $0.70 million (prior year total: $0.73 million). Despite experiencing a current-year deficit, the organization looks to preserve and grow its asset base in the future.

Looking forward to the 2024/2025 fiscal year (FY2024), CLG continues to move towards a bright future of change and growth and will continue to explore new funding opportunities to meaningfully expand and enhance its existing services. The organization is incredibly grateful for the continued support of its loyal staff, funders and donors, and we express our sincerest gratitude to all of our highly committed volunteers that continue to assist those in need. As inflation and increasing costs of living continue to impact vulnerable Albertans, CLG continues to have an ever-important role in serving our community.

Sheetal Esmail, CPA, CA
Treasurer

FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS

Assets	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-23
Cash and Other Current	702,353	732,126
Assets Tangible Capital	37,756	46,423
Assets Long-term	25,112	24,252
Investments Long-term Deposit	52,017	52,017
Total Assets	817,238	854,818

Liabilities & Fund Assets

Liabilities		
Current Liabilities	217,948	132,542
Deferred Contributions Related to Capital Assets Long-term Deposit	30,718	-
Long Term Rent Liability	206,918	202,891
	455,584	335,433
Fund Balances		
Unrestricted Net Assets	1,164	1,164
Programs & Infrastructure Fund	61,550	61,550
Operating Reserve Fund	298,940	456,671
Total Liabilities & Fund Balances	817,238	854,818

Operations

Revenues	4,237,875	4,092,876
Expenses		
Salaries, Benefits & Contract Services	3,245,413	3,085,227
Rent & Utilities	502,431	481,284
Information Technology	101,218	85,095
Office & Printing	42,779	24,216
Insurance	59,241	38,492
Dues & Memberships	50,468	62,175
Travel & Parking	66,490	65,385
Amortization of Capital Assets	24,379	24,963
Advertising & Promotion	8,022	14,511
Professional Development	43,313	19,131
Other	251,852	273,694
Total Expenses	4,395,606	4,174,173
Surplus / (Deficit)	(151,731)	(81,297)

SAHWOO MOHKAAK TSI MA TAAS

("Before Being Judged") provides legal services and support centered around culture with the goal of increasing access to justice for Indigenous people.

HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) team gives legal advice and services along with emotional support and social agency referrals through our lawyer and non-lawyer advocate team including representing people who are facing criminal charges or are being evicted.

SOCIAL BENEFITS ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Social Benefits Advocacy Program offers information, guidance, advocacy, help with system navigation and referrals regarding benefit matters for low income Calgarians.

IMMIGRATION LAW PROGRAM

The Immigration Law Program primarily assists refugee claimants in Canada to submit their refugee claim; helping vulnerable populations (including victims of family violence and children) to regularize their status; and overall facilitating family reunification in Canada.

ELDER LAW PROGRAM

The Elder Law Program helps underprivileged seniors access and engage with the law through legal information and advice about documents such as Enduring Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives, and connects seniors and family members with appropriate resources when seniors are victims of abuse.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS LEGAL ADVICE PROGRAM

The Sexual Violence Survivors Legal Advice Program provides support for survivors of sexual violence with legal information, helping them to understand their rights and the legal process, and connecting them to available community resources and services.

PRE-APPREHENSION CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM

The Pre-Apprehension Child Welfare Program provides legal advice and assistance to parents/guardians facing investigation and non-apprehension interventions under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and other related legislation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/FAMILY LAW PROGRAM

Domestic Violence/Family Law Program is an award-winning program that works without judgment to address safety needs, identify legal issues, support in making informed decisions, and connect to the right help; including legal resources and social services such as counselling and housing.

CLG CLINICAL STUDENT TEAM

The CLG clinical student team supports program staff to interview & advise clients, deliver outreach services, attend court & tribunal hearings, research law & provide plain language information to diverse clients.

SUMMARY LEGAL ADVICE

During a 45-minute appointment with a volunteer lawyer, the Summary Legal Advice Clinic program helps you to understand your rights and responsibilities under the law, your legal options for addressing your legal issue, and what to do next.

ONE FINAL SUCCESS STORY...

In early 2023 the Domestic Violence/Family Law Program (DVFLP) worked with an Indigenous woman who said it's the first time she felt heard. The client said that professionals will typically skip straight to colonial legal issues, while DVFLP gave her space to tell the story of who she was, who her people are, the land and horses she rode as a child before residential school and how residential school and inter generational trauma impacted her life and her ex partners life. The Family Law issue was straightforward under Canadian law, but there were sensitive cultural/religious protocol issues that needed to be adhered to. The program lawyer connected with the Indigenous Law program as an incredible resource and support. With interdisciplinary program support we all listened to one another and collaborated on a solution, bringing in the knowledge, cultural aspects and keen community resources of that program, the framework of Family Law, and DVFLP's unique practices and social work emphasis on safety planning in situations of domestic violence.

DVFLP Lawyer Testimonial: *"It was an honour as a settler lawyer to work collaboratively to apply Indigenous Law respectfully and holistically to the Canadian Legal System. I know that we made a difference and that only at CLG could the client have received the time, space, and intersecting resources to resolve her Family Law issues in a way at that was meaningful and respectful of cultural practices and kept her psychologically, physically and emotionally safe within both legal systems."*

CLG CALGARY LEGAL GUIDANCE

Guiding vulnerable Albertans through the legal system