Fall Newsletter

2026 Issue

COMMUNITY LEGAL AID
University of Windsor Law

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Author: Hamza Saeed, 2026 Summer Student



COMMUNITY LEGAL AID ENTRANCE AT THE RON W. IANNI FACULTY OF LAW BUILDING

The Environment at Community Legal Aid

For over 50 years, Community Legal Aid ("CLA") has been a staple in providing access to justice in the Windsor-Essex community. Located in the heart of the Windsor Faculty of Law Building, CLA offers students the unique opportunity to practice law in an environment endorsed by the Faculty and work alongside the over 160 student volunteers and Summer Students attending Windsor Law. Despite our large numbers, we are a tight-knit clinic that values a sense of community.

Our clinic is proud to serve a dual purpose. On one end, we provide complete and accurate legal services to marginalized members of the Windsor-Essex community who may otherwise face access to justice barriers through seeking out traditional legal representation. On the other end, our clinic offers summer students, volunteers, and academic students in the fall and winter terms the opportunity to develop legal skills that build the foundations for their future careers as lawyers. We are proud that this unique experiential learning opportunity is part of our clinic's identity. One of our clients in the summer had this to say about our clinic and one of our Summer Students, Colin: "I found every aspect of the process very easy. Colin was polite and tried to answer my many questions as best he could."

At CLA, our colleagues are not simply our colleagues - they are our friends. This lighthearted environment translates into the positive and cordial atmosphere we maintain at our clinic and extends well beyond the files that are worked on. Our students describe the friendship, mentorship, and professional connections they have developed through their time with the clinic as having a lasting impact on their growth as a law student. One of our summer students, Taleen Kasbarian, reflected that "the guidance, encouragement, and trust I received from lawyers, supervisors, and fellow students created an environment where I was able to grow both professionally and personally."

Community Legal Aid Practice Areas:

- Housing Law
- Employment Law
- Consumer Protection
- Criminal Law
- Estates Law
- Family Law (Summary Advice)





Left Image: Summer Student Jenna Taghikhani and Legal Receptionist Lexi-Lee Gauthier at CLA's Client Desk.
Right Image: Summer Students Jagdeep Brar and Ethan Tion at the Ontario Court of Justice for Navigator Duty.

Experiential Learning at Community Legal Aid

There is a key phrase at CLA that furthers the objective of the clinic: experiential learning. Unlike traditional summer student roles widely-adopted across various practices, Summer Students at CLA are given the opportunity to have carriage of files from the opening stage to the closing stage under the supervision of our esteemed Review Counsel. In doing so, Summer Students are directly responsible for every stage of file work, giving experience and growth to our students that is difficult to encapsulate through theoretical and classroom learning. Intake procedures, conducting research, drafting pleadings and motions, corresponding with opposing parties, and making court and tribunal appearances to advocate for clients are some of the highlighted responsibilities of our Summer Students.



Shane Price
Summer Student

"Overall, CLA has taught me the value of client-first advocacy and the importance of providing legal services to those who may otherwise struggle to navigate the legal system. It has also shown me that no matter how much you learn in class, nothing teaches you faster than a real file and a deadline."

This level of responsibility gives students an appreciation for the realities of legal practice that simply cannot be replicated in the classroom. Legal teaching becomes meaningful when it is actually applied to a client's legal issues and experiences. Deadlines become more significant when another person's legal rights and resolutions depend on your work. Every intake interview, research memorandum, court or tribunal appearance, and client meeting contributes to a broader understanding of what it means to practice law professionally and compassionately, while ensuring that legal advice given to clients is complete and accurate. Hamza Saeed, a summer student, said that, "CLA has greatly helped me in bridging the gap between theoretical learning in law school and providing clients with practical and complete legal representation."

This hands-on approach ties into the holistic practice offered at CLA - throughout the summer, students work on matters involving criminal law, provincial offences, landlord-tenant disputes, employment, consumer protection, Small Claims Court proceedings, civil litigation, and estate planning and litigation. Additionally, all of our Summer Students have the opportunity to appear as amicus curiae in the Ontario Court of Justice and Provincial Court, bringing confidence and quick growth in our initiative.

Some of our students come to the Clinic seeking experience in complex litigation training, while some of them come exhibiting a genuine passion for public interest law. Regardless of the unique and varying goals of our students, CLA continues to foster an environment where the unique ambitions of all of our students are catered to through our versatile practice areas.

The clinic is actively retained by over 120 Clients and gives student caseworkers the opportunity to carry their own file load, allowing students to gain invaluable hands-on experience.



Summer Students Jiangnan Yi and Jenna Taghikhani in the CLA Student Office.

Our Summer Students

One of the defining characteristics of our clinic is the confidence it places in our Students. While every file presents a unique legal issue, each also presents an opportunity for our Students to exercise professional judgment, develop advocacy skills, and experience the realities of practice under the guidance of our Review Counsel. This approach allows our Students to move beyond simply observing legal work and instead encourages them to become active in achieving meaningful outcomes for their clients.

For our Students, this responsibility is both challenging and rewarding. It cannot be said that files are always clear-cut; they are actively changing and our students are actively adapting to accommodate those changes. Learning how to navigate these changes forces our students to develop tools beyond legal knowledge, instilling patience, empathy, and adaptability in their toolsets.

Summer Student Taleen's experience exemplifies this approach. After first joining CLA as a volunteer caseworker, Taleen returned as a Summer Student with the opportunity to assume greater responsibility on complex files. In particular, Taleen played an integral role in securing a rent abatement of over $2,000.00 for one of her clients through extensive legal research and strategy. Through every stage of the file, Taleen was encouraged by Review Counsel to take ownership of her work while receiving guidance that strengthened her advocacy and professional judgment.

Victorious results like Taleen's are not uncommon at CLA. Many of our Summer Students start at CLA with little to no practical legal experience and, through the mentorship and exposure, become capable in delivering favourable results to clients. By the end of the summer term, our Students gain skills that will stay with them throughout their legal careers. The mistakes made are treated as opportunities that give our students the confidence to become better advocates.

At the end of the day, CLA puts great emphasis in ensuring that our clients receive the most astute and informed legal representation, ensuring that our free and low-cost legal services have a widespread, positive impact on the clients who have chosen to retain us. Our Students are the backbone in ensuring that this positive impact is achieved.



Summer Students David Faltas, Ethan Tion, and Shane Price at the Annual Black Kids in Action ("BKIA") Bike Ride.

Public Legal Education

In addition to the central practice of representing clients, CLA also recognizes that promoting access to justices requires maintaining a connection with the local community. Equipping members of the Windsor-Essex community with legal information empowers community members to make informed decisions, seek legal counsel, and better understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. Throughout the summer, our clinic's students participated in a large number of Public Legal Education ("PLE") initiatives that furthered access to justice.

One of the summer's highlights was the PLE initiative delivered in connection with the Black Kids in Action ("BKIA") organization. This summer, at BKIA's annual bike ride event, summer students Shane, Ethan, and David engaged with Windsor's youth, teaching them about understanding their legal rights, safely interacting with police, and making informed decisions. Rather than approaching the discussion from a purely legal perspective, our summer student representatives emphasized practical strategies while eating ice cream and participating in the bike ride with the youth. By presenting legal concepts in an accessible and engaging manner, Shane, Ethan, and David helped empower young members of the community with knowledge they can carry throughout their lives.

Another meaningful initiative involves a series of Wills and Estates PLEs delivered to senior residents at three Windsor-Essex Community Housing locations. Hamza, along with fellow summer students Ethan, Jagdeep, and Jenna, discussed the importance of having a legally-valid will and powers of attorney while encouraging attendees to think carefully about who they choose to appoint as estate trustees and attorneys. Participants were encouraged to choose individuals they trust to carry out these responsibilities, while learning about the dangers that could arise when wills and powers of attorney are not prepared thoughtfully. The sessions led to active discussion among the senior attendees, and led to clients retaining CLA for estate planning and litigation files.

Our clinic also partnered with Women's Enterprise Skills Training ("WEST") to deliver several PLEs on tenant rights under the Residential Tenancies Act, employment law, and financial literacy. These sessions focused on ensuring that all legal information given was through an accessible, easy-to-understand manner to ensure that attendees understood the protections they are entitled to.

Every interaction through the PLEs contributes to the pursuit of access to justice and individual empowerment of the law in our local community. We are very proud to have summer students deliver meaningful presentations that have had such a broad outreach.

Joining Community Legal Aid



Every summer term, CLA welcomes 10 Summer Students to the Clinic to further our mission of experiential learning and access to justice. The experience that these students gain during their summer employment proves to be invaluable to their future in the legal field. You can find past CLA summer students working on Bay Street, for the Ministry of the Attorney General, criminal law firms, employment firms, in-house, or continuing to advance their careers in public interest work with Legal Aid Ontario. The key takeaway is that no matter what the aspirations of our summer students are, the tools they have gained from CLA prove to be an asset in any legal field they choose to pursue.

If you are interested in joining our family at CLA, be on the lookout for volunteer applications at the beginning of the Winter 2027 academic term, through which over 100 student volunteers per academic term work on client files, prepare public legal education sessions, and aid with community outreach Community Legal Aid's Winter 2027 Registration and Orientation will take place on Saturday, January 9, 2027 in the Faculty of Law Building. In-person registration will be held in the Jamie Johnson Student Lounge from 8:30 am to 9:30 am. The general orientation session will be held in the Don Rodzik Moot Court Room 1150 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The SCW and Navigator Orientation session will be held in the Don Rodzik Moor Court Room 1150 from 1:15 pm to 2:15 pm. Student volunteers MUST bring a printed copy of their Winter 2027 class schedule from their UWinsite Account to registration. Group times will begin the week of January 11, 2027.

Resources for applying will be posted on *12Twenty* and *Brightspace*. If you are interested in becoming a summer student, our competitive application cycle begins in February, which will also be posted on *12Twenty* and *Brightspace*.

For more information regarding CLA, visit Law Student Opportunities | Faculty of Law. We look forward to hearing from you and how you wish to further our mission.

Stay up to Date

@clawindsor

Community Legal Aid Windsor

A Note from the Acting Clinic Director

As we begin the Fall 2026 term, I am pleased to share this newsletter reflecting on the partnerships, experiences, and work that shaped our Summer 2026 term.

The stories featured in this issue highlight the breadth of our work and the important role CLA plays in our community. From our students' experiences and reflections, to our partnerships with community organizations and the meaningful legal assistance we provide to our clients, each aspect of CLA's work reflects our commitment to experiential learning, community service, and access to justice.

Thank you to our students, staff, supervising lawyers and community partners who contributed to an especially busy and productive Summer 2026 term. With our largest summer student cohort to date, an increased caseload, and a range of new and expanded initiatives, the term was marked by tremendous dedication and teamwork. This included the expansion of our Court Navigator Project through new partnerships, two PBSC supervising projects - including the Wills Group and our new collaboration with the John Howard Society. I hope this newsletter offers a glimpse into the many ways CLA continues to teach our law students and serve our community.

Your truly,
Community Legal Aid