COMMUNITY ADVOCACY & LEGAL CENTRE (CALC)

BAFFLEGAB

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The raise in the ODSP rate — too little, too late

As of September 1st this year, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients across Ontario received a 5% increase, which amounts to an additional $58 per month for a single ODSP recipient.

This raise comes at a time when inflation, and the cost of basic necessities, has increased by over 11% since 2018. Even with this small increase, the total amount that a single person with a disability receives from ODSP is still under $1,300 per month — and from this they have to pay rent, food, clothing and all other expenses.

Recipients of Ontario Works (OW) saw no such raise in September, despite the fact that a single person on OW receives a grand total of $733 per month to pay all of their expenses.

We joined with a broad coalition of human services organizations and healthcare providers to sign an open letter demanding that the provincial government immediately raise both the OW and ODSP rates to meet the cost of living.

For more information on this issue, and to read the open letter that CALC has signed on to, please visit the ISAC website.

CALC can assist individuals who have been denied OW or ODSP. We can help you navigate your various legal options, as well as connect you with community supports.

Samuel Clements, Clinic Lawyer

CALC's Annual General Meeting—December 8, 2022

You are invited to hear more about CALC's work at our virtual Annual General Meeting.
See back page for details.

Sexual harassment in the workplace project

Nearly 3 years ago CALC received funding from the federal Department of Justice to educate employees and employers on understanding, reporting, preventing and stopping workplace sexual harassment. We are part of a coalition of 20 Community Legal Clinics to receive this funding.

We provide free public legal education to employees and employers on their rights and responsibilities. Due to Covid-19 this project shifted to online training. We are now very happy to announce that we are back out in the community providing in-person training! If you would like to book a public legal education session you can call us at 1-877-966-8686 or fill out a "request a speaker" form on our website. We can customize a workshop to best suit the needs of your group.

In addition to providing public legal education we also provide free and confidential legal advice to any worker who has been sexually harassed.

We know that most workers who are sexually harassed do not make a formal complaint to anyone. Workers who experience violence and harassment, particularly marginalized workers, face many barriers to reporting. We can help break down some of those barriers and explain different options so you can decide the remedy best for your specific situation. If you have been sexually harassed at work, call us – we can help.

Deirdre McDade, Clinic Lawyer

Employment news update — Minimum wage increase, EI rules

Minimum Wage Increase

As of October 1, 2022, minimum wage for most workers increased to **$15.50/hour**. Homeworkers (including student homeworkers), such as telemarketers working from home, must be paid at least $17.05/hour.

For students under 18, minimum wage is $14.60/hour. Some students may get a different amount, for instance:

- Students will get the full minimum wage of $15.50/hour if they work more than 28 hours per week during the school term.
- Students who are taking part in a "work experience program" such as a high school co-op student or working as part of their college course work, are not entitled to any payment.

The minimum wage applies to bartenders and servers at restaurants. That means that even if a worker gets tips from customers, the employer still has to pay the minimum wage.

Employment Insurance (EI): EI rules are back to pre-COVID rules for regular benefits

Regular EI benefits are payable to eligible workers who need short-term financial assistance and are out of work.

The EI rules changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and workers only needed to have 420 hours of insurable work to apply for regular EI benefits. But as of September 24, 2022, the old (pre-COVID) EI rules are back in place. Workers now need to show they have enough insurable hours in the 52 week period before they apply for EI. The number of insurable hours needed depends on the unemployment rate and varies across regions in Canada. Currently, the number of insured hours for Central Ontario region is **700 hours**. You can check the unemployment rate and insurable hours required on the EI website.

EI Tips & Reminders:

Workers should apply for EI regular benefits as soon as possible and within 4 weeks of having a break in their earnings, i.e. when laid-off from employment.

To be eligible for regular EI benefits, workers must have:

- been employed as employees (rather than independent contractors or business owners);
- lost their job through no fault of their own;
- worked the required minimum amount of insurable hours;
- be ready, willing and able to accept work; and
- be looking for work.

It is a good idea for workers to keep track and document their job search efforts. Workers claiming EI income support must show they are available for work and making efforts to find work.

In practical terms, workers may want to keep a diary of jobs they have applied for, internet job searches, efforts to upgrade their resume and/or obtain assistance from employment agencies.

There are other EI benefits available including sickness benefits, parental and maternity benefits and compassionate care benefits.

If you are a low-income worker and have questions about your rights or what EI benefits you may be eligible for, call us!

Karen McClellan, Clinic Lawyer

Having a pet in your rented home

You're excited you've brought home a new furry family member, but suddenly your landlord's there threatening to evict you if you don't get rid of your new pet. Excitement turns to horror and you wonder: what do I do?

Landlords cannot evict you simply because you now have pets. If the pets cause damage or severe allergies, the landlord may try to argue that's reason enough for eviction at the Landlord and Tenant Board. The landlord will have to prove to the Board that the damage or allergies are severe enough that eviction be ordered.

Prospective landlords can refuse to rent to you in the first place if you have a pet. However, anything in your lease forbidding pets has no effect.

Landlords cannot ask for a "pet" or "damage" deposit but they can ask for proof your pets have been vaccinated. If you don't provide this proof, they may be able to give you an eviction notice for interfering with their reasonable enjoyment. Condominium and city bylaws may restrict which animals are allowed to be kept as pets. Please refer to them before bringing your new family member home.

See our pet tip sheet for more details, and contact us for help if you get an eviction notice because of your pet.

Erin MacLellan, Articling Student

Helping seniors afford health costs

Older adults often see their income fall short of covering their medical expenses. Fortunately, there are some government benefits that can help seniors with these costs.

The Seniors Co-Payment Program

If you are a single person over 65 who has an annual income of less than $22,000, or are part of a couple with at least one spouse over 65 and a combined income of $37,100 or less, you may apply for the Seniors Co-Pay Program. Under this program, your co-payment for prescriptions is $2 or less and you pay no yearly deductible.

You can find the application for the Seniors Co-Payment Program on the government's Central Forms Repository or you can call the Seniors Co-Payment Program, toll-free, at 1-888-405-0405 for a copy.

Ontario Seniors Care at Home Tax Credit

In 2022, the Ontario Government created a new tax credit for residents who are over 70 and who earn less than $65,000 a year. This tax credit allows people to claim up to 25% of their eligible medical expenses up to $6,000.00, the maximum credit being $1,500.

To get the Ontario Seniors Care At Home Tax Credit, you must claim your eligible medical expenses on your income tax return. You can find a list of eligible medical expenses on Revenue Canada's website.

You can claim the Ontario Seniors Care At Home Tax Credit in addition to the existing Ontario Medical Expense Tax Credit.

This article was inspired by information from Community Legal Education Ontario.

Samuel Clements, Clinic Lawyer

Support for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault

Actual and threatened violence against women, gender-minorities and some men can take many physical, psychological, social and financial forms. People who experience this violence, often called 'Survivors', commonly feel alone and "stuck" in an unsafe and abusive situation. Adequate, accessible legal information and advice is essential to ensuring that Survivors understand their legal rights and available supports as they make important decisions about their future.

CALC, in partnership with 8 other community legal clinics across Ontario, recently received a small grant from the federal Department of Justice to explore the ways that legal supports for Survivors could be enhanced in our community. As part of this project, CALC is working with community partners to "spread the word" about useful legal information. These include CLEO's Do you know a woman who is being abused? A Legal Rights Handbook and Luke's Place Family Court and Beyond Workbook. If you are experiencing abuse, please keep this information in a safe and secure place.

Survivors can get free legal advice through Luke's Place Virtual Legal Clinic, the Ministry of the Attorney General's Independent Legal Advice Program for Survivors of Sexual Assault and Legal Aid Ontario's Emergency Certificate Program. Emergency Certificates (for 2 hours of legal advice) can be obtained by calling CALC and some shelters.

Watch for new programs to improve Survivors' access to justice that CALC will develop in collaboration with partners, based on our research into local unmet needs. Let's work together to help all Survivors receive the support they need.

Claire McMenemy, Clinic Lawyer

TENANT HOTLINE

613-966-8686 or 1-877-966-8686

Call NOW if you or someone you know is worried about eviction or has received an eviction notice.

Our tenant hotline is here to help you. Getting information and advice **early** can help to avoid eviction!

Keeping Seniors "SAFE" Workshops Available!

Do you want to learn more about preventing and dealing with scams, fraud and financial abuse perpetrated against seniors?

If so, please contact our office for a Seniors Against Financial Exploitation (SAFE) presentation. We have aprons, tote bags, water bottles and more for some presentation participants!

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CALC
Community Advocacy & Legal Centre

Your community legal clinic

Virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Report

CALC's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held virtually over Zoom on **Thursday, December 8, 2022**, from 12:00-1:00 pm.

Clinic staff are busy preparing our Annual Report of significant work we completed over the past year—another challenging year! Read it on online on our website in early December, ask us to mail you a copy, or come to our AGM and hear all about our work this year. You must register to attend the AGM by calling Lynda at 1-877-966-8686, ext. 25, or by emailing lynda.morgan@calc.clcj.ca. Lynda will then provide you with a Zoom link or a phone number to participate in the meeting.

If you need an ASL interpreter, please indicate this when you register (**on or before December 1**).

Join us as a clinic member or run to be a Board member

If you would like to support the clinic by joining as a clinic member, or by standing for election to our Board of Directors, you can find out more on our website or call Lynda (ext. 25), or email lynda.morgan@calc.clcj.ca. Nomination forms for the Board positions must be submitted by November 15.

CALC's Annual Fall Forum moved to Spring!

You may be used to CALC's Annual Fall Forum, where we invite the public to participate in workshops and discussions about current issues impacting our community and others across Ontario. This year we're moving our Forum to Spring 2023 to showcase the launch of an exciting new project!

CALC received a grant from the Law Foundation of Ontario to develop a "Trusted Help" video series as part of our Justice & Health Partnership work. There is often overlap between legal problems and health-harming issues, and CALC works closely with local healthcare providers to help solve these problems. The Trusted Help video series will be available to healthcare providers across the province, and will help educate them on topics such as poverty and health, establishing a Justice & Health Partnership and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

We look forward to sharing these videos with our community in Spring 2023.

How to get help from CALC

CALC provides service to people living in Hastings, Prince Edward, and Lennox & Addington Counties and the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Our main office is in Belleville and we're starting to return to satellite offices across our service area. We're still taking steps to make sure that our clients and staff are as safe as possible.

SCAN ME

If you would like to meet with us in person in our Belleville office we ask that you call us first to make an appointment. If you are outside of Belleville and would like to meet in person please call us to see if we're available to meet in your area. We're available by telephone Monday-Friday at 613-966-8686 from 9am–12pm and 1-5pm to help with your legal issue.

You can also contact us by filling out a webform and letting us know what you need help with. This form is available at https://bit.ly/calc-help or scan the QR code above.

This newsletter is posted on our website at https://communitylegalcentre.ca/news/newsletter/

The information in this newsletter is not legal advice. If you have a legal problem in any of the areas of law mentioned in this newsletter, please contact a community legal clinic near you.