Impact Report 2022

PRO BONO ONTARIO

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Our mission

Pro Bono Ontario (PBO) transforms goodwill into action by connecting lawyers with pro bono opportunities that have an immediate, measurable impact on access to justice in Ontario. Our innovative programs create low-barrier opportunities for lawyers to give back, harnessing their valuable expertise to support Ontarians who would otherwise go without critical legal help.

We focus on everyday civil issues that disproportionately impact people of limited means, such as employment problems, housing challenges, and consumer protection. Our province-wide services are accessible to everyone and make a tangible difference in the lives of people who have nowhere else to turn.

Message from PBO's Chair and Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are proud to reflect on the progress we have made together at Pro Bono Ontario over the past year. Our dedication to providing meaningful access to legal services for every Ontarian has been the driving force behind our achievements, and we are deeply grateful for your ongoing support.

Our mission is to provide a wide front door for those experiencing common but highly destabilizing legal problems, empowering them to lead secure, healthy, and productive lives. Last year, we served a record-breaking **34,000** clients, a testament to our commitment to delivering legal services when and where they are needed.

To make legal assistance more accessible, we expanded our Free Legal Advice Hotline hours by 45%, benefitting individuals with inflexible work schedules. An astounding 87% of our clients reported that our Hotline was their first opportunity to speak with a lawyer about their legal problems, underscoring the vital importance of our services.

In response to emerging needs, we launched a nation-wide dedicated Hotline for Ukrainians arriving in Canada due to the Russian invasion, leveraging our expertise to support this vulnerable community during their transition.

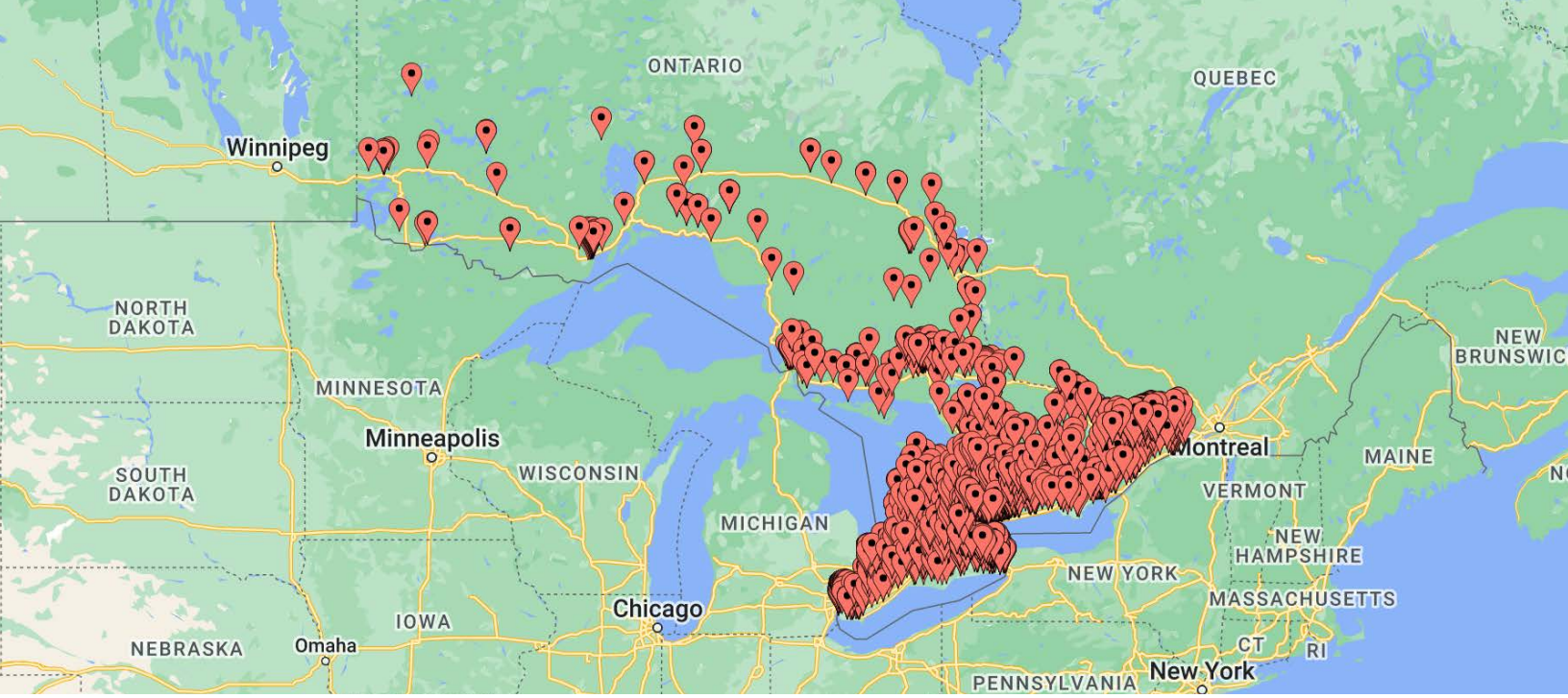
PBO is committed to continuous improvement. Last year, we conducted extensive research to understand which legal services and delivery models would best serve low-income Ontarians in the face of rising inequality and rapid technological change. We also explored ways to enhance collaboration with our community partners to deliver a seamless continuum of legal services. With this knowledge, we aim to achieve better outcomes for those who depend on us and ensure responsible use of donor resources. Together, we can drive transformative change and maximize our collective impact.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our dedicated team, compassionate volunteers, and generous donors. Your resolute support and commitment to our shared vision have been truly inspiring. Together we have the power to achieve 100% access to justice in Ontario and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. We are profoundly grateful for your continued partnership and heartfelt contributions.

With deepest gratitude,

GORDON A.M. CURRIE
Chair, Pro Bono Ontario

LYNN BURNS
Executive Director, Pro Bono Ontario



PBO clients served in 2022 by postal code

Pro Bono Ontario by the Numbers (2022)

34,000
clients served

87%
client satisfaction rate

500+
cities & towns served province-wide

276
new Hotline volunteers

260
participating law firms & legal departments

$5.2 million+
in legal services provided to the public

87%
of clients have never spoken to a lawyer before calling

39%
of hotline callers are unrepresented litigants

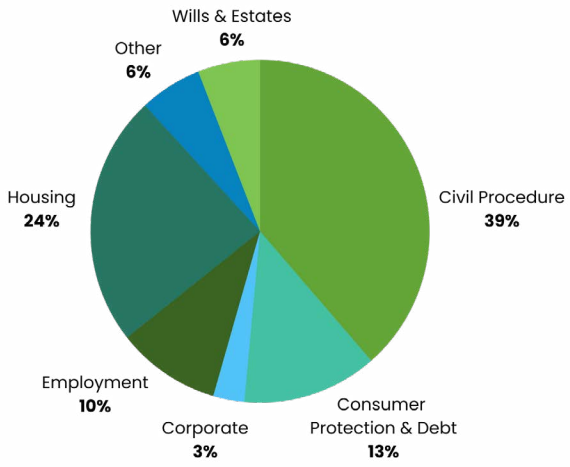
26%
of Medical-Legal Partnership clients experience employment insecurity

Answer the call: Volunteer and make an impact

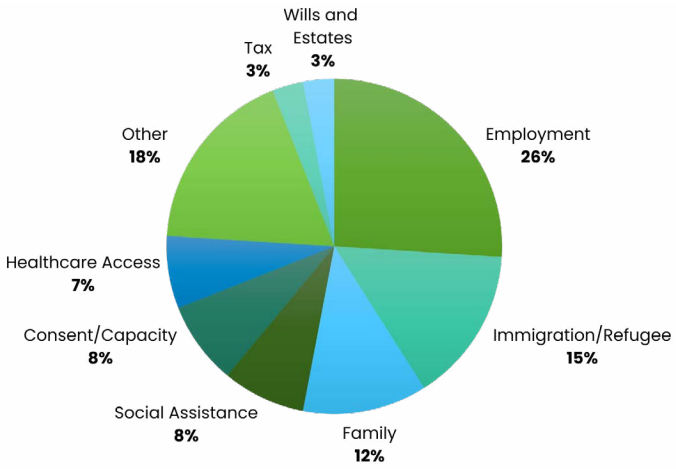
With only 5% of Ontario's 57,000 lawyers currently volunteering, we aim for a participation rate of 20%. By doubling our volunteer base, we could provide crucial assistance to up to 60,000 clients in 2023. Be part of the change—volunteer today and make a significant impact in the lives of thousands.

Visit www.probonoontario.org/volunteer

Hotline Consultations by Area of Law



Medical-Legal Partnership Consultations by Area of Law



Client Feedback

"I felt bullied, frightened & and was losing hope. Until PBO! From the first call, every single lawyer has been so kind and patient. They helped me understand our rights and explained everything clearly. PBO made us feel safe, protected & valued from the first call. Thank you PBO!"

Forward-thinking and client-centered: Addressing unmet legal needs

For individuals without legal representation, navigating the justice system can be a daunting task. In 2022, PBO remained committed to expanding access to legal services for low-income Ontarians by utilizing the hotline model. Alongside managing a dedicated hotline for victims of **workplace sexual harassment**, PBO introduced a nationwide hotline in June specifically designed to provide direct legal assistance and referrals to **Ukrainians arriving in Canada due to the Russian invasion**. Together, these programs made a significant impact, supporting and serving **629** clients throughout the year.

PBO has embarked on an exciting research project aimed at uncovering the barriers to justice for low-income individuals and identifying inefficiencies within the legal services delivery system. This novel initiative, generously supported by the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) and in partnership with the National Self-Represented Litigants' Project, seeks to inform future strategies, prioritize planning, and foster collaborative efforts among agencies. By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges, PBO strives to improve access to justice and enhance the overall effectiveness of frontline legal service providers.

Empowering Ontarians through community and opportunity

PBO's Free Legal Advice Hotline offers accessible legal services to Ontarians, breaking down barriers of inflexible work schedules, age, disability, geographical limitations, poor transit options, and childcare responsibilities. The Hotline provides just-in-time legal assistance to help people address their problems before they escalate and intensify. To fuel opportunities for growth, it also provides free corporate law services to Ontario's charities, start-ups, and newcomer entrepreneurs, driving economic and social development.

The Hotline is the only service in Canada that provides summary advice and legal drafting assistance over the phone. In 2022, PBO extended its service hours by **45%**, and with the power of pro bono, we provided a record-breaking **30,010** Hotline consultations.

Client Feedback

"PBO got me the help I desperately needed and now I'm about to recover 100 percent of the funds that the plaintiff owes to me. Thank you Pro Bono Ontario for helping me and my family."

Transforming healthcare through impactful partnerships

PBO blazed trails in 2009 with Canada's first-ever Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) at SickKids Hospital. We've since expanded our reach, placing Triage lawyers within clinical teams at all children's hospitals in Ontario. By addressing legal challenges faced by families, such as job loss and substandard housing impacting health, we make a meaningful difference. Our acclaimed model, recognized as a Leading Practice by Accreditation Canada, is now being replicated nationwide. PBO's medical legal partnerships served **1,025** clients in Ontario in 2022, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to helping families address their health-harming legal issues.

Safeguarding rights in education

Legal issues can arise in unexpected places, including schools. Children have rights that must be upheld when it comes to accessing special education support, addressing bullying, and dealing with disciplinary actions like suspensions and expulsions. In 2021, PBO improved access to its Education Law Program by introducing a dedicated hotline available Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursday afternoons, 12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. alongside its online pathway to services. As a result, in 2022, the program successfully assisted **139** families whose children faced challenges to their rights within public schools.

Access to Justice Leadership Circle

Thank you to the law firms and legal departments who, through donations of time and money, supported PBO's vision of providing meaningful access to legal services to every Ontarian.

Gold Tier Members

Adair Goldblatt Bieber LLP
Aird Berlis
Blakes
Blaney McMurtry LLP
BLG Borden Ladner Gervais
BMO
Davies
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Gowling WLG
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LexisNexis
mccarthy tetrault
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Norton Rose Fulbright
Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP
Paliare Roland
RBC
TGF Thornton Grout Finnigan LLP
Torkin Manes
TORYS LLP
WeirFoulds LLP
Weston

Silver Tier Members

CIBC

Bronze Tier Members

Bennett Jones
Chaitons LLP

Thank you to our Honour Roll Volunteers

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and support of our volunteers who help us serve clients in need. Our Honour Roll volunteers, who donated at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services, were instrumental in helping us reach a record 34,000 clients in 2022.

- Jeff Adams
- Kehinde Adetula
- Sarah J. Armstrong
- Sammy Bayefsky
- Lambert Boenders
- Lia Bruschetta
- Seanna Callaghan
- Simon Cameron
- Amitha Carnadin
- Dorothy Charach
- Adrian Cormier
- Fraser Dickson
- Kira Domratchev
- Tina Economopoulos
- Geneviève Fauteux
- Chris Hummel
- Adrian Ishak
- Gabriel Latner
- Timothy Law
- Jennifer Lillie
- Alexandra McLennan Brown
- Carly Moore
- Brodie Noga
- Jared S. Rosenbaum
- Reuben Rothstein
- Rohan Shah
- Jaimie Singleton
- Kavi Sivasothy
- Robert Tarantino
- William Webb

Volunteering with Pro Bono Ontario made me a better lawyer

Volunteering through PBO's Education Law Project and the free legal advice hotline has made me a better advocate by challenging me to be creative, empathetic, practical and strategic. The many clients I have had the privilege of working with over my 20 plus years as a PBO volunteer have also made me a better advocate by teaching me about the importance of resilience, persistence and, above all, gratitude.

Sarah Armstrong
Partner, Fasken

Make a lasting impact through Pro Bono Ontario

At PBO, we are dedicated to building a future where every Ontarian has meaningful access to justice. Our Hotline serves as a crucial entry point, but we rely on your generosity and volunteers from the legal profession to ensure that everyone receives the assistance they deserve. Join us in our mission to empower change and experience the fulfillment of making a lasting impact. Together, we can leverage our skills and meet the diverse needs of our community through pro bono work.

Your gift ensures those in need have access to justice.

Donate today.

Online

probonoontario.org/donate

Cheque

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Pro Bono Ontario

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The Law Foundation of Ontario
Advancing access to justice