



22/23

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We work on land covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was a pre-contact agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabeg to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

We welcome you to acknowledge the first Peoples of the territory upon which you live and work. It is part of the collective responsibility of settlers and guests of these lands to educate ourselves and to actively engage with the Calls to Action of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

The Income Security Advocacy Centre commits to moving from acknowledgement to action in order to end the cycles of colonial violence, including enforced income insecurity and poverty, faced by Indigenous Peoples in Ontario today.

OUR VISION

A province where everyone flourishes on a livable income.

OUR MISSION

To advance the systemic interests and rights of low-income and equity-seeking communities and meaningfully support Indigenous Peoples and communities, with a focus on improving income security programs and ending low-wage precarious employment.

WHO WE ARE

The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) was established in 2001, in partnership with Legal Aid Ontario. We are a specialty legal clinic wholly dedicated to systemic advocacy on income security issues for and with low-income Ontarians. Our clinic comes from a shared vision of social programs based on our experiences and drawn from core values expressed in Canada's international commitments and fundamental values of our legal system. Since then, we have been fully funded by LAO. In order to achieve income security, ISAC addresses income benefit programs and pushes for employment protections.

As a non-profit organization, we are governed by a community Board of Directors with representation from all regions of Ontario. Our Board includes legal clinic representatives and people with lived experience, and has representation from Indigenous communities, racialized communities, people with disabilities, and recipients of income support benefit programs.

ISAC's work is supported by our members. We welcome the participation of those who share our goals and objectives and are interested in advancing our common message within your own communities and with our elected officials. Together, our common voices are strong.

WHAT WE DO

Our work is guided by our strategic plan, a multi-year plan developed by the Board of Directors together with ISAC staff. The plan is based on ongoing assessment of the needs of our client communities and the opportunities presented in the environment in which we work. Our strategic plan is available on our website.

The strategic priorities established by the Board are implemented by staff through systemic litigation, policy work, and community organizing. The methods we use depend on the issue and the opportunities to pursue reform, but they are often used in combination. We also work in coalition with other advocacy groups and organizations. We maximize our impact by working with partners in the legal clinic system and the community, and expand our reach by creating and distributing public education materials on the issues we are working on. Our analyses and recommendations are informed by ongoing consultation with, and information provided by, low-income Ontarians, our partners and others in the anti-poverty sector.

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear ISAC Members and Community Partners:

Welcome to ISAC's 2022/23 Annual Report. The past year has been an exciting and productive one for our clinic.

The ISAC Board resumed in-person meetings in November 2022. It was so nice to finally meet our fellow directors face-to-face rather than on a screen. Full ISAC Board meetings are held quarterly and we now plan to have two of them in-person per year.

Over the past year, the management and staff of ISAC have been working hard to strengthen our ties both within the clinic system and with our partners in the wider community. Our Executive Director, Melinda Ferlisi, and ISAC staff have made a point of attending in-person regional training events around the province. It is the mandate of ISAC to listen to and collaborate with community clinics to address the wider systemic income security issues they observe in their client caseloads. Being able to meet fellow clinic staff in person most certainly helps this collaboration.

Like every other community legal clinic, the ISAC Board has been working to ensure that our Bylaws are aligned with the new *Ontario Non-Profit Corporations Act*. Like many other clinics, we are using this opportunity to look at our Bylaws overall, specifically our Board size and composition and our membership criteria. Our goal is to ensure both effectiveness and inclusive representation of the communities we serve. Proposed changes will be presented for approval at our 2024 AGM

At this upcoming AGM, we have to say goodbye to two Board members. Rachael Lake has been the ISAC Clinic representative for the southwest region. Thank you Rachael for your commitment and the quiet wisdom that you have contributed to our many Board discussions. Claudette Paul is a long-standing Board member from northern Ontario. Over the 6 years that she has served on the ISAC Board, Claudette has taught us much about indigenous culture and community legal issues. Thank you, Claudette, for your wisdom and your astute observations. We have learned a lot from you.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, management and staff, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our membership and community partners for your support over the past year. ISAC is thriving as we all work together, in our respective roles, to further access to justice for low-income Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Jenny Gullen, Chair
ISAC Board of Directors

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The 2022-2023 fiscal year is defined by setting goals, working towards them, and growing and learning along the way. Welcome to the Income Security Advocacy Centre's 2022-2023 annual report. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff at ISAC, I am honoured to share our accomplishments and progress within these pages for the period of April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023.

The Income Security Advocacy continues to push for change – by focusing on improving income security programs and ending low-wage precarious employment. Guiding our work is ISAC's multi-year Strategic Plan. 2022-2023 marked its second year in pursuit of our strategic priorities emphasizing organizational sustainability, access to income security and justice, and increasing ISAC's presence and community engagement.

ISAC's Board of Directors and management have embarked on a by-law review and revision as we prepare to transition to the new *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*. We are excited to have begun this work. Internally, we have developed a new Case Selection Policy and accompanying criteria, as well as a Media Request Policy, ensuring consistency in our approach to these processes.

This last year saw ISAC lead a campaign to fight for an increase to social assistance rates, which had remained stagnant since 2018. ISAC's Open Letter to Double the Rates amassed 250+ signatures. Media coverage of the Open Letter alone garnered more than 15 unique stories, and reached multiple regions across Ontario. This broad and concerted push for an increase in rates led to a 5% benefit rate increase for ODSP recipients and changes to earning exemptions rules, however, those on Ontario Works were left behind, as those benefits were not increased, and there was no change to earnings exemptions faced by OW clients. The fight to Raise the Rates – all the rates – and to improve the conditions and experiences of people receiving social assistance forges ahead.

In 2023-2023, as ISAC's litigation practice grew, we were able to increase our appellate level litigation work. ISAC undertook Federal Judicial reviews related to pandemic benefits, representing 3 appellants, and providing over 20 consultations on federal judicial reviews in the last year. ISAC continues to address the inequities resulting from both the pandemic and the unintended consequences by the rapid rollout of income security benefits that were designed to provide financial relief.

ISAC, as an organization must continue to progress along the path to Reconciliation. We have much work to do. This past year, ISAC staff worked with Suzanne Methot, a Nehiyaw writer, editor, educator, and speaker through two workshops to learn Indigenous history in the context of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and to explore issues of trauma that our clients may face.

In the spirit of engaging and connecting with our communities around the province, ISAC presented at its first Regional Training, held in Thunder Bay in November 2022, since prior to the pandemic. We look forward to more in-person Regional training workshops in the coming years. Digitally, ISAC increased traffic to our website and we ended the fiscal year with 55,000 page views. Similarly, our Twitter/X activities were active at 107.3K impressions over the year.

All of ISAC's work could not be possible without a tremendous amount of support. Thank you to our Board of Directors who volunteer countless hours for the good governance of our organization. Your participation, commitment, and service has allowed ISAC to overcome its challenges and face our future with confidence. A special thank you to our outgoing ISAC Board Chair, Jennifer Gullen. Your guidance, leadership, and care during a time of organizational transition paved the way for the progress we've made and the great things to come.

Thank you to our funder, Legal Aid Ontario. Your contribution is crucial in allowing us to continue working for change alongside our communities and clients.

Thank you to my colleagues at ISAC. Your hard work, creative ideas and tenacity has allowed ISAC to continue the fight for change for those who access income security programs or are precariously employed.

Finally, thank you to our clients, communities, and partners. It is a privilege and an honour to work for change alongside you.

Yours truly,



Melinda Ferlisi
Executive Director

Campaign Highlights:

Double the Rates Campaign

- Open Letter calling on government to double social assistance rates gained 250+ signatures (Summer 2022)
- 5% increase to Ontario Disability Support Program rates announced in Summer 2022 and applied November 2022
- Annual rate increase linked to inflation announced March 2023
- Raise the Rates Coalition re-established (January 2023)

Canada Disability Benefit Advocacy

- Worked with clinic and community partners to develop basis of campaign to be launched in Spring 2023
- Positioned ISAC as an important community voice on the issue of appeal rights

Litigation Highlights:

- 1 Successful intervention appearance at the Court of Appeal
- 1 appearance at Income Tax Court – Decision TBD
- 3 successful Federal Judicial Reviews Commenced
- 2 Ontario Divisional Court appeals commenced
- Co-counselled on numerous Tribunal matters successfully assisting vulnerable clients facing complex issues

Policy Reform Highlights:

- 6 budget analyses or pre-budget submissions released
- 5 roundtables / consultations attended
- 4 Tribunal stakeholder meetings attended
- 9 advocacy letters to politicians

Written Submissions to Government or Agencies advancing the interests of low-income people:

- 5 written submissions advancing the interests of low-income people to government or agencies
- Statements, Policy Analysis and Advocacy Pieces: 10+ Statements, Policy Analyses, and Advocacy Pieces

Legal and Advocacy Education Highlights:

- 2 Social Assistance Rate Sheets
- 8+ election education materials produced
- 1 Election Forum
- 29+ Legal Education Trainings delivered to 845+ participants

Clinic and Community Work Highlights:

- Participation in 8+ inter-clinic groups
- Participation or partnership in 10+ community groups
- 5 major campaigns supported
- 15+ rallies and other community-led organizing events supported or attended

Communications:

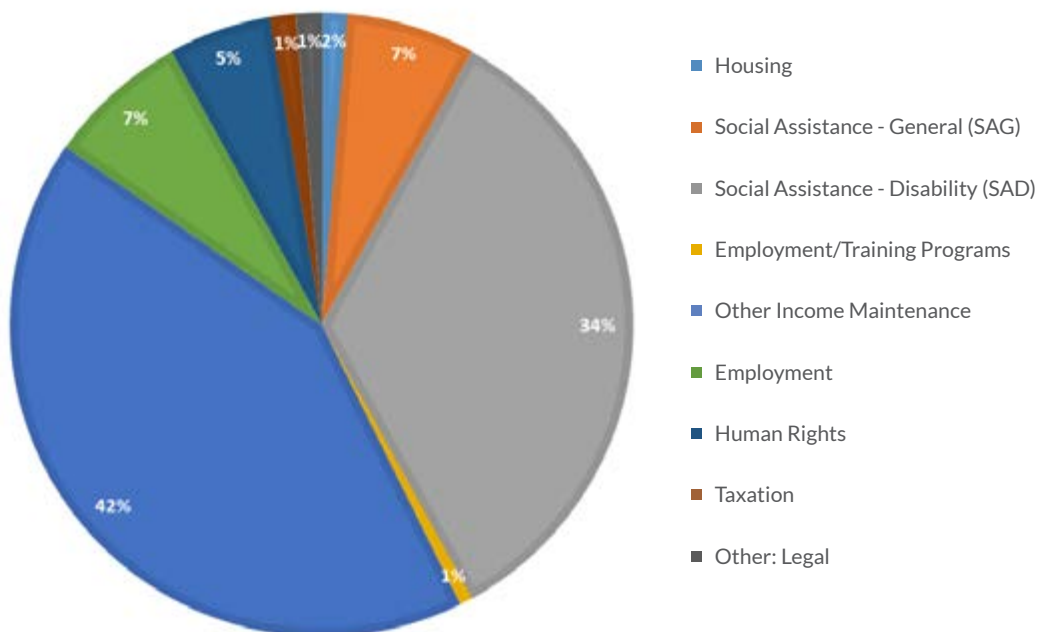
- 52 media appearances (print, radio, television, online), including an op-ed co-authored with members of the ODSP Action Coalition which was syndicated in four Torstar news outlets
- Increased social media presence and new website with increased functionality and regular updates
- 55,000 total page views on website

Legal Service Inquiries: 227

Cases Opened: 150

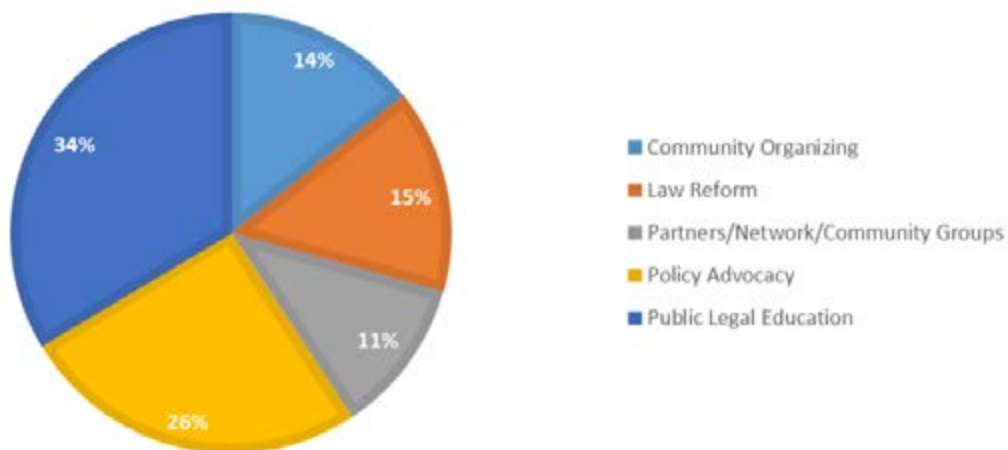
Community Servicing Initiatives: 140

CASES BY AREA OF LAW



- Other income maintenance includes Employment Insurance and other income maintenance benefits such as Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Canada Pension Plan benefits.

INITIATIVE BY TYPE



LAW AND POLICY REFORM AND ADVOCACY

Social Assistance Reform (Modernization)

Major changes have been made to the way social assistance is delivered in Ontario. Referred to as modernization, this structural reorganization has resulted in changes to service delivery. Employment services have been separated from the rest of social assistance. The new modernization processes also change which entity determines benefit eligibility and changes how benefits are delivered, with a shift towards digitization and automation.

In 2022-2023, ISAC's goals around Social Assistance Reform were to provide information and education about the modernization process and to advocate for changes that don't adversely impact social assistance applicants and recipients. In Spring of 2022, ISAC launched its "Modernization Toolkit" with Part I designed as an information and education guide for legal clinics, and Part II, a practical advocacy guide. ISAC capped off the launch of the toolkit with a virtual presentation to 84 participants from clinics around the province.

Continuing our advocacy, ISAC on our own and with community partners sent letters to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, members of the opposition, and critics. We outlined the adverse impact the centralization and digitization of social assistance could have on applicants and recipients, as well as problems with a pay-for-performance employment support model.

As reforms to social assistance are rolled out, ISAC continues to play an active role on the Steering Committee on Social Assistance, advocating for social assistance clients' needs.

GIS and CERB Interactions: Achieving restitution for low-income seniors caught in a nasty benefit interaction

ISAC staff was able to see major success with regards to the restoration of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to seniors who had lost access to the benefit due to their receipt of Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). In some cases, seniors were facing repayment requests in addition to losing their GIS. ISAC staff worked tirelessly throughout the 2021-2022 year to ensure that low-income seniors would continue to have access to their regular federal income benefits,

regardless of their receipt of temporary federal pandemic benefits. In April 2022, low-income seniors who saw a reduced or denied GIS due to collecting CERB received an automatic one-time lump sum payment. These non-taxable payments compensated the full annualized amount of the GIS loss or reduction as a result of pandemic benefits.

ISAC staff continue to work on issues impacting seniors through providing summary advice to community legal clinic staff and supporting external campaigns run by community partners.

Federal Budget Work

ISAC prepared a response to the 2022 Federal Budget upon its release in April 2022, finding major shortcomings in the areas of Employment Insurance reform, supports for people with disabilities, and much-needed reform for migrant and low-income workers. (April 2022)

In the submissions for Federal Budget 2023, ISAC advocated for 10 employer paid-sick days as legislated in *Bill C-3*, as well as an increase to the minimum wage for federally regulated workers; Employment Insurance reforms including a lower number of qualifying hours and a higher benefit floor for all workers; the implementation of a Canada Disability Benefit; the expansion of the Canada Workers Benefit; and the extension of eligibility for the Canada Child benefit (CCB) for all who need it, regardless of their immigration status. (July and August 2022)

Provincial Budget Work

The 2022 Provincial Budget was released at the end of April 2022 and re-introduced in August 2022, after the June 2022 election. ISAC's analysis of the 2022 Provincial Budget found that the 5% ODSP rate increase and 0% rate increase for OW recipients was exceptionally inadequate, especially given the province's strong financial position.

As part of the 2023 Provincial Budget Consultations, ISAC advocated for investments in income security programs, including raising social assistance rates, broadening access, forgiving overpayments related to temporary federal pandemic-related benefits, and implementing regulatory changes including raising asset limits. ISAC also advocated for improvements to the changes in social assistance delivery and a new digital access benefit. One recommendation, which called for an increase to the earnings exemption from \$200 to \$1000 per month for both OW and ODSP recipients, was partially adopted. Changes to earning exemptions for ODSP recipients were brought into force in November 2022, though there are ongoing concerns that the changes do not go far enough and completely ignore OW recipients.

Other provincial budget recommendations included calling for investments to Legal Aid Ontario funding, and eliminating the backlog at the *Human Rights Tribunal*. They also focused on improving and investing in justice for workers, including legislating 10 employer-paid sick days and an additional 14 days of employer-paid sick leave during declared public health outbreaks; increasing the minimum wage to \$20 per hour, and ensuring workers receive equal pay and are not misclassified and therefore excluded from the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*. (February 2023)

The 2023 Provincial Budget passed at the end of March 2023 and included funding to carry out the government promise of increasing ODSP shelter and basic needs rates annually at the rate of inflation. This amounted to a 6.5% increase to ODSP starting in July 2023, though no equivalent change was made to OW rates. Very little else was included to support the income security of low-income Ontarians, whether they are low-wage workers or surviving on social assistance.

Election Advocacy - Provincial Election 2022

ISAC staff worked on several projects focused on public education in the lead up to the June 2022 Provincial Election. Staff developed and released a 10-page participation guide (May 2022) which included info sheets on five major income security issue areas, as well as an advocacy guide on where to vote, and how to talk to local candidates. Staff released the materials publicly and at a special OPICCO session on election advocacy.

ISAC also hosted a public Income Security Forum (April 2022), moderated by former Toronto Star Reporter Laurie Monsebraaten. ISAC invited one representative from each of the major political parties with sitting representatives to attend and provide their party's perspectives on important questions related to income security. Three representatives participated, and over 100 members of the public and clinic staff attended.

In addition to the participation guide and income security forum, each week for four weeks leading up to the date of the election, ISAC staff produced a weekly news "round-up" digest, and published these digests to our newly launched website. They included promotion of ISAC's election advocacy materials, and election-related materials and events hosted by other community legal clinics and advocates in the non-profit sector. Overall, ISAC's public education work leading up to the election successfully engaged many members of the public, and provided much-requested supportive materials for our clinic system colleagues for use in their local communities.

Reforming Canada's Employment Insurance system

In 2021, the federal government launched a historic review of Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) system, with the goal of reforming it to better serve workers. ISAC has long advocated for improvements to EI, which has become increasingly hard to access for low-wage and precarious workers. In June 2022, ISAC (as co-chair of the Ontario Community Legal Clinics EI Working Group) participated in oral consultations with Minister Carla Qualtrough, who was Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion at the time, about how to improve EI. The federal government is expected to propose changes to the EI system in future.



ISAC joined members of Workers Action Centre, South Asian Women's Rights Organization (SAWRO), and other supporters in downtown Toronto on the National Day of Action to Fix EI in December 2022.

The 2022-2023 fiscal year also saw two important changes to EI that ISAC advocated for. The first is the creation of a new tripartite EI Board of Appeal, which will hear first-level EI appeals instead of the Social Security Tribunal (General Division). As a tripartite organization, the new Board of Appeal would represent the interests of government, workers and employers, and help return first-level EI appeal decisions into the hands of those who pay into the EI system. The Board is expected to become operational in the summer of 2024. The second change was a much-needed extension of the duration of EI sickness benefits, from 15 weeks to 26 weeks.

Unfortunately, pandemic-related EI temporary measures which improved access and increased rates expired in September 2022. ISAC continues to engage in EI

reform advocacy with other groups through the Interprovincial EI Working Group, and through annual forums with the EI Commissioner for Workers.

ISAC continues to play an important role in supporting campaigns for stronger employment standards. ISAC has remained involved in the Justice for Workers campaign, which is calling for reforms to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* such as \$20 minimum wage and 10 paid sick days. ISAC attends monthly provincial organizing meetings and local organizing meetings. ISAC staff has been involved in multiple facets of the campaign such as organizing outreach activities, phone banks, trainings, presentations and undertaking research and developing materials.

In the last year the Justice for Workers campaign played a key role in winning the implementation of the 10 paid sick days for federally regulated private sector workers. The Justice for Workers campaign over the last year has expanded, organizing more actions in communities across the province. Over 200 people attended its in-person Beat the Bosses Bootcamp in early spring 2023, at which ISAC presented.

In January 2023, community and labour groups launched the Enough is Enough campaign, to demand increased wages, stronger labour standards, better public services affordable rents and higher social assistance rates. The Justice for Workers campaign and other community groups participated and helped build the successful June 3rd Day of action across the province.



ISAC Bowlers at the 2022 Workers' Bowl, helping to raise over \$135,000 for the OEERC Education and Leadership Fund with the Workers' Action Centre.
(Left to Right: Claudia C., Dave B., Zumrad A. and Anu B.)

ISAC continued to play an important role in the Workers' Rights Action Group (WRAG), the interclinic group focused on employment law. WRAG is helping to build out the employment law practice in the community legal clinic system. Through its monthly meetings and its employment law conference WRAG has been a critical group to talk through current employment law cases, share legal strategies and connect individual cases at the clinic level with broader efforts at labour law reform. ISAC helped to organize the annual WRAG employment law conference in June 2022, with over 100 people attending.

ISAC is part of the Status for All campaign of the Migrant Rights Network and continued to support the network throughout the 2022-2023 year. In September 2022 and March 2023, ISAC organizers joined thousands of migrant workers, allies, and organizations on the streets of Toronto to march for Status for All.



ISAC joined dozens of organizations and individuals in March 2023 to protest cuts to healthcare for uninsured people in Ontario. ISAC supports health care equity for all, regardless of immigration status.

Double the Rates Campaign (Summer 2022)

In early 2022, it became clear that the ending of pandemic supports (both direct and supportive funding to social service organizations) along with the increases in food prices, rents, and the cost of living were hitting social assistance recipients especially hard.



In 2022, ISAC supported two rallies held by the ODSP Action Coalition and the Ontario Disability Coalition which called on the province to increase raise social assistance rates and fix longstanding problems with Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

With rates having been frozen for several years and the provincial election approaching, ISAC staff, along with clients, community members, clinic staff, organizations, and allies, saw a moment of opportunity to push for the bold demand of doubling social assistance rates.

On July 25, 2022, ISAC's open letter calling for the government to double social assistance rates for both ODSP and OW recipients was published, with over 230 organization signatories from across Ontario. News about the open letter took off, with more and more organizations asking to sign on in the ensuing days after the launch. By the time the budget was re-introduced in early August 2022, over 250 organizations had endorsed the call to double social assistance rates.

This monumental push from across sectors, communities, and regions resulted in some movement towards ODSP increases and positive regulatory changes, with base ODSP rates increasing (or being pledged to increase) by 11.5% by the end of March 2023. While this was the most movement on ODSP rates in some time, the impacts of having stagnant rates since 2018 and the high rates of inflation which occurred throughout 2022 and into 2023 tempered the efficacy of these increases. The decision not to apply these rate increases to crucial supplementary benefits like the Special Diet Supplement also impacted their efficacy in supporting ODSP recipients.

In October 2022, ISAC co-wrote an op-ed with members of the ODSP Action Coalition spotlighting the problems with the 5% rate increase, referencing the need to double social assistance rates to make up for lost time and to end the legislated poverty that is experienced by people receiving ODSP and OW.

The fight for increased rates continue. In early 2023, ISAC joined a small group of Ontario-based advocates to begin work on a renewed Raise the Rates campaign, to be launched later in the year.

Initiative to Track and Increase Access to In-Person Hearings at the Social Benefits Tribunal

In Fall 2022, ISAC launched a clinic-focused initiative on In-Person SBT Hearings, resulting in the development of the Step-By-Step Guide for Requesting In-Person Hearings for Community Legal Clinic Practitioners. We were concerned that Tribunals Ontario Digital First approach leaves some clients behind. We provided step-by-step assistance and consultations with clinic staff to ensure that clients and clinic staff knew about the in-hearing option was available. Our goal was to increase clinic staff knowledge on how to successfully apply for a hearing-related accommodation, and to preserve access to in-person hearings for clients who need them.

During the six month initiative, we heard from community legal clinic staff that the process to request an in-person hearing was onerous. We drafted in-person hearing requests for our sister clinics and tracked and received information about several in-person hearing requests submitted to the SBT by clinic staff. We found that overall, staff was mostly successful in changing the hearing format from virtual

to in-person hearing as an accommodation for medical reasons, though not all were successful in obtaining the specific hearing format requested for their client. Special thank you to the clinics who worked closely with ISAC on this initiative.

Long COVID and the Ontario Disability Support Program

ISAC worked with the Long COVID Working Group to develop an income security roadmap for those with Long COVID who may need last-resort benefits. Long COVID is relatively new, and research into it is ongoing. Long COVID affects everyone differently; there have been reports of over 100 symptoms. Some people with Long COVID continue to have symptoms even if they test negative. Knowing that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts low-income racialized and Indigenous communities because of existing health inequities related to income, education, employment and housing, it was essential for ISAC to work with medical professionals and advocates to develop Long COVID materials addressing income security.

The group pushed for an updated addition to the ODSP Disability Adjudication Long COVID adjudication Handbook chapter. Because the purpose of the Handbook is to provide general information about medical conditions for ODSP disability adjudication, the group advocated that the Handbook include that a person applying for benefits does not need proof of a positive COVID-19 test to be diagnosed with Long COVID. In October 2022, the ODSP introduced a new chapter on “Coronavirus Disease.”

In the fall of 2022, ISAC helped to develop resources on Long COVID and disability for the family medicine/primary care community. In February 2023, ISAC assisted Dr. Gary Bloch with long-COVID seminar materials to present at the Ontario College of Family Physicians’ Community of Practice session.

CERB/CRB Overpayments and the Ongoing Call for CERB repayment forgiveness

ISAC staff continued to support the CERB Amnesty working group, which engaged in advocacy and public awareness on the ongoing impact of CERB/CRB repayments years after temporary pandemic benefits were received and used to support recipients during an extremely unstable and difficult time. ISAC staff monitored federal government actions and reports, calling attention to the problems with the Auditor General’s report on COVID-19 Benefits released in December 2022. ISAC staff also worked towards developing public education materials and workshops on how to challenge CERB/CRB overpayments, designed for both community legal clinic staff and the broader communities they serve.

Poverty and Systemic Discrimination in Housing and Mental Health and Addiction Disabilities: Submissions for the OHRC Study

In July 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) announced a study on poverty and systemic and intersectional discrimination in the areas of adequate, accessible, and affordable housing, and mental health and addiction disabilities. As part of its study, the OHRC wanted to hear from Indigenous communities, academic, legal, and community organizations, and people with lived experience on how systemic and intersectional discrimination in housing and mental health and addiction disabilities causes and sustains poverty. The OHRC aims to use its study to advance how Ontario's *Human Rights Code* is interpreted and applied.

On September 30, 2022, ISAC provided a submission to the OHRC's study. ISAC's submission focused on the systemic discrimination that people living with mental health and addiction disabilities who are precariously housed face when attempting to access and remain within the social safety net. Within the broader social safety net, ISAC focused on provincial social assistance (OW and ODSP) and federal employment insurance. ISAC concluded that these benefit schemes contain structural barriers that discriminate against individuals with mental health and addiction disabilities, undermining their ability to access and maintain vital benefits.

Following receipt of these submissions, ISAC participated in a community roundtable with OHRC partners as part of the second phase of its study. During the session, ISAC answered questions concerning its submissions, elaborating on them, and providing feedback on the substantive issues that OHRC seeks to achieve.

Reducing Poverty and Supporting the Financial Security of People Living with Disabilities: Bill C-22, the Canada Disability Benefit Act

In June 2022, the federal government reintroduced framework legislation meant to create a Canada Disability Benefit for low-income working age people with disabilities, titled *Bill C-22*. *Bill C-22* replicated the contents of *Bill C-35*, which the government introduced in June 2021 but abandoned due to the 2021 federal election. Under pressure from the disability community and based on the principle of "Nothing About Us, Without Us", advocates were determined to have *Bill C-22* succeed.

Bill C-22 completed Second Reading in the House of Commons in October 2022. The Bill then moved to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) for a

study. On November 16, 2022, ISAC submitted a brief to HUMA's study recommending amendments to *Bill C-22* that:

1. Raise people with disabilities above the poverty line and include the cost of living with a disability;
2. Develop an inclusive and expansive definition of disability for eligibility purposes;
3. Guarantee automatic eligibility for people on existing disability programs;
4. Insert statutory appeal rights through a timely and accessible dispute resolution process; and
5. Remove stringent identification requirements so hard-to-reach populations can access the Benefit.

While HUMA made some progress on our first two recommendations by indexing the Benefit to inflation, requiring adequacy of the Benefit to consider the Official Poverty Line, and including an expansive definition of disability, our final three recommendations were unaddressed. Ultimately, the House accepted HUMA's study and passed their recommended amendments in February 2023, paving the way for *Bill C-22* to proceed to the Senate. After passing Second Reading in March 2023, the Senate sent *Bill C-22* to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (SOCI) for further study.

To improve *Bill C-22* in the Senate, ISAC collaborated with ARCH Disability Law Centre, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Alliance, and advocate Vince Calderhead. Together, we alerted the Senate to further amendments they should make, including the three proposed ISAC amendments that HUMA did not consider. Thanks to our partnership and advocacy, SOCI invited ISAC to appear as a witness during its study of *Bill C-22* in April 2023.

SYSTEMIC LITIGATION

Misclassification, Discrimination and Wrongful Dismissal: S.O.T.B. v. Attorney General of Canada

Since 2017, ISAC and the Lake Country Community Legal Clinic have represented an Indigenous Elder who worked as a Cultural Advisor at a federal penitentiary and who experienced discrimination and harassment. ISAC filed a wrongful dismissal action with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, in a lengthy process that included a successful motion for disclosure of key documents that the federal penitentiary had improperly withheld. ISAC also filed a human rights complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which was ultimately referred for a hearing at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The Commission acts as a gatekeeper and determines whether human rights complaints submitted by individuals have sufficient merit to be referred for a hearing at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. This is a highly selective process and usually only complaints that are in the public interest and that address systemic discrimination will be heard.

In the summer and fall of 2022, ISAC represented the client in a private mediation that resulted in the successful settlement of both his civil and human rights claims. However, the fight continues: other former Indigenous staff of federal penitentiaries have launched a class action claiming, among other things, systemic discrimination against Indigenous persons.

COVID-19 Benefit Overpayments and Impact on Low-wage Precarious Workers

After the COVID-19 pandemic commenced in March 2020, the federal government introduced numerous new benefit programs to support people in Canada. This included the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and Canada Recovery Benefit. Although they offered much-needed support, these programs came with challenges and were often confusing and unclear. In 2021 and 2022, many of these problems came to light as the Canada Revenue Agency began sending overpayment notices to thousands of benefit recipients.

ISAC and other clinics noticed an alarming trend: many individuals who received overpayment notices were low-wage precarious workers, who had engaged in self-employment work. Some of them worked in the cash economy and/or ran small businesses from home, and did not have the official paperwork and documentation demanded by the CRA to prove their self-employment income. These individuals were determined ineligible for the pandemic benefits and assessed with significant overpayments.

ISAC assisted several clients with challenges to their overpayment decisions through applications for judicial review at the Federal Court of Canada, and reviews with the CRA. The experience has highlighted significant concerns with the CRA's collections process. For example, their decision letters are standard templates that do not explain why an individual was deemed ineligible, making it difficult for benefit recipients to understand what evidence they need to provide or what case they need to meet.

In ***S.U. v. Attorney General of Canada***, ISAC represented a low-income single mother who was assessed with a nearly \$12,000 overpayment of the Canada Recovery Benefit. The Canada Revenue Agency had determined that the client was ineligible because she did not earn \$5,000 in employment and self-employment income. In particular, the CRA found that the attendant care services she had provided to her disabled father, in exchange for remuneration, did not constitute “self-employment” work.

ISAC filed an application for judicial review of the CRA's decision with the Federal Court of Canada. The application eventually settled in exchange for a new review before a new CRA officer. ISAC submitted detailed evidence and written submissions to the CRA in support of the client's new review, including contextual evidence of the varying nature of precarious self-employment work and research on how the pandemic disproportionately affected precariously employed women and single mothers. ISAC was successful in the new review: in January 2023, the CRA issued a decision in favour of the client, cancelled her overpayment, and provided her outstanding payments of the Canada Recovery Benefit.

Finally, together with Don Valley Community Legal Services, ISAC provided a detailed presentation and guide to litigating pandemic benefit overpayments for clinic caseworkers, along with legal document templates and precedents. This has helped more caseworkers across Ontario to take on these cases and assist low-wage workers with fighting back against overpayments.

Procedural Fairness during ODSP Requests for Information

A person receiving ODSP income support has a duty to report their income, assets, financial situation, and living arrangements to their caseworker. For single recipients living with a disability who require caregivers, ODSP caseworkers often request detailed information to determine whether the recipient and their caregiver are “spouses”. You do not have to be legally married for ODSP to find that a companion, friend, or caregiver is your “spouse” under the applicable legislation. Instead, the “spouse” test considers whether you resided in the same dwelling place for a period of at least three months, are financially interdependent, and share social and familial aspects consistent with cohabitation.

When ODSP requires more information to determine whether there is a spousal relationship, it must provide recipients with a fair process. A finding that two people are “spouses” can have a significant negative financial impact on a recipient. For example, an ODSP recipient can lose their income support entirely if the financial assets of their supposed “spouse” rises above the asset threshold allowed under ODSP.

The Income Security Advocacy Centre and the Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic represented an ODSP recipient who required two caregivers to assist her with her day-to-day activities and literacy-based support. ODSP believed that one of these caregivers was her “spouse” and asked her to provide extensive information about this caregiver. However, on the same date that ODSP requested this information it also issued a decision suspending the recipient from receiving income support. ODSP did this despite stating in the request for information that the recipient would have one month to gather the relevant information from her caregiver.

We challenged ODSP’s failure to allow our client to explain her situation. ODSP’s process was unfair because it suspended our client from income support before she could provide information and explain that her caregiver was not her “spouse”. The Social Benefits Tribunal agreed that ODSP has a duty to make sure that the process is fair when making decisions that affect social assistance recipients’ ability to pay for food, rent, medical benefits, and basic necessities. ODSP failed to follow its own procedures and denied our client a fair process. Accordingly, the Tribunal rescinded ODSP’s decision to suspend our client’s benefits.

ODSP Treatment of the Federal “Incapacitated Child Benefit”

When a person living with disabilities receives ODSP income support, they have a responsibility to pursue other government benefits that they may be eligible for. ODSP may withhold income support to account for the income an ODSP recipient obtained, or should have obtained, from other government benefits. For example, if an ODSP recipient gets \$900 in monthly Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits, ODSP withholds or “claws back” \$900. This clawback can have severe financial consequences. A person may owe thousands of dollars in overpayments if ODSP failed to claw back their income support to account for their receipt of other government benefits. In addition, a person’s income support may permanently be reduced every month to account for the income they are expected to receive from other benefits. But what happens if a person on ODSP receives a parental benefit that was re-directed to them?

ISAC provided support to Waterloo Region Community Legal Services to advocate against deducting a re-directed parental benefit from their client’s monthly ODSP income support. The client’s father is a veteran who qualifies for a federal disability pension and an additional “incapacitated child benefit” pension



*Ensuring access to the Canada Child Benefit for all children in Canada regardless of their parents' immigration status continues to be an important piece of legal work done by ISAC staff.
Left to Right: Zumrad A., Claudia C., Nabila Q., Adrian M. at Tax Court.*

payment because his son, the client, is unable to “earn a livelihood” due to his disability. To ensure his son benefitted from this money, the veteran decided to direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay this benefit directly to his son, the client, instead of directly to the veteran. However, since the benefit was directed to the client, ODSP treated this as a government benefit that the client applied for. ODSP charged the client an overpayment and deducted the “incapacitated child benefit” amount from his monthly ODSP income support on a go-forward basis. Had the benefit instead been paid to the client’s father, and then gifted to the client, ODSP would have considered this amount a gift, not income. This case settled in advance of the Social Benefits Tribunal hearing, and the client was able to work with the media to amplify the issues surrounding his case.

Correcting a Faulty Health Status Report with Supplementary Medical Evidence

When applying for income support, ODSP requires applicants to complete a Health Status Report (HSR), usually filled out and signed by their family physician. The HSR includes information about the applicant’s disability, its likely duration/prognosis, their intellectual and emotional wellness scale, and restrictions to their activities of daily living. Accordingly, adjudicators rely on the HSR when assessing whether an individual qualifies for ODSP income support.

ISAC and the Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic represented an ODSP applicant whose family physician had confused the applicant with his father when completing the HSR. The Director denied his application. Following this denial, the family physician provided corrected supplementary medical information meant to correct the errors he made in the HSR. We argued that the Social Benefits Tribunal should place no weight on the HSR given the physician's error and instead rely on the supplementary medical evidence that was relevant to the date of the Director's decision. The Tribunal agreed with our argument. The supplementary medical evidence, as well as the applicant's testimony and other medical evidence in the applicant's disability package, satisfied the Tribunal that the applicant's impairments from chronic back pain were substantial and that they restricted his ability to function in a workplace. Accordingly, the Tribunal rescinded the Director's denial and granted our client ODSP with a one-year medical review date.

Adjudicating Entitlement to ODSP, Even if Eligible Under CPP-D Prescribed Class

When a person stops working because of their disability, they often apply for federally administered Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) benefits and provincially ODSP benefits at the same time. When a person is approved for CPP-D benefits, they automatically qualify for ODSP benefits as a person of a "prescribed class". This automatic approval allows them to receive essential ODSP benefits without having to prove to ODSP administrators that they are a person with a disability.

One of the reasons for this automatic approval is because the legal test to receive CPP-D benefits is more difficult than the legal test under ODSP regarding disability severity and prognosis. The benefits programs are distinct. If an individual applies to both programs, receives an ODSP denial and appeals the decision, they may still be approved to receive CPP-D benefits.

Generally, when the individual (also known as the appellant) is approved for CPP-D while waiting for their ODSP disability appeal to be heard, the Social Benefits Tribunal will find that the issues in the appeal are resolved and no decision is needed because the appellant is a person of a prescribed class and entitled to ODSP benefits. The Tribunal will not address whether the appellant is also eligible as a person with a disability under the ODSP legal test.

The problem with the Tribunal's approach is that when a person receives ODSP benefits solely as a CPP-D prescribed class member, their ODSP benefits depend on them also receiving CPP-D. Therefore, if they are disqualified from CPP-D for any reason (i.e. if they return to work, school, or volunteering) they can lose both their CPP-D and ODSP benefits, even if they otherwise would have met the ODSP test. If at the time of an ODSP appeal, the Tribunal determined that an appellant is not only eligible for CPP-D but also eligible for ODSP, any future disqualification from CPP-D would not result in the loss of ODSP benefits.

ISAC and Chatham-Kent Legal Clinic worked together to represent a former healthcare worker receiving CPP-D benefits who desired to work sometime in the future (even in a limited or temporary capacity as her disability allowed). Unfortunately, if she tried to return to work, she may have faced the loss of both CPP-D and ODSP income support because she never received a disability adjudication under the ODSP test. Specifically, the loss of ODSP would cause her to lose access to the essential health benefits she needed to manage her serious disabilities and health-related expenses.

We challenged the Tribunal's refusal to adjudicate our client's disability, even though she was receiving income support as a prescribed class member. We explained the differences in the two income support schemes, raised concerns that former prescribed class members cannot receive extended health benefits or rapid reinstatement to ODSP, and discussed the likelihood that our client will lose their prescribed class status in the event that she attempted to return to work, train, or volunteer.

This case was successfully settled before the hearing occurred, but the issues raised continue to present a concern for people with disabilities who rely on ODSP and other income support programs.

Decision-makers Must Reject Discredited Myths about Domestic Violence Survivors

In 2022, ISAC filed a second reconsideration request for a domestic abuse survivor whose income assistance was cancelled. She was ordered to pay over \$95,000 for failing to provide information about her estranged spouse and her co-residing with him. She represented herself at the original hearing. She testified that she was legally married, that her abusive husband lived out of the country and that their marriage was broken due to trauma and violence. Her husband's comings and goings were unpredictable, and he stayed no more than a month at a time. She testified that she told her Ontario Works caseworker about the complex situation with her husband, and the caseworker told her to re-apply as a single person.

The Tribunal partially rejected her appeal and reconsideration request because the Member did not believe the client's testimony that her caseworker knew about the complex situation with her husband. The Tribunal did not consider domestic violence a factor because the Member presumed that the client would avoid or challenge her abuser and pursue criminal and legal recourse when he unexpectedly showed up at her home. The Tribunal erroneously reasoned that a genuine victim would have called the police, a lawyer, or pursued legal action to have her husband removed or restrained from attending her apartment.

After receiving new evidence from the client's Ontario Works file showing that the client did inform her caseworker about the complex situation with her husband numerous times and other important documents relating to the appeal,

ISAC advocated that the new information amounted to “exceptional circumstances”, warranting a new hearing.

ISAC focused on the Tribunal’s analysis of domestic violence. ISAC provided academic and community resource evidence of the client’s cultural context to inform the Tribunal’s analysis of why she may not have pursued formal separation/divorce. ISAC argued that the Tribunal erred in law by focusing on an outdated incident-based Western-centric understanding of domestic violence and relied on discredited “ideal victim” myths in rejecting the client’s testimony and appeal. In doing so, the Tribunal treated her painful account of abuse as meaningless.

The Tribunal denied this request with boilerplate reasons. ISAC appealed this case to the Divisional Court. The Court will hear this matter in 2024.

PUBLIC INTEREST INTERVENTIONS

Removing Barriers to Accessing Judicial Review: Yatar v. TD Insurance Meloche Monnex

Social assistance recipients have a statutory right to appeal certain decisions about their benefits to the Social Benefits Tribunal. However, there are some decisions that they cannot appeal. For example, decisions about access to “discretionary benefits” to cover dental, medical, and other expenses cannot be appealed. Social assistance recipients’ only option in these situations is to bring an application for judicial review at the Ontario Divisional Court. Therefore, judicial review applications should remain reasonably accessible.

In 2022, ISAC intervened in a case before the Ontario Court of Appeal. The case concerned an appeal from a decision of the Ontario Divisional Court that significantly restricted access to judicial review applications. ISAC provided written submissions as well as oral submissions before the Court in April 2022, highlighting the importance of judicial review applications for low-income social assistance recipients.

In June 2022, the Ontario Court of Appeal released its decision. The Court of Appeal helpfully clarified that access to judicial review can never be restricted in its entirety. However, the Court still found that significant restrictions can be triggered in some circumstances. This decision may negatively impact social assistance recipients.

The Court of Appeal’s decision is now being appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. ISAC plans to intervene in the appeal and provide submissions in support of social assistance recipients’ access to judicial review.

Ensuring Access to the Canada Child Benefit for All Children: YY and SZ v. Her Majesty the Queen

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) was introduced by the federal government in 2016 to help low and middle-income families with the cost of raising children, and reduce child poverty. However, the program excludes children of refugee claimants and others without immigration status from receiving CCB, even though those children are among those most in need of the benefit. The denial of CCB benefits has adversely impacted racialized people and women in particular.

The Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic together with Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP pursued an appeal and a *Charter* challenge in the Tax Court

of Canada, on the basis that the CCB's exclusion is unconstitutional. ISAC intervened in the case, providing written submissions and oral arguments before the Court in October 2022. ISAC argued that the *U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child* requires the Court to consider the Best Interests of the Child, and that equality principles must inform the analysis of whether the CCB exclusion breaches section 7 of the *Charter*. The parties now await a decision by the Court.

Panhandling to Survive Should Not Be an Offence: Fair Change Community Legal Clinic v. Ontario (Attorney General)

Thousands of people in Ontario struggle with poverty and homelessness, and many turn to panhandling in order to survive. However, Ontario's *Safe Streets Act* prohibits poor individuals from panhandling in certain circumstances. Anyone who violates the *Safe Streets Act* could be subject to fines they cannot afford to pay, or even jail time.

As a result, the Fair Change Community Legal Clinic in Ottawa launched a *Charter* challenge at the Superior Court of Ontario that states that the *Safe Streets Act* is unconstitutional. ISAC was granted leave to intervene in the case in April 2021. ISAC will argue that the *Act* discriminates against individuals who receive social assistance, contrary to section 15 of the *Charter*, and that it hurts individuals' ability to meet their basic needs, contrary to section 7 of the *Charter*. ISAC expects to provide written submissions to the Court in the fall of 2023, and oral submissions at the hearing in the spring of 2024.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION, COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND OUTREACH, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit and Building Capacity

The Canada Pension Plan pays a monthly disability benefit to people between 18 and 65 who have contributed to the Plan and who are living with a severe and prolonged disability. It also pays monthly benefits for their dependent children.

ISAC co-chaired the Canada Pension Plan-Disability (CPP-D) Working group within the clinic system and attended Social Security Tribunal stakeholder meetings. In 2022, the legislation and the Tribunals' Rules changed. These changes gave ISAC the opportunity to provide submissions to SST to reform their Reimbursement of Expenses Policy. ISAC advocated that the policy be flexible and include digital access to facilitate the right to be heard, especially for those in difficult circumstances.

Throughout Fall 2022, ISAC delivered seven small group training on the basics of the CPP-D benefit to more than 55 community legal clinic caseworkers working across Ontario. We aimed to build clinic capacity and learn from our sister clinics.

The trainings were geared towards newer CPP-D caseworkers in the community legal clinic system and were designed to provide an interactive and comfortable learning environment for clinic staff. In these trainings, clinic staff learned how CPP-D may benefit clients living with disabilities, eligibility criteria, minimum contributory requirements and the test for disability, and how to manage an appeal successfully. ISAC also provided one to one mentorship for a caseworker's first SST CPP-D appeal.



In Fall 2022, members of ISAC's legal team attended the in-person Northern Regional Training. Pictured: Anu Bakshi co-presenting the Social Assistance Update in partnership with the Clinic Resource Office (CRO).

We greatly enjoyed connecting and working with the sister clinics who signed up for trainings, including Chatham-Kent Legal Clinic, Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC), Clinique Juridique Grand-Nord Legal Clinic, Community Legal Assistance Sarnia, Durham Community Legal Clinic, Injured Workers Clinic, Northwest Community Legal Clinic, Scarborough Community Legal Services, South Etobicoke Community Legal Services, and West Scarborough Community Legal Services, and we thank all clinic members who participated.

ISAC helped CLEO in developing Guided Pathways to appeal CPP-D benefits denials. The Guided Pathways are online interactive tools that help people fill out the legal forms they need and access public legal information tailored to their situation. The CPP-D pathways are a free resource available to all Ontarians, including people with low incomes, people who do not have legal representation, and people whose disabilities prevent them from working regularly to earn a living.

Erik Bornmann, Director, Guided Pathways shared, “ISAC’s legal expertise, practice perspectives, and relationships with key stakeholders were invaluable to CLEO in making the pathways relevant to the real needs of people who require income assistance and are denied CPP-D benefits.”

ISAC produced a litigator toolkit designed for clinic staff titled “Representing Absent Clients at the Social Benefits Tribunal” which helps advocates deal with a situation where a client fails to attend a meeting close to a hearing or fails to attend the hearing entirely. The toolkit outlines potential responses to a variety of scenarios, explains how and when to rely on the decision in *Director of the Ontario Disability Support Program v. Miller*, and includes draft submissions that can be adapted to the individual circumstances of a case. ISAC presented the toolkit to 88 community legal clinic staff working on social assistance issues across Ontario.

Significant Trainings, Webinars, and Presentations by ISAC

- Spring 2022 social assistance training (April 2022)
- Modernization Toolkit Launch for Clinic System (April 2022);
- Workers Rights and Income Security Presentation to PROMPT (April 2022)
- Numerous presentations to community groups on social assistance modernization (April-November 2022);
- Decent Work and Income Security Presentation – Kensington Bellwoods (May 2022)
- Co-delivered training on Intersections between the *Human Rights Code* and *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, for the Ontario Bar Association’s Annual Update on Human Rights (May 2022)

- Co-presented at a panel on Best Practices for Representing Marginalized Employment Law Clients, for the Ontario Bar Association (June 2022)
- Co-delivered training on Introduction to Litigating Employment Law Cases in Superior Court, for the Workers' Rights Action Group Conference (June 2022)
- Northern Regional Training sessions on social assistance and Canada Pension Plan Disability (November 2022)
- Litigation Toolkit I: Miller Toolkit (October 2022)
- Guest Speakers for Masters York University Human Rights students (November 2022)
- History of Employment Standards for PCLS (January 2023)
- Co-delivered training on Challenging CERB and CRB Overpayments (February 2023)
- Contributed Chapters Health Harming Legal Needs Textbook for medical students and fifth edition of Public Health Law & Policy in Canada (Bailey, Sheldon & Shelley)

Community Organizing and Outreach

As ongoing COVID-19 pandemic waves frequently pushed community organizing into digital spaces, in 2022, in-person events and demonstrations continued to increase, bringing back joyful and creative modes of in-person community resistance. Along with joining digital organizing spaces to discuss the campaign on doubling social assistance rates, ISAC organizers attended in-person organizing meetings and participated in many demonstrations, marches, and events.

We are proud to support education workers, nurses, social assistance recipients, Canada Disability Benefit advocates, non-unionized workers, migrant workers, and uninsured people needing healthcare, and many others as they organize to win. *[Here are just a few photos from the past year.](#)*



Workers hold a sign at the rainy May Day Rally in Toronto (May 2022)



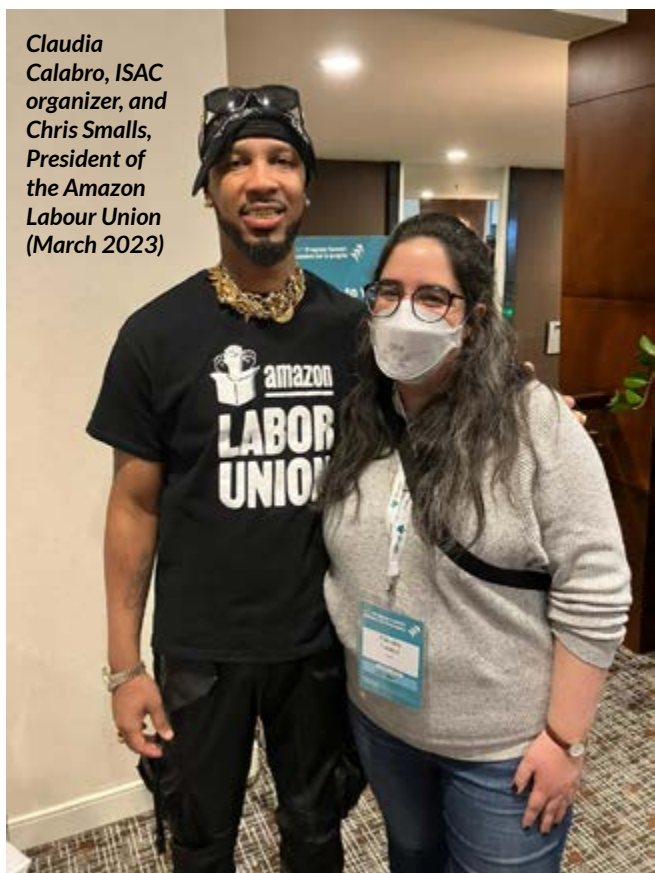
Claudia Calabro and Dave Bush, organizers, at Status for All Day of Action in Toronto (September 2022)



Fix EI Day of Action in Toronto (December 2022)



Supporting access to public healthcare for all people in Ontario (March 2023)



Claudia Calabro, ISAC organizer, and Chris Smalls, President of the Amazon Labour Union (March 2023)



Attendees of the Rally 4 ODSP hold a banner with an important message (April 2023)



Healthcare workers and allies shut down Bay and Wellesley Streets in Toronto after the provincial government stopped funding healthcare for people without OHIP coverage (March 2023)

Crowd shot of massive province-wide demonstration and march in support of education workers (November 2022)



Members of the ODSP Action Coalition and the Ontario Disability Coalition after the Rally 4 ODSP (April 2023)

In the Media

ISAC co-published an op-ed in the Toronto Star titled “Doug Ford’s math on social assistance doesn’t add up — and doesn’t solve the problem of legislated poverty for people on ODSP” on October 31, 2022, to coincide with a demonstration led by the ODSP Action Coalition and the Ontario Disability Coalition, which took place on November 1, 2022.

Link: https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/doug-ford-s-math-on-social-assistance-doesn-t-add-up-and-doesn-t-solve/article_22dd1d42-53bf-5343-a9de-8fa6dc9e30.html

The Double the Rates Summer Campaign garnered 20+ appearances in the media in the two weeks following its launch on July 25, 2022. The open letter and related stories continued to be referenced in articles and radio pieces throughout the rest of the year.

ISAC was in the media speaking about other subjects as well, including the provincial budget, workers’ rights, and the Canada Disability Benefit, with over 50 direct or indirect media appearances over the 2022-2023 year.



INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE**Statement of Financial Position**

Year ended March 31, 2023

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Cash	120,803	67,888	-	-	188,691
Accounts receivable	2,159	11	-	-	2,170
HST recoverable	11,064	151	-	-	11,215
Prepaid expenses	26,866	-	-	-	26,866
	160,892	68,050	-	-	228,942
Capital assets	-	-	13,420	-	13,420
Total assets	160,892	68,050	13,420	-	242,362
LIABILITIES Current					
Liabilities					
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	94,616	-	-	-	94,616
Inter-fund payable (receivable)	17,403	-	-	(17,403)	-
	112,019	-	-	(17,403)	94,616
FUNDS BALANCE	48,873	68,050	13,420	17,403	147,746
Total liabilities and funds balance	160,892	68,050	13,420	-	242,362

Approved on behalf of the Board:

Julia McNally
Treasurer
Income Security Advocacy Centre



NOTE: This information is a condensed financial statement consistent with and derived from the audited financial statements of the Income Security Advocacy Centre as of March 31, 2023. Audited financial statements were prepared by Hilborn LLP Chartered Professional Accountants in accordance with the Canadian generally accepted standards and who express an unqualified opinion on these financial statements in their report dated June 23, 2023. To obtain a better understanding of the organization's financial position and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year in question, the condensed financial statements should be read in light of the relevant audited financial statements, which are available upon request.

INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE**Statement of Operations and Funds Balance**

Year ended March 31, 2023

	General Fund \$	Legal Disbursements Fund \$	Capital Fund \$	Non-LAO Fund \$	Total \$
Revenues					
Legal Aid Ontario					
-direct receipts	1,320,892	-	-	-	1,320,892
-indirect receipts	74,119	-	14,145	-	88,264
Other income	1,156	35	-	-	1,191
	1,396,167	35	14,145	-	1,410,347
Expenses					
Salaries	909,425	-	-	-	909,425
Benefits	138,073	-	-	-	138,073
Professional dues	9,123	-	-	-	9,123
Travel	9,546	-	-	-	9,546
Communications	12,350	-	-	-	12,350
Accommodations	125,174	-	-	-	125,174
Equipment	1,314	-	-	-	1,314
Library	13,049	-	-	-	13,049
Supplies and services	22,125	-	-	-	22,125
Audit fees	4,542	-	-	-	4,542
Indirect payments	74,119	-	-	-	74,119
Consulting and legal	35,447	-	-	-	35,447
Legal disbursements	-	1,099	-	-	1,099
Amortization	-	-	6,045	-	6,045
	1,354,287	1,099	6,045	-	1,361,431
Excess of revenues over expenses (expenses over revenues)	41,880	(1,064)	8,100	-	48,916
Return of funding to Legal Aid Ontario	(210,177)	-	-	-	(210,177)
Funds balance, beginning of year	217,170	69,114	5,320	17,403	309,007
Funds balance, end of year	48,873	68,050	13,420	17,403	147,746

2022-2023 Staff Changes

The 2022-2023 year saw the arrival of Judith Norris into the role of Intake and Administrative Assistant and the departure of Devorah Kobluk, Senior Policy Analyst.

Board of Directors

Community Members: Jenny Gullen (Chair), Jessica Mayer, Julia McNally (Treasurer), John Mills (Vice chair), Margarita Mendez (Secretary), Claudette Paul, Larry Woolley

Clinic Reps: Dominique Conway, Rachael Lake, Christie McQuarrie, Therese Menard, Claudette Audette



ISAC Board Members smile for a picture together during the first in-person board meeting in years. Left to Right: Margarita M., Jenny G., Rachael L., Larry W., Therese M., John M., Christie M., Claudette P. Posing in front: Jessica M.

Staff Team

Zumrad Amirdjanova, Legal Assistant

Anu Bakshi, Staff Lawyer

Dave Bush, Workers' Rights Organizer

Claudia Calabro, Communications Specialist / Organizer

Melinda Ferlisi, Executive Director

Devorah Kobluk, Senior Policy Analyst

Elena Koneva, Office Manager

Adrian Merdzan, Staff Lawyer

Judith Norris, Intake and Administrative Coordinator

Nabila Qureshi, Staff Lawyer



ISAC team (Left to Right: Claudia Calabro, Adrian Merdzan, Nabila Qureshi, Elena Koneva, Judith Norris, Dave Bush, Zumrad Amirdjanova, Melinda Ferlisi, Anu Bakshi)

Key Partners

We deeply appreciate support from and partnerships with

Access to Justice Committee

Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO)

AODA Alliance

Campaign 2000

Canadian Artists Representation (CARFAC)

CanAge

Clinic Resource Office (CRO)

Co-operative of Specialty Community Legal Clinics of Ontario

CPP/Pensions Group

Daily Bread Foodbank

Defend Disability

Disability Without Poverty

EI Working Group

Feed Ontario

Gig Workers United

Hamilton Social Workers Action Committee (HSWAC)

Health Justice Coalition

Health Providers Against Poverty (HPAP)

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)

Interprovincial EI Working Group

Justice for Workers (J4W)

Women's Legal and Education Action Fund (LEAF)

Lincoln Alexander School of Law

Maytree Foundation

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO)

Migrant Rights Network (MRN)

Ministry Relations Sub-committee

North York Harvest Food Bank (NYHFB)

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
ODSP Action Coalition
Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC)
Ontario Federation of Labour
Ontario for All
Ontario Native Welfare Administrator's Association (ONWAA)
The Ontario Project for Inter-Clinic Community Organizing (OPICCO)
Prosper Canada
Regional Income Maintenance Study Groups: north, southwest, east, GTA
RISE Norfolk County
SBT Practice Advisory Committee
Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators (SOAR)
St. Michael's Hospital Health Justice Program
Steering Committee on Social Assistance
Workers Action Centre (WAC)
Workers' Rights Action Group (WRAG)
YWCA Toronto

***Clinics we've co-counselled or collaborated
with during 2022-2023***

Aboriginal Legal Services
Algoma Community Legal Clinic
ARCH Disability Law Centre
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE)
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)
Chatham-Kent Legal Clinic
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC)
Clinic Resource Office
Community Advocacy and Legal Centre

Community Legal Assistance Sarnia

Community Legal Clinic – Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk

Don Valley Community Legal Services

Downtown Legal Services

Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic

HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)

Jane Finch Community Legal Services

Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic

Lake Country Community Legal Clinic

Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County

Mississauga Community Legal Services

Neighbourhood Legal Services

Northumberland Community Legal Centre

Parkdale Community Legal Services

Rexdale Community Legal Clinic

South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services

West Scarborough Community Legal Services

Willowdale Community Legal Services



INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE
Centre d'action pour la sécurité de revenu

Income Security Advocacy Centre
1500 – 55 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M5J 2H7

Tel: 416-597-5820
Toll Free: 1-866-245-4072
Fax: 416-597-5821

Website: www.incomesecurity.org
Email: info@isac.clcj.ca