

Connecting Ottawa

Effective communication
Accessible justice

CATALYST FINAL REPORT YEAR 1 JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2022

Prepared for :



Submitted: February 21, 2022

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Part I: Applicant Information

Name of Organization	Community Legal Services of Ottawa / Services juridiques communautaires d'Ottawa
Name of Program	Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa
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Grant Number:	CAT-61-21
Reporting period:	January 1 to December 31, 2022

Part II: Final Report

Introduction:

This is the final report for Catalyst Grant # CAT-61-21 detailing the activities of the Connecting Ottawa project for the period January 1 to December 31, 2022. We have **met or exceeded** all programming expectations for this period as identified in our workplan. In our interim report, we noted a significant increase in demand for our project services and that this increase was largely due to the reopening of in-person services by our network partner agencies, a back log of cases at these agencies due to extended closures, significant front-line community worker personnel changes, and changes in government programming. We have not seen this demand decrease or stabilize since our interim report and we have ended the year operating well above our existing capacity. We have been able to manage this demand with the addition of a articling student to our staff; however, our current output is not sustainable for 2023.

We continue to make significant impacts in our community, increasing the ability and capacity of front-line community workers to support the legal information and referral needs of clients who are linguistic minorities or who have communication barriers due to sensory impairment. Our most significant impacts are with those cases that are multi-faceted or where free or low-cost services are not available to clients. In these instances, we work closely with the front-line workers to identify and address the clients' needs and next steps and support them in walking their clients through the labyrinth of requirements to find resolution. The case-studies at the end of this report clearly illustrate this impact. Without Connecting Ottawa, many of these individuals would be denied support and access to the legal system and processes that are often difficult to understand and navigate.

We are thankful to the Law Foundation of Ontario for the ongoing support for this project. We specifically want to acknowledge Lili Pach and Lisa Cirillo for the help and support over the past year.

Background and Mandate:

The mandate of Connecting Ottawa is to improve access to justice for linguistic minorities and those who have communication barriers in Ottawa. We achieve this by working with front-line community workers to develop their capacity to provide appropriate legal information and referrals to clients within these target populations.

The Connecting Ottawa project has been a successful and impactful program operating in Ottawa, Ontario since 2012, funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario's Connecting Regions program until 2021 at which time it was approved for three year Catalyst funding.

Connecting Ottawa has developed a partnership network of over 55 community, legal, immigration, disability, and social services agencies who work with and address the compounded barriers faced by individuals in the target populations. For these organizations, we offer to their front-line personnel: case management support services, legal and community informational referrals and coordination, a website directory of legal, social and communication services, a bi-weekly newsletter of legal and social service information updates and activities, and legal education sessions and workshops. We also seek opportunities to work with our partners to coordinate legal and community services to ensure that the access to justice needs of clients are addressed.

Connecting Ottawa has become known as a knowledge leader in the social justice sector around issues related to the vulnerable populations that we serve. We regularly get requests from local and provincial social service and legal organizations outside our networks for receiving and sending information in our *Communique* and to utilize the educational tools that we develop, which we enthusiastically support.

Project Goals and Activities

The overarching goals of the Connecting Ottawa project are to:

- Provide information to help front-line social service workers, who act as trusted intermediaries to our target populations, to understand their clients' legal rights, and provide information about the legal services available to help them to exercise those rights;
- Ensure that “every door is the right door” to legal services by training and supporting the information, assessment and referral needs of front-line service providers and other trusted intermediaries to be able to identify when a person from the focus populations requires a legal service and then to connect the person with the right legal information and legal service; and
- Support legal services organizations to provide services to the focus populations within a framework that acknowledges issue complexity and requires a holistic approach to service delivery.

The activities funded under the 2022 Catalyst Grant are to:

- Maintain and expand the Connecting Ottawa partnership network;
- Provide capacity-building on social issues relevant to our target populations to our network of social service and legal partners through direct one-on-one support and consultation opportunities;
- Provide capacity-building opportunities on legal issues relevant to our target populations to our network of partners through education workshops, Connecting Ottawa co-hosted workshops with other organizations, educational presentations delivered upon request at partner agencies' on-site locations, and webinars;
- Host the Connecting Ottawa annual conference;
- Promote the use of resources developed by Connecting Ottawa and other organizations to social services and legal workers supporting clients in the target populations;
- Maintain and expand the Connecting Ottawa website;
- Share information pertinent to the legal and social services needs of our target populations with our partnership network via our *Communique*, website and social media channels;
- Work with our legal services partner organizations and community service organizations to help “fill the gaps” of legal services available to our target populations via workshops, seminars and clinics;

- Share the lessons learned from the program's continued development to build upon the strengths of the network in Ottawa and to support similar and complementary initiatives in other communities;
- Increase attention and support towards disability-serving agencies who work with people with communication barriers; and
- Manage the project effectively and professionally.

Activity reports:

Connecting Ottawa partnership network

The Connecting Ottawa network consists of 57 local social and legal service organizations. This includes 20 community service organizations, 19 immigration and settlement service organizations, 10 legal service organizations, and 8 disability service organizations. During the reporting period we increased our network by 2 organizations. Organizations engage with Connecting Ottawa on various levels. For many settlement agencies and community resource centres, we engage on a regular basis. Others, like many of the disability agencies and diaspora groups in our network, we engage primarily for the educational and information sharing opportunities.

For the reporting period, most of the demand for consultation services was from our settlement partner agencies. During the reporting period, we held regular meetings with all settlement agency managers and staff to understand their changing needs as borders and programs reopened after COVID-19, and to discuss specific requirements for capacity building. We also participated as part of a local Ukrainian settlement working group to understand and help respond to the specific needs of this newcomer population.

In addition, we regularly meet with community legal service organizations to discuss community worker needs, coordinate activities, and identify partnerships opportunities. A longstanding partnership in our network is the Housing Education Group, initiated by Connecting Ottawa and Reach Canada in 2020 with participation from Community Legal Services of Ottawa, Ontario Legal Information Centre, Clinique juridique francophone d'Ottawa, University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic, Housing Help and Action Logement. This group discusses needs and coordinates 7-10 education sessions per year for community workers to develop their capacity to identify and assist clients with housing issues (see the list below for the sessions coordinated during the reporting period). This partnership has been beneficial for all organizations and ensures coordination of programming in this area for community workers.

Connecting Ottawa indicated in its 2022 funding proposal a goal to increase support to disability organizations. In the past year, we have worked closely with Reach Canada, a legal services organization in Ottawa supporting individuals with disabilities, to collaborate on projects and share knowledge. We also worked with Reach to submit a funding application for the development of a simple wills clinic that will benefit both organizations' target populations. We continue to have a strong relationship with Canadian Hearing Services and regularly seek feedback from them on education needs for community workers in the disability sector.

One-on-one support and consultation

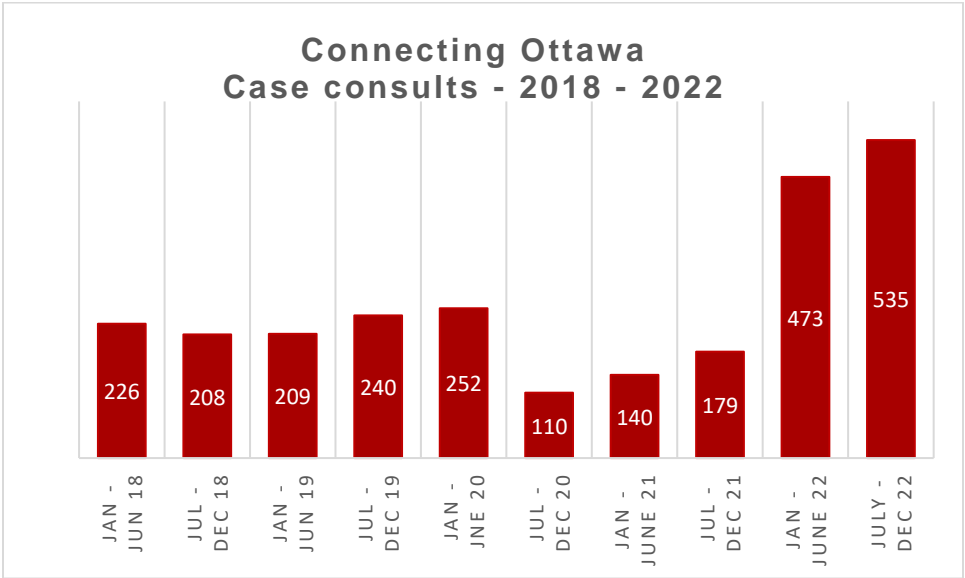
Over our ten-year history, Connecting Ottawa has found that one of the most effective and impactful way to develop the capacities of the front-line community workers is for Connecting Ottawa lawyers to consult one-on-one with frontline workers to help them address their clients' legal issues. Connecting Ottawa lawyers do not work directly with clients. All client

communication, follow up and case management support is conducted by the frontline worker. Connecting Ottawa lawyers determine the level and degree of their involvement in each case and support may include: providing summary legal advice, drafting legal documents, reviewing applications, giving adequate referrals or legal information, etc. The level of involvement is determined on a case-by-case basis by the lawyer in consultation with the frontline worker.

Connecting Ottawa lawyers assist caseworkers and their clients in the following areas of law: immigration and refugee law services, social assistance (ODSP, OW), federal income support benefits (EI, CPP, OAS/GIS, pandemic recovery benefits), housing, employment/work, human rights, consumer/debt, small claims matters, wills/powers of attorney (not drafting but advising), lost identification, guardianship applications (advising/reviewing), and some family law issues.

From January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, Connecting Ottawa lawyers conducted 1008 individual consultations, serving 1579 clients. This is a significant increase in our consultation activities due to the issues discussed in the introduction and is not sustainable into 2023. Of the 1008 consultations, 570 required “multiple” interactions with the caseworker, meaning that they were of a complicated nature, requiring follow up by our lawyer prior to fully resolving the query. In the past, Connecting Ottawa held “in-house” sessions at key partner agencies where one of our lawyers would be present and workers could seek support for specific client issues. With current technologies, we feel that we are more efficient utilizing email, phone, or Zoom contact with front-line workers and have not resumed these efforts.

This aspect of our project is the most impactful for the outcomes of the client. We share some case studies in Appendix A to illustrate this aspect of our work. We have not received approval from the individuals in the case studies to reveal their names; however, the stories themselves can be shared as the names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals.



Legal education, workshops and conferences:

As part of our capacity building approach, Connecting Ottawa plans and delivers legal education sessions to front-line community workers. We develop and present sessions that are open to our entire partnership network as well as respond to invitations from individual organizations on specific issues relevant to their practice.

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa coordinated and facilitated 18 education sessions that were open to our entire partnership network, reaching a total of 519 front-line workers. Where appropriate, we invite guest speakers to expand the range of topics that we were able to present. The sessions hosted from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022 were:

- Landlord and Tenant Board forms for front line workers – An in-depth look at N7 – December 6
- Vous êtes convoqué à une audience où l'on demande votre éviction ? À quoi pouvez-vous vous attendre ? (en Français) - November 24
- Ottawa's Essential Health and Social Supports/Home Support Services Program - What front-line workers need to know to support clients - November 22
- Attending an Eviction Hearing - What to Expect (English) - November 17
- The Landlord's Duty to Accommodate - September 22
- One year window program - information for settlement workers - July 21
- Landlord and Tenant Board forms for front-line workers – An in-depth look at N12 - July 12
- Understanding Ontario Works for settlement workers - July 7
- Understanding consumer rights and contracts - June 28
- The Social Security Tribunal of Canada: What community justice workers need to know - June 21
- Landlord and Tenant Board forms for front line workers - An in-depth look at N13 - June 7
- Modernization of social assistance in Ontario 2019-2024 - May 26
- Tips for supporting a client who has an LTB hearing - May 19
- Landlord and Tenant Board forms for front line workers - An in-depth look at N6 - April 26
- Information Session: Sakeenah Homes - April 6
- Landlord and Tenant Board forms for front line workers - An in-depth look at N5 - March 29
- Landlord Tenant Board vs Small Claims Court - March 23
- Information Session: Income tax and benefit returns for low-income residents - March 10

During the period, Connecting Ottawa also coordinated and delivered 20 in-house partner education sessions, reaching a total of 192 frontline workers. Further, Connecting Ottawa lawyers presented three workshops for the CLEO Connect network, reaching 787 front line workers provincially and one session for Canada Council for Refugees (CCR) reaching 60 individuals. The topics of the sessions were:

- One year window program (CCR) – October 25
- Ukrainians in Canada: Special immigration measures and supports for temporary residents (CLEO) - June 23
- Newcomers and the Transition Child Benefit (CLEO) - March 22
- Newcomers and the Canada Child Benefit (CLEO) - March 8

In addition to the above, Connecting Ottawa actively promoted education sessions coordinated and delivered by other organizations relevant to the social service and legal education needs of our community service workers. During the reporting period, we shared the following organization's education information:

- Community Legal Services of Ottawa (CLSO)
- Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO)
- Reach Canada
- L'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO)
- Canadian Women's Federation
- FCJ Refugee Centre
- Women's Initiative for Safer Environments
- Humber Centre for Human Rights Equity and Inclusion
- Refugee 613
- EBO Financial Education Centre
- Tribunal Watch Ontario
- National Accessibility Week
- Welcome to Ottawa Week

Connecting Ottawa hosts a yearly conference on a timely issue relevant to both social service and legal service workers. In 2022, Connecting Ottawa held a 3-part online series during Access to Justice Week on issues of employment and vulnerable populations. The first session was targeted to both legal workers and front-line workers and was a collaboration between CLEO Connect and Connecting Ottawa. This session was entitled "*Unsafe workplaces and low pay: The health and safety issues faced by low-income workers*" and attracted 247 attendees. The subsequent two sessions "*Frequently asked employment law questions, part 1*" and "*Frequently asked employment law questions, part 2*" attracted 89 and 71 participants respectively. The first session was approved for CPD hours by the Law Society of Ontario and was listed in the Access to Justice week calendar.

Legal information resource sheets

An important tool for developing the capacity of front-line workers and for helping them to directly assist their clients is the information sheets related to specific legal issues that can be referred to on a case-by-case basis. These Information sheets can also help to reduce the number of one-on-one case consultations requests received by our lawyers. Connecting Ottawa develops and/or updates and distributes information sheets as the capacity of our lawyers allow. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa developed and shared 24 resources:

- One time top up Canadian Housing Benefit (Updated December 21, 2022)
- One time top up Canadian Housing Benefit (December 13)
- Canada Dental Benefit (Updated: December 13, 2022)
- Prestation transitoire pour enfants (PTE) (November 30, 2022)
- Allocation canadienne pour enfants (November 30, 2022)
- Catch Up Payments for Parents (November 1, 2022)
- Employment Resource Sheet (October 31, 2022)
- Droits des personnes protégées (un réfugié accepté au sens de la convention ou une personne à protéger) en Ontario (September 21, 2022)
- Paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (July 25, 2022)
- Work Permit Letter (July 25, 2022)
- Rights and Responsibilities of Refugees in Canada (July 22, 2022)

- One Year Window Training Manual (July 18, 2022)
- Q & A about Ukraine Immigration status and access to benefits (June 23)
- Financial Assistance for Ukrainian Families (June 6, 2022)
- Transition Child Benefit (May 31, 2022)
- Wills & Powers of Attorney Resource Sheet (May 17, 2022)
- Canada Child Benefit (May 17, 2022)
- Newcomer Owned Small Businesses in Ottawa (April 5, 2022)
- Updated information on Special Immigration Measures for Ukrainians and their immediate families (March 23, 2022)
- Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (January 11, 2022)
- Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (January 11, 2022)
- Canadian Worker Lockdown Benefit (January 11, 2022)
- COVID-19 and Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (January 4, 2022)
- Paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (January 4, 2022)

Connecting Ottawa information sheets are shared via our bi-weekly *Communique* or in conjunction with our education sessions. Recipients are invited to share more broadly across their network. Our distribution system does not allow for the collection of analytics on the use or further distribution of these resources; however, during the report period, we are aware that seven of our information sheets were shared provincially by and uploaded to the CLEO Connect Your Legal Rights resource collection and that Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario also regularly shares the resources.

In addition to sharing our internally developed resources, Connecting Ottawa also shares resources produced by other local, provincial and federal organizations. In 2022, 67 resources related to legal and social issues pertinent to our target populations were shared via our *Communique*.

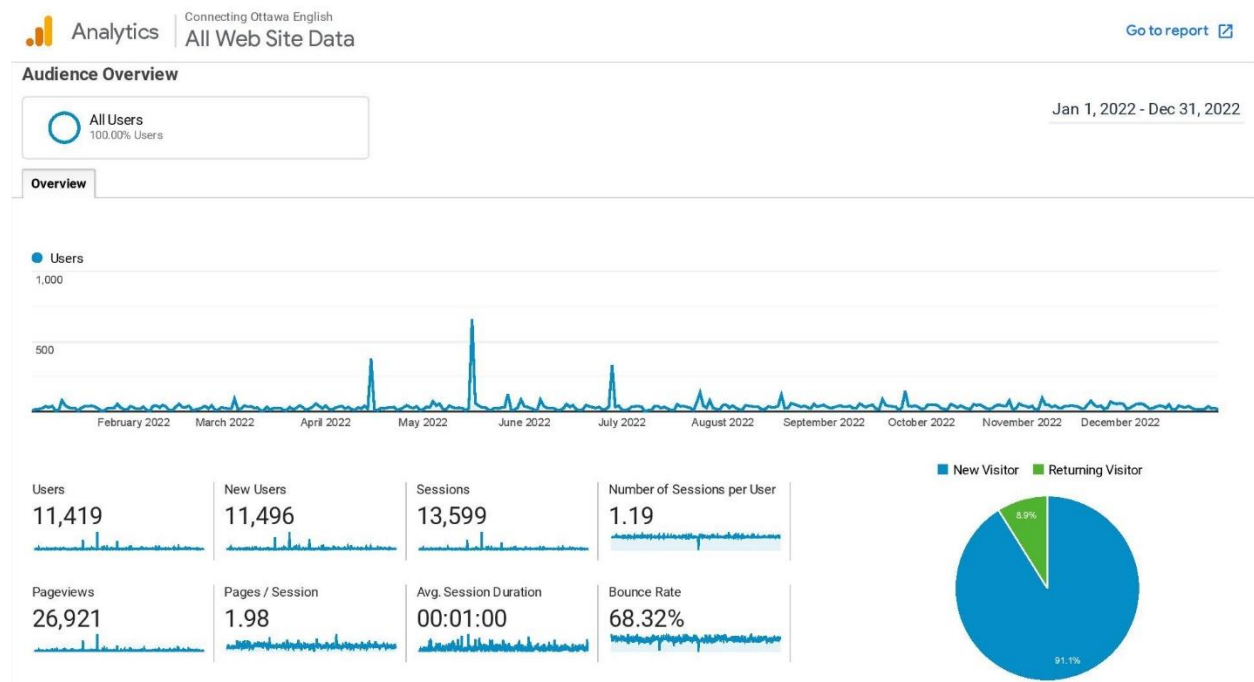
Website

Over the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa's websites have been available in both English (connectingottawa.com) and French (connexionottawa.com). The domain registrations have been extended until April 2023 and we arrange for hosting services through a monthly agreement with a hosting provider.

The Connecting Ottawa website is a centralized hub for sharing information about local legal, social services and communication barrier services to partner agencies, other community groups, and the public. A key element of the site is the links to the Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario (CNEO) 211 data base and providing ease of access to legal, social services, and communication barrier resources found there.

Connecting Ottawa promotes and integrates legal information resources via the website. Resources that are posted include: Connecting Ottawa information sheets and resources, links to the Steps to Justice information tool, social service and legal information tools available in multilingual formats, and our *Communique*. Any Connecting Ottawa educational resources that are posted on the website are centralized on a dedicated "Resources page". This page link is promoted in any electronic or social media posts. Website analytics show that this practice has resulted in multiple hits to our site and to this specific page as individuals seek out these resources.

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa received 11,419 visitors to the site, resulting in 26,921 pageviews. In the graphic below, note the peaks in audience activity, representing the promotion of new Connecting Ottawa resources via our electronic communication that are driving users to the site. An analysis of the most viewed pages reveals that the most accessed page (after the home page) is the “Resources” page noted above. The website also has a link for community service workers to request a consultation on behalf of their clients, which is used regularly by network front-line workers to connect with our services.



Our original funding application requested additional administrative funds for development of website content and site management and other social media management. This request was not approved. Consequently, our workplan schedules for only minimal of posting and updates.

Communique & other media

Connecting Ottawa produces a bi-weekly electronic newsletter, *Communique*. In this newsletter we share information on upcoming education sessions as well as timely information and updates on local, provincial, and federal legal programs of interest to front-line workers serving clients in our target populations. The *Communique* is very popular among our partners, and we continually receive positive feedback on the content. One partner shared with us “*I was just thinking that I remember when this Communique first started and it was only a few items and how much it has grown! I wanted to let you know how much it is appreciated and how informative it is. It is a lot of information but I can’t tell you how many times I’ve said: “Oh wow...I didn’t know that!!! I need to tell so and so...”. All that to say...Keep up the great work! You are making a difference! We appreciate all the ways that Connecting Ottawa has supported Carty House and how amazing the team is there. Truly! The world needs more people like all of you. 😊*”.

During the reporting period, we produced 24 issues of the *Communique*. (Due to holidays, only one issue was produced in August and in December). We encourage recipients to share the document widely and we post the most current issue on a dedicated page on our website. Our

distribution system does not allow for the collection of analytics on the use of or further distribution of the *Communique*; however, we are aware that the distribution extends far beyond our current email list and that Community Network of Eastern Ontario regularly shares content in its newsletter that originated from our *Communique*.

Connecting Ottawa also has a Facebook (655 followers), Twitter (682 followers) and LinkedIn profile. Our 2022 funding application requested, and was denied, additional administrative funds for content and media management. Currently, only the most minimal content is shared via these networks.

Fill the gaps

Connecting Ottawa works with our legal service and community service partner organizations to help “fill the gaps” of legal services available to our target populations via workshops, seminars, and clinics. We are currently seeking to make an impact in three areas: Newcomer identification replacement, Wills and POA support for low-income clients, and employment law support.

In 2019-20, Connecting Ottawa initiated a partnership with Pro-Bono Students Canada (PBSC) to host a series of newcomer ID clinics to help individuals replace missing or stolen permanent resident or citizenship documentation. The partnership emerged from several settlement partners indicating that this support was unavailable in Ottawa. PBSC works under the direction of lawyers from Borden, Ladner & Gervais law firm and Connecting Ottawa arranged for the location and promotion of the clinic. In September of 2022, we met with PBSC to discuss their clinics for 2022-23. For this period, Connecting Ottawa is supporting the PBSC ID clinics and students via one-on-one consultation with students to support clients who have newcomer ID issues. Our lawyer, Liz Majic, also provided a training session for the students on the specific issues related to newcomer ID in September. We mutually agreed to explore hosting in-person clinics in 2023 at partner facilities.

In 2019-20, two agency partners approached Connecting Ottawa for support and resources to assist their clients with wills and powers of attorney. Ottawa’s legal clinics do not offer these services and many individuals within our target populations were identified as falling through the cracks. Connecting Ottawa has worked with the Renfrew County Legal Clinic, Reach Canada and Community Legal Education Ontario to present information sessions to partner organizations. The demand for information and services in this area has only increased due to COVID-19 health concerns among our target populations. During the reporting period, we updated our “Wills and POA information sheet” and initiated discussions with legal service providers in Ottawa on ways to address this gap in a collective manner. In the summer of 2022, the McLachlin Fund released a call for proposals for projects related to civil justice. Reach Canada and Connecting Ottawa jointly submitted a proposal to develop a clinic model for simple wills and estates that could be offered to low-income clients. In December, 2022 we were advised that our proposal had been accepted.

Employment law continues to be an area of concern for individuals in our target populations. Many of these individuals work gig or minimum wage employment jobs and/or are subjected to problematic employment circumstances and discrimination. In 2020 the Employment Law Clinic opened in Ottawa. This is a 4-month service project of the University of Ottawa that is available directly to clients to address their employment law issues. Connecting Ottawa has been working with the Clinic to support funding proposals for full time activity and share information.

Collaboration and sharing

Connecting Ottawa actively promotes and facilitates sharing and connecting of resources among our partnership network. During the reporting period, we:

- Connected a private bar lawyer with two settlement partners to offer PLE sessions for CUAET holders.
- Connected CLSO with partner Newcomer Health Centre to share information on pelvic education.
- Shared English housing session materials with AJEFO. The organization then translated and offered these sessions to front-line workers in French.
- Connected Housing Help with the Muslim Community via Sakeenah Homes. Housing Help felt that the Muslim community was under-informed about low-income housing issues and through this connection, initiated a series of education sessions.
- Regularly referred partner agencies with UOCLC, CLSO and other legal clinics to present legal information sessions directly to clients.
- Connected OLIC with CESOC to develop francophone workshop series
- Connected Sakeenah Homes with EBO Financial to arrange budgeting workshops.

Connecting Ottawa also actively seeks to promote and share the knowledge learned from the program within the larger sector of newcomer and legal support organizations. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa staff members regularly participated and contributed to:

- Consumer (Law) Working Group
- Employment Insurance Working Group
- Refugee 613 Executive Committee
- Refugee 613 Ukrainian Working Group
- Social Security Tribunal Stakeholder Group
- Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Ottawa Chapter
- Workers Rights Action Group

In addition, Connecting Ottawa was invited to participate as a panelist at the Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC) Conference in Toronto and at the Sexual Assault Support Centre community conference in Ottawa to share our lessons learned with other community organizations.

Project management

The lead agency for the project is Community Legal Services of Ottawa (CLSO). They are the grantee, provide the accounting services, and contract project management. Office accommodations and human resources services during the period were provided by our partner agency Centre des services communautaires Vanier (CSC Vanier). CSC Vanier acted as the “employer of record” for project staff, managed payroll and benefits administration, provided personnel policies and other human resources infrastructure, and provided office accommodations. Post-COVID, we determined that it would be more efficient to move the human resource services for our lawyers and our office of record to CLSO. We initiated discussions and plans for this move during 2022 for implementation in 2023.

The project is managed by Dr. Gina Grosenick, an independent consultant under contract for 2.5 days per week to provide project management and coordination. Dr. Grosenick holds a Ph.D. in (non-profit) communication and has an extensive background managing and communicating about community-based programs and networks.

Connecting Ottawa has two full time lawyers: Heather Neufeld, L.L.M, L.L.B and Liz Majic, J.D. Heather Neufeld is an immigration and refugee lawyer who has more than 10 years of community legal clinic experience. She speaks English, French and Spanish. Liz Majic brings a depth of knowledge in landlord and tenant law, social assistance, and employment law drawing on an extensive background working with vulnerable populations and complex human rights issues. She previously worked at three community law clinics, Canada Without Poverty, and the Feminist Alliance for International Action. Both individuals have strong education and PLE abilities. Both have experience as University lecturers and in offering seminars to front-line workers and clients. During the reporting period, Heather Neufeld co-taught the course “Access to Justice for Refugee Claimants” at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Common Law. Both lawyers are licensed with the Law Society of Ontario, are insured by LAWPRO and participate in professional development upgrading throughout the year.

We were pleased to welcome Anneka Oh as our articling student in September of 2022. Anneka will be with Connecting Ottawa until May of 2023 supporting the lawyers to manage the increased demand in case consultations. The Law Foundation of Ontario generously agreed to allow Connecting Ottawa to utilize unspent Connecting Regions funding to pay for Anneka’s salary and expenses for the articling period.

Team meetings are held bi-weekly to manage schedules, plan activities, and ensure that funding goals and objectives are being met.

Connecting Ottawa actively works with law students to introduce them to access to justice issues within our target populations and to supplement our capacity. During the reporting period and prior to her articling contract, 3rd year law student Anneka Oh worked with us on a part time basis 10-15 hours per week. We also worked with ProBono Students Canada placement, Ali Aghaamoo over the winter term in 2022 and with Joel Szota for the summer term. Because we had arranged for an articling student beginning September of 2022, we decided not to work with an additional PBSC student until the current articling placement is over.

Connecting Ottawa has appointed an Advisory Group to assist in the effective management of the project. This Advisory Group is an essential resource to ensure that the programs and activities of the project meet the needs of the various groups within our partnership network. In 2022 the Advisory Group met five times. The 2022 membership of the Advisory Group is:

NAME	SERVICES SECTOR	PARTNERING ORGANIZATION
Lois McIntyre	Community	Canadian Hearing Society
Radiah Jouad	Community	South East Ottawa Community Health Centre
Laura MacLean	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Farouq Samim	Community	Somerset West Community Health Centre
Mirela Dranca	Immigrant	The Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC)
Christine Sharp	Community	Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre
Leigh Pousseau	Community	Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre
Daniel Danford Dussault/Julie Lavergne	Community	Community Information Centre of Ottawa / 211
Clarisse Titus	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Gary Stein	Legal	Retired.
Arber Zaplluzha	Immigrant	Catholic Centre for Immigrants – Ottawa
Sarah Caspi	Immigrant	Jewish Family Services
Yemane Adebe	Immigrant	Ottawa Community Immigrant Settlement Organization

Reflections

As requested in the report guidelines, below are our reflections on challenges and successes with our project, unanticipated benefits of our project in 2022, strategic and operational planning for 2023 and any opportunities that we see for the coming year.

The most significant challenge in the past year has been the increased demand in one-on-one case consultations as a result of the circumstances identified in the introduction. Our biggest success is that we have managed this demand; however, this has been at the expense of increased stress and burnout to our legal team. Compounding this challenge is the concern that the gaps in low-cost legal services in Ottawa are getting larger, that there are more people in our target populations in need, and that Connecting Ottawa is often the only organization able to support front-line workers and their clients in these gaps. Despite the proven need for additional personnel we have been unable to secure additional funding which puts us in position of either denying access to justice to those in need or further burning out our staff. We have sought out, where possible, opportunities for additional funding; however, we do not have the ability to commit the needed attention to securing additional long-term funding (see below).

We were also challenged in 2022 with not enough management/administrative support. As the project demand grows, the time needed to manage the project also grows. In our initial application we sought to increase our project manager position from a .5 FTE to a full-time position. This was denied. As a result, efforts to maintain our website and share information via social media is limited. Any efforts to secure additional funding is also limited and often are a rushed or “side of the desk” effort. This situation has also limited our ability to develop new partnerships and activities that could possibly fill the gaps in Ottawa for low-cost legal support for our target populations and other vulnerable individuals. The catch 22 is that if we could develop these partnerships and activities, some of the demand on our front-line staff would be reduced.

The positive response to the joint funding application with Reach Canada to develop a simple wills and estates clinic model for vulnerable populations in Ottawa has created an opportunity for the coming year. We look forward to identifying a low-cost model that will work for Ottawa to fill this gap. Part of the work will be to look for ways to fund the model once it’s been identified so that there is a service in Ottawa available to those who need it. Our concern is that the work will be meaningful, but a sustainable funding model will not be available.

The Connecting Ottawa project is flexible and nimble enough to respond to unanticipated issues that come up. As described in *Case Study #2* below, the need for intensive one year window training for caseworkers to support government-assisted refugees is one example. In a very short period of time, our immigration lawyer, Heather Neufeld, produced a training manual and presentation that was quickly rolled out to our partnership network and has helped to ensure that proper documentation is submitted within the required window. The introduction of new government benefits is another example. Our senior lawyer, Liz Majic, continuously scans for information on new programs and prepares information sheets within days of these programs being introduced that are rolled out to our partnership network. What is unanticipated with these information sheets is the extent to which they are helping community and legal workers across the province and country. We regularly receive communication from organizations outside of our partnership network to use these information sheets and to share them with their clients and workers.

Connecting Ottawa prepares a workplan for the coming year that is included in the funding request provided to the Law Foundation of Ontario. During our bi-weekly team meetings we review the workplan to ensure that it is operationalized and adjust it as needed to respond to any emerging issues. For the evaluation of our project, we largely rely on unsolicited feedback from front-line workers to our lawyers. Our project manager also meets regularly with partner agencies to discuss their satisfaction with our services. We also ensure that our Advisory Group is reflective of our larger partnership network so that we can discuss planning and needs with them during the quarterly meetings. Overwhelmingly we are praised for our work and efforts and the most common complaint is that our partnership would like more availability of services.

Workplan

Below is the revised workplan (based on approved grant funding) submitted to Law Foundation of Ontario on January 21, 2022 noting progress in planned activity areas. Activities that have been completed as per the workplan are indicated with a green background and an X. Any shaded cells without an X indicate that the activity happened but was not part of the original workplan. Any cells with a number included indicates the multiple times in that month that the activity occurred.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Project Planning and Review												
Staff Planning Session	X											
Data collection and analysis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review of Activities							X					
Team Meetings	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
Annual Conference planning (moved to Fall)						X	X	X	X			
Advisory Group Meetings	X			X			X			X		
Maintain and Grow Partnership Network												
Meetings with high-use partners to receive feedback		X		X		X		X		X		X
Identify and follow-up potential new partners	X		X		X		X		X		X	
Prepare and distribute bi-weekly Communique	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	1
Connect Community Legal and Social Services												
Respond and support front-line worker inquiries	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide interpretation services as required			X			X			X			X
Develop working groups as required			X			X			X			X
Share services of partners via <i>Communique</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain and update CO websites – NB: limited		X		X		X		X		X		X
Maintain and post updates on CO social media												
Provide PLE sessions for partner agencies – For this reporting period referred to other legal clinics	X			X			X			X		

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Capacity Building for Front-line workers												
Provide consultations to front-line workers	X 74	X 62	X 96	X 71	X 85	X 85	X 74	X 84	X 95	X 86	X 99	X 97
Offer in-house consultations to high-use partners – see note above. Replaced with technology consultations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Offer in-house education sessions on demand	X		X		X		X		X		X	
Offer network education session by CO lawyers		X	X 2	X		X		X		X		X
Offer network education sessions by CO partners	X		X 3	2	X 2	3	X 1		X 1		X 3	1
Develop short education videos and post on website											X	
Develop and distribute Infosheets/resources as required	X 5		X 1	1	X 2	2	X 4		X 1	1	X 3	3
Annual Conference										X		
Fill the Gaps												
Plan and offer ID Clinic		X	X							X	X	
Coordinate other clinics/session as required					X				X			
Share Lessons Learned												
Continue participation in sector roundtables/committees	X		X		X		X		X		X	
Participate as guest speaker on request		X						X				
Set up info table at sector conferences – not accomplished due to COVID-19 restrictions				X				X				X
Share Communique to extended network	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	1
Increase support to disability serving agencies												
Coordinate meeting with agencies to discuss needs				X								
Plan and provide disability education session for lawyers						X						
Management and Administration												
Review and renew Project Manager contract	X											
Review and renew staff contracts	X											
Renew accommodation contract									X			
Prepare yearly budget									X			
Financial review and analysis		X		X		X		X		X		X
Report to the Law Foundation of Ontario	X							X				X
LFO Application for 2023								X				

Acknowledgement Report

Connecting Ottawa thanks and acknowledges the support of the Law Foundation of Ontario in all our public documentation. We have incorporated the Foundation's logo as part of the Connecting Ottawa logo to ensure that any branded output of the project recognizes the Foundation.

Below is the completed acknowledgement checklist. Any clarification notes are provided in blue. Please note that we were unclear what the "disclaimer added" requirement was in reference to and could not find any reference to it on the "Acknowledging the Foundation webpage". Can you please advise what disclaimer is required and what document included this requirement?

Annual report	Connecting Ottawa publishes the year end report to the funder as our annual report	
	Mentioned the Foundation by name	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓
Enewsletter/electronic communications		
	Linked or "Tagged" the Foundation	
	Mentioned the Foundation by name	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓
Event or workshop		
	Mentioned the Foundation by name	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓
	Used the Foundation's signage	
	Verbally recognized the Foundation's contribution	✓
Media		
We do not seek media attention	Notified Foundation prior to grant announcement	
	Foundation and grant acknowledged by name in news release and interviews	
	Foundation boilerplate included in news release (optional)	
Printed material		
	Mentioned the Foundation by name	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓
Published report		
	Disclaimer added	?
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's name	✓
Social media		
	Foundation acknowledged by name ("tagged") at time grant was made	✓
	"Tagged" Foundation in posts when possible	✓
	Follow the Foundation on LinkedIn	
	Follow the Foundation on Twitter	✓
	Like the Foundation on Facebook	✓
Website		
	Foundation logo on website, with hyperlink to Foundation website (our current design does not allow for the link)	✓
	Foundation logo on 'funders' page, with hyperlink to Foundation website	✓
Video		
Video of conference presentation	Disclaimer added	?
	Mentioned the Foundation by name	✓
	Showcased the Foundation's logo	✓

Quantitative Statistics

Organization: Community Legal Services of Ottawa		Grant File #: CAT-61-21
Project Title: Connecting Ottawa		
	Total #	Notes or Comments
Public Legal Education (PLE)		
# of print resources produced, updated	24	
# of online text resources produced, updated	24	All of our print resources are posted online
# of video or audio resources produced, updated	3	Conference videos
# of PLE training sessions	45	
# of people with legal needs or members of the public trained		There may have been some members of the public attending our PLE sessions directed at TI/front-line workers, however we did not collect data as the number was less than 5%
# of trusted intermediaries and / or frontline workers trained	1965	
# of website page views	26,921	
# of website sessions	13,599	
# of print resources distributed		All of our resources were online
# of online text resources downloaded		Our metrics do not allow us to determine this
# of video or audio resources viewed, downloaded or distributed		Our metrics do not allow us to determine this
Legal services		
# of clients served	1579	Total number of clients affected by number of case consultations below
# of clients provided legal advice or brief services	1008	Total number of case consultations with TI/front-line workers
# of clients represented	0	
# of clients supported through legal processes by non-legal professionals (e.g. court navigator)	0	
Pro bono		
# of law/paralegal students engaged in pro bono work	3	
# of lawyers engaged in pro bono work	2	
# of paralegals engaged in pro bono work	0	
# of pro bono hours volunteered by law/paralegal students		
# of pro bono hours volunteered by lawyers		
# of pro bono hours volunteered by paralegals		
Growing the non-profit justice sector		
# of books, reports, oral histories, or other significant legal research or policy work	0	
# of staff employed in the sector (full-time)	2	
# of staff employed in the sector (part-time)	1	
# of students employed in the sector	1	
# of professional development and learning events	8	Attended by our legal team
Building a culture of law and understanding of rights		
# of training events to build awareness of law, democracy and rights		All of our training events are directed to TI/frontline workers and included above under PLE work
# of participants in events to build awareness of law, democracy, and rights		
# of student/youth participants		
# of adult participants		
Encouraging partnerships and collaboration		
# of organizations you partnered with	63	

Financial Report

Project income and expenditures to December 31, 2022 are below. There are no significant discrepancies.

CONNECTING OTTAWA		
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS		
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022		
	Budget	Actuals
REVENUE		
Law Foundation of Ontario		
Received During Year		251,775
Holdback Receivable (10%)		27,975
Total LFO	279,750	279,750
Registration Fees	-	-
	279,750	279,750
EXPENSES		
Website Hosting, Management and Administration		
Translation		1,122
Website Hosting, Management and Administration	5,000	3,332
	5,000	4,454
Education Sessions on New Areas of Law		
Training and Meeting Expenses	750	265
Honoraria	500	245
Equipment Purchases		500
	1,250	1,010
Legal Services/Social Services Collaboration		
Accommodation	12,000	11,500
Cloud/Mobile Services	2,000	1,645
Equipment Purchases	750	208
Materials and Supplies	750	721
Meeting Costs	250	171
Salaries and Benefits	185,500	187,705
Training/Professional Development	1,200	1,319
Translation/Interpretation	1,250	1,000
Travel	1,500	-
Sundry	-	-
	205,200	204,269
Shared Lessons Learned		
Annual Conference	3,000	3,294
Materials and Supplies	500	14
	3,500	3,308
Administration		
Project Co-ordinator and Administration Costs	56,000	56,167
Lead Agency Stipend	6,000	6,000
Accounting and Audit Expenses	2,700	2,700
Other	100	53
	64,800	64,920
	279,750	277,960
	279,750	277,960
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES		
(EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)		1,790

Appendix A: Case Studies and Impact

Case Study #1

In 2018, Mr. A arrived in Canada from Saudi Arabia. He is 50 years old, married with three children. He connected with a settlement agency in Ottawa upon arrival and has been a client ever since.

In August 2018, Mr. A started part-time employment at Tim Hortons. A year later, Mr. A started to work towards his high school diploma as a full-time student because he was struggling to find work in Canada as a newcomer. Mr. A continued to work as a baker at Tim Hortons while in school full-time. Mr. A was temporarily laid-off due to COVID-19. In September 2020, Mr. A requested vacation – both paid and unpaid – from his employer. Mr. A requested his schedule from his manager upon his return. Instead of scheduling Mr. A for work, they notified him that his employment was terminated.

Mr. A contacted his caseworker at the settlement agency for help. He didn't know if he qualified for Employment Insurance (EI) regular benefits. Understandably, he wanted to inquire about his rights and responsibilities prior to applying for federal income assistance because recent news of CERB overpayments made him wary of applying. Unfortunately, Mr. A missed the 4-week deadline to apply for EI regular benefits. (It is very difficult to get EI if you miss this deadline.)

During the appointment, his caseworker suggested that they contact Connecting Ottawa for a consultation. The staff lawyer at Connecting Ottawa advised Mr. A to apply for EI immediately. Mr. A was also advised to pursue his former employer for termination pay. Mr. A applied for EI and was denied. The Canada Employment Insurance Commission argued that Mr. A did not show good cause for his delay in applying for benefits because he did not contact Service Canada to ask about EI. The Commission also disentitled him from receiving benefits because it decided that he had not proved his availability for work while being in school full-time.

Connecting Ottawa's staff lawyer advised Mr. A to submit a Reconsideration Request. At the time, Mr. A did not qualify for help from the local community legal clinic because his wife worked and they were slightly above the income eligibility cut-off for free legal services from Legal Aid. The caseworker assisted Mr. A with compiling evidence to support his Reconsideration Request, including a job search list. Connecting Ottawa's law student compiled statistics and other social science research on the hardships that newcomers face in the job market. Connecting Ottawa's staff lawyer drafted a lengthy submission arguing that there was good cause for the delay and that Mr. A was trying hard to find another job while in school full-time. Mr. A's Reconsideration Request was denied.

Connecting Ottawa's staff lawyer assisted Mr. A and his caseworker to appeal to the Social Security Tribunal (SST). A hearing was scheduled. At this point, Mr. A was feeling discouraged and frustrated. He didn't know if he wanted to go through with the hearing. Connecting Ottawa's staff lawyer asked the caseworker if she could attend the hearing as a witness. She agreed. We also ensured that an Arabic interpreter would be in attendance. Prior to the hearing, Connecting Ottawa's staff lawyer coached both the caseworker and the client on what to expect and how to conduct themselves at a hearing before the SST.

Mr. A and his caseworker attended the hearing. A couple weeks later, Mr. A's appeal was granted and he received close to \$10,000 in EI regular benefits.

Mr. A's deadline to file an *Employment Standards Act* against his former employer was October 2022. However, Mr. A decided not to pursue his employer for this money because he is content with the outcome of his EI appeal and has moved on with his life.

He recently wrote the following message to Connecting Ottawa:

Thank you very much for your email, to be honest, I'm very satisfied with what I gained, I have to thank you so much for your amazing help. I focus right now on my new career as Medical Device Reprocessing Technician after I graduated recently from Algonquin College. You know EI gave me a very difficult time but in the end, I got some money which covered a valued percentage of my expenses during the unemployment period. Your support is highly appreciated.

Case Study #2

When government-assisted refugees are resettled to Canada, they have one year during which they can submit an application to reunite with spouses and dependent children still abroad (a one-year window application). If they miss the one-year deadline, they must sponsor these family members which is a more complicated process with more requirements which are often difficult for the refugees to meet.

With the arrival of so many Afghan evacuees at once, Ottawa settlement agencies suddenly had a greater number of families needing assistance with one-year window applications than in the past. Connecting Ottawa learned that settlement workers did not receive training on how to complete such applications, that Legal Aid did not grant certificates to permit individuals to hire a lawyer to assist, and that the community legal clinic did not take on one-year window cases due to capacity issues. Complicating the situation, many Afghans had failed to declare their spouse on their own application for resettlement to Canada due to a combination of rapid flight from the country, incorrect advice, and lack of assistance with the forms. This meant that individuals would have to submit detailed affidavits to explain their personal situation and the reasons why their undeclared spouse should be permitted reunification.

In light of this situation, Connecting Ottawa developed a multifaceted strategy to assist. We developed a training manual on one-year window applications for settlement workers and ran a training for them; we began consulting with settlement workers on individual cases and reviewing applications prior to submission; and we prepared the detailed affidavits necessary to demonstrate why individuals should be permitted reunification with their undeclared spouse. We are now filling a gap that no other organization is filling in Ottawa and we are building settlement workers' capacity to correctly complete and submit those one-year window applications that are less complex and do not require support of an immigration lawyer.

Case Study #3

The client in this case is a visitor from the Philippines who came to Canada in March 2022 and gave birth to a son in Ottawa in April 2022. She was referred to us by OCISO, but because she did not qualify for their services as a visitor, she only had minimal support from a social worker at the hospital where her son was born.

The client's son was born with cysts in his head that required him to be hospitalized shortly after he was born. During the following months, he also attended regular check-ups at the hospital to monitor his condition. As such, the client was forced to overstay her visa to take care of her son and accompany him to his appointments. The client's son also accumulated a large sum in medical bills due to his lack of health insurance as the client was having issues registering her son's birth with ServiceOntario and signing him up for OHIP.

Connecting Ottawa assisted the client in restoring and extending her visitor visa and advocating for her son's birth registration with ServiceOntario. We assisted the client in filling out the relevant immigration form and drafted a letter from the client's perspective explaining her situation. We also helped the client gather evidence to prove her claims and reviewed her application before she submitted it to IRCC. The client remained in Canada on maintained visitor status until December 2022, when her application to restore and extend her visitor visa for one year was granted.

Although the client had made numerous attempts to register her son's birth, ServiceOntario had delayed the registration several times. The first delay was due to the lack of her son's father's signature. As the father lives in the Philippines and ServiceOntario does not accept scanned signatures, the client was required to mail the physical forms to the Philippines for him to sign and mail back. The second delay was due to an administrative error by the client's caseworker at OCISO. The client's caseworker had accidentally written the incorrect date of birth for the child, which led to ServiceOntario requiring further proof of the child's birthdate. In October 2022, Connecting Ottawa assisted the client in resubmitting the birth registration forms with the correct information, which again required the client to mail the forms to her son's father in the Philippines. We also drafted a thorough letter explaining the client's situation and requesting the immediate issuance of the child's birth certificate.

The client contacted us again in November 2022 as her son's birth certificate had still not been issued and she had received another medical bill for her son. As such, we called ServiceOntario with the client to confirm the status of her son's birth registration and to ask for interim OHIP coverage while the client waited for the birth certificate. ServiceOntario confirmed that her son's birth had been registered, but that his birth certificate had not been printed yet. They also confirmed that although the client's son was born in Canada and is thus a Canadian citizen, he is not eligible for OHIP due to his mother's status in Canada as a visitor. In particular, her son did not meet the Ontario residency requirement for OHIP because ServiceOntario assumed he would leave Ontario with his mother when her visa expired. We thought this was extremely unfair as the client had been forced to stay in Canada due to her Canadian son's medical issues and the fact that she could not bring her son back to the Philippines even if she wanted to because her son did not yet have a birth certificate. Connecting Ottawa is currently assisting the client in filing a review to the OHIP Eligibility Review Committee asking for reconsideration for her son's OHIP eligibility.

In December 2022, we called ServiceOntario with the client again to ask for an update on her son's birth certificate. ServiceOntario refused to update the client on the status of her son's birth

certificate as they said that they had the client's sister on file as the applicant for the birth certificate. This was despite the fact that we had spoken to them just a few weeks prior and it was clear in the birth registration application that the client was the applicant. However, due to ServiceOntario's confusion on who the applicant was for the birth certificate, they told the client that she had to submit a letter confirming that she was the applicant for her son's birth certificate application. On the other hand, they also advised her that submitting the letter would delay the issuance of the birth certificate by a further eight weeks and that cancelling the application and starting a new one would be faster.

The client ended up cancelling the birth certificate application and applied instead for a certified copy of birth registration, which would still allow her to apply for her son's passport. Finally, at the end of December, the client finally received a birth registration document for her son. We are now about to submit the OHIP review for the client's son as the client is unable to afford the medical bills that her son has amassed.

This case study illustrates the unique position that Connecting Ottawa is in to resolve legal issues that otherwise would slip through the cracks or be very costly to resolve because of the multiple legal issues that are intertwined. It also highlights the inaccessibility of basic government services such as birth registration and health insurance and the difficulty in resolving these issues without legal assistance.