



**Pro Bono Law Alberta**  
Paths to possibilities

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2023



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To facilitate access to justice

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Thank You  
Our Team and Partners





**OUR MISSION** is to be a leader and valued partner in fostering pro bono contributions by the legal community to facilitate access to justice for Albertans.

**Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA)** was launched in 2007 as a legacy project of the Law Society of Alberta in recognition of its 100th anniversary celebrations.

Today, PBLA continues to facilitate access to justice by creating opportunities for lawyers to provide pro bono legal services through our court-based legal assistance programs, volunteer lawyer services roster, brokered partnerships on legal initiatives, and more.

Our **Strategic Direction** for 2021-2024 contemplates action in the following areas:

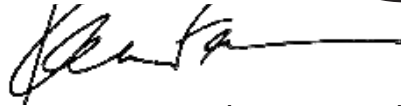
- Pro Bono Engagement**
- Research**
- Organizational Health**

## OUR MISSION **IN ACTION**





*Message from the*  
**PRESIDENT**

 — Karen Fellowes, KC

On behalf of the PBLA Board, I am pleased to present our Annual Report. PBLA has emerged from the restrictions of the pandemic years with a new energy, new directions and renewed commitment to providing lawyers in Alberta with opportunities to promote and engage in pro bono legal work.

We are still basking in the glow of a successful National Pro Bono Conference, hosted in Calgary in the fall of 2022 with our co-hosts, Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan. I wish to thank the staff and Board of Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan for all their hard work in planning and implementing this conference. We saw friends, allies, colleagues, experts and supporters from across Canada, and it was wonderful to have the community come together again. This conference could not have happened without the support of our generous sponsors and funders – the legal community in Alberta and Saskatchewan responded to our sponsorship requests with overwhelming generosity, thank you.

Our diverse and dynamic Board continues to go above and beyond, and we are implementing new improvements in our governance processes in furtherance of our strategic plan.

In January of 2023, PBLA’s Court-Based Programs finally returned to in-person delivery at the Calgary and Edmonton Courthouses. I know that our volunteers, Courthouse staff, and clients have welcomed the chance to return to in-person delivery. I spent many years as a volunteer in the Court-Based programs, and can attest to the fact that there is something special about being able to sit in the same room with an anxious self-represented litigant, and help them explain their situation to a Judge, or help them work through their issues in a supported environment. We are continuing to work on innovative ideas to expand our reach and services.

As always, I want to give a special thank you to PBLA staff and our volunteers – your efforts make a real difference in access to justice in Alberta.





# PRO BONO PROGRAMMING

POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

## Court-Based Programs

PBLA administers two court-based programs - the Civil Claims Duty Counsel (CCDC) Program and the King's Bench Court Assistance (KB Amicus) program. Both programs provide summary legal assistance to self-represented litigants engaged in civil proceedings in the Alberta Court of Justice and the Court of King's Bench in Calgary and Edmonton. Assisted by volunteer law students, volunteer lawyers in both programs provide legal advice, document support, procedural and referral information, and in the KB Amicus program, court assistance in morning Chambers.

Both programs are administered in partnership with several law firms, in-house and government legal departments, Pro Bono Students Canada (Calgary and Edmonton Chapters), Student Legal Assistance, Student Legal Services of Edmonton, as well as independent lawyers, articling students and law students, including internationally trained lawyers.

## In-person & Virtual programming

After two years of administering the programs virtually, PBLA resumed in-person delivery on January 9, 2023. During this time, both virtual and in-person applications were accepted on a pilot basis to assist self-represented litigants through telephone, video conference, and in-person.

## In-person Applications Only

Following an assessment of the pilot phase, PBLA has made the decision to revert to the pre-pandemic format of delivering the court-based programs in person, effective April 1, 2023. The decision to offer the programs wholly in-person was made with careful consideration and an assessment of the virtual program's usage.

For those seeking in-person assistance at the Calgary and Edmonton courthouses, no appointment or pre-registration is required. The programs operate on a first-come, first-served basis.

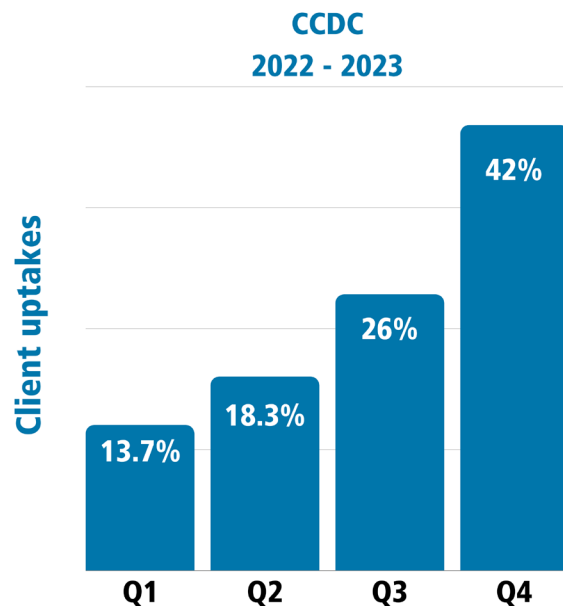
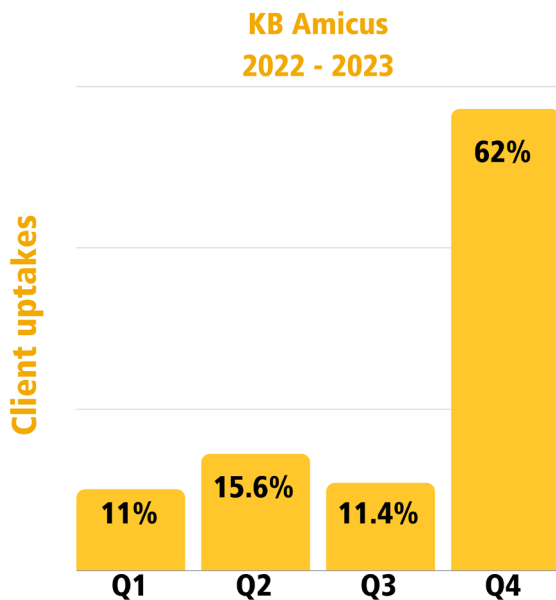


# PRO BONO ENGAGEMENT

During the first three quarters of the fiscal year, client uptakes were relatively low. However, the data from the final quarter highlights a significant increase in client uptakes when we resumed delivering in-person programming at the Calgary and Edmonton Courthouses on January 9, 2023.

For example, **42% of the individuals we assisted through the CCDC program during the fiscal year were accounted for in the final quarter.** This highlights the notable surge in client engagement once we transitioned to a hybrid format.

Similarly, in the KB Amicus Program, we assisted **62% of our self-represented litigants during the final quarter.** These findings clearly demonstrate the advantages and effectiveness of delivering programs in person, aligning with established traditional practices.



PBLA's court-based programs continue to attract interest from a total of 29 law firms, several independent lawyers, and articling students across Calgary and Edmonton. We have approximately **429 volunteer lawyers and articling students** who provided **1926.50 volunteer hours** of pro bono legal services across both cities.



## King's Bench Court Assistance Program (KB Amicus)

The KB Amicus Program is specifically designed to provide assistance to self-represented litigants during hearings in King's Bench Justice and Masters Chambers in Calgary and Edmonton. The program aims to streamline court processes for individuals without legal representation by having volunteer lawyers act as amicus curiae before the court. Additionally, the program in Calgary offers a "storefront" where volunteer lawyers offer summary legal advice on Chambers applications and other civil matters in the Court of King's Bench.

However, the ability to participate in hearings was severely limited when hearings were conducted virtually, greatly impacting the program until this past January when we were able to get back into court as Amicus, resuming in-person program delivery. In fact, 62% of the individuals we assisted through the KB Amicus Program during the fiscal year were accounted for in the final quarter. We expect this positive trend will continue as the Court further expands its in-person proceedings, enabling us to better serve those in need of assistance.

### King's Bench Court Assistance Program (KB Amicus)

**162**  
volunteer lawyers  
and articling  
students



**89**  
documents  
prepared

**790**  
volunteer  
hours

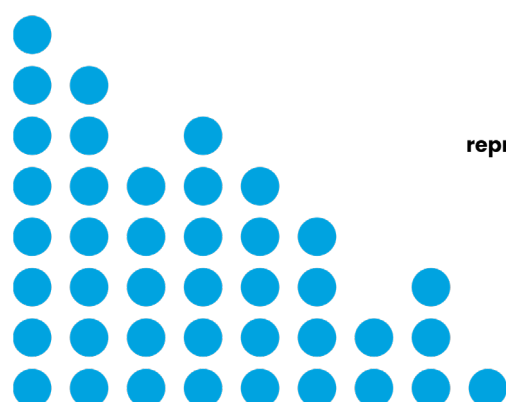


**100**  
referrals  
made

**130**  
representations



**231**  
individuals  
assisted





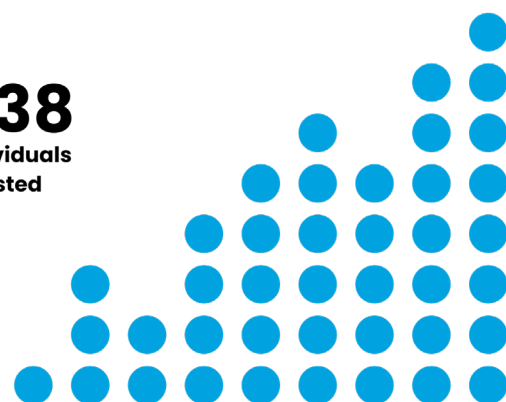


# Civil Claims Duty Counsel Program (CCDC)

The Civil Claims Duty Counsel Program provides brief legal assistance to self-represented litigants with civil matters in the Alberta Court of Justice on a first come first serve basis. The Program is assisted by volunteer lawyers and articling students who provides summary legal advice, document assistance, procedural information as well as help with trials, motions and other appearances to those self-represented litigants who are either thinking about bringing a legal action or are looking for alternative measures to resolve their legal issues. Majority of the legal matters are grounded in contracts, monetary claims, and employment issues. Requests for assistance can be but not limited to assessment of merits, limitation periods, understanding cause of action, drafting documents and service of documents.

The CCDC Project was delivered in person and virtually in 2022 - 2023. More than 267 volunteer lawyers and articling students provided over 1137 hours of pro bono legal services to more than 438 individuals.

## Civil Claims Duty Counsel Project (CCDC)



# INTHEIROWN WORDS



I appreciate the volunteer lawyers' time and I felt that they are trying their best to help in their best capabilities.

**Court-based Program Client**

I had the wrong expectation of the process. The assistance required was amazing. Satisfy with the outcome.

**Court-based Program Client**

Very helpful. Made the filing process simple. Had strong advice!

**Court-based Program Client**

They were very good of understanding my questions!

**Court-based Program Client**

It was a very informative 30 minutes of my time. I have a better view of the case now.

**Court-based Program Client**

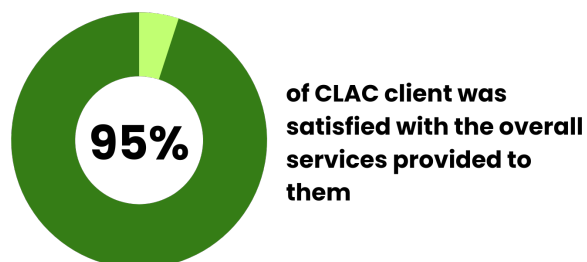
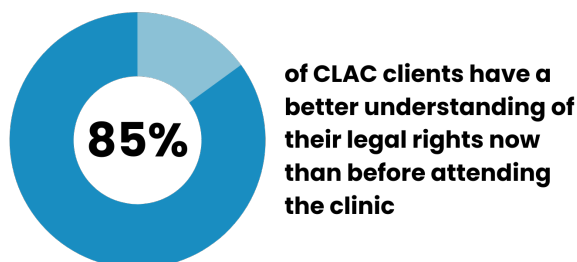
# PBLA IN THE COMMUNITY

## Calgary Legal Advice Clinic (CLAC)

The 12th annual Calgary Legal Advice Clinic (CLAC), a joint initiative between Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA), Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP (NRF), Calgary Public Library, and Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG), was held on October 27, 2022, from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. The clinic provided at least 30-minute free legal advice sessions to Calgarians in select areas of law.

CLAC has traditionally been hosted in cooperation with our partner organizations to offer in-person legal advice sessions to pre-booked and walk-in clients. However, due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and in adherence to federal and provincial health and safety regulations for social distancing, the 2020 and 2021 clinics hosted virtual sessions by phone or video conference for two consecutive years. As the pandemic eased, PBLA resumed the in-person clinic this year at the award-winning Calgary Central Library.

A total of 34 clients pre-booked their appointments, 22 clients showed up, and 33 clients walked in on the clinic day. This resulted in **55 clients being assisted** with their legal matters relating to civil, family, labor, criminal, immigration, and other areas of law.





# National Pro Bono Conference



**Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA)** and **Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan (PBLs)** joined hands and co-hosted the 2022 National Pro Bono Conference (NPBC) from September 21 to 23, 2022, at the Hotel Arts, Calgary.

The 2022 NPBC was a tremendous success on multiple levels. The conference theme, “Navigating Justice for the Future,” aimed to celebrate the significant gains made by the pro bono sectors over the past decade. It also focused on sector challenges and sought to provide key learnings for future action in the areas of diversity, resourcing, collaboration, and innovation.

The conference featured **12 workshops** and **5 plenaries** covering a broad range of subjects such as fund development, wellness, artificial intelligence, and indigenous legal services. The NPBC 2022 brought together approximately **200 pro bono and access-to-justice stakeholders** from provinces across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. National Pro Bono Awards were presented at the Awards Banquet as part of the 8th National Pro Bono Conference.



## Congratulations to 2022 National Pro Bono Awards Recipients:

### PARLEE MCLAWS LLP

CANADIAN NATIONAL PRO BONO LAW FIRM  PARLEE MCLAWS<sup>LLP</sup>

### KARA-DAWN JORDAN, KC

CANADIAN NATIONAL PRO BONO DISTINGUISHED SERVICE



### INMATE APPEAL PANEL PROGRAM

CANADIAN NATIONAL PRO BONO PROGRAM



## . Navigating Justice for the Future .

We had over **65 speakers** from various sectors, including the judiciary, government, public sector, universities, private bar, and pro bono organizations.

To kick off the conference, the Honourable Chief Justice Robert G. Richards from the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal provided welcoming remarks at the first day's reception.

On the second day of the conference, the Honourable Justice Sheilah Martin from the Supreme Court of Canada delivered the keynote address.



**Opening Speaker:**  
The Honourable Chief Justice Robert G. Richards  
Supreme Court of Canada



**Keynote Speaker:**  
The Honourable Justice Sheilah Martin  
Supreme Court of Canada

**Plenary: Emerging Trends in Access to Justices**

**Workshop: Medical Legal Partnerships**

**Workshop: Law Student Pro Bono in Pandemic and Beyond**

**Plenary: Pro Bono and Wellness**

**Plenary: Trauma Informed Lawyering**

**Plenary: Trauma Informed Lawyering**

**Workshop: Nothing For Us Without Us: Diversity & Collaboration in Pro Bono**

**Plenary: The Sea Change in Law by & for Indigenous Peoples**

**Workshop: Pro Bono Post Pandemic: Leveraging the Learning**

### National Pro Bono Conference Sponsors:





# THE POWERHOUSE

The ideation, planning, and delivery of the 2022 National Pro Bono Conference was made possible by the invaluable contributions of the volunteers, whom we proudly call “The Powerhouse”. We are thankful to members of the Conference Coordination Committee, planning sub-committees, and everyone who gave their time, skill and resources towards making this year’s conference a success.

## COORDINATING

Carly Romanow (Co-Chair)  
Nonye Opara (Co-Chair)  
Eleanor Carlson (Co-Chair)  
Brett Anderson  
Marija Bicanic

## CONTENT & PROGRAMMING

Eleanor Carlson (Co-Chair)  
Kendall Moholitny (Co-Chair)  
Carly Romanow  
Gabriel Chen  
Judge Michelle  
Christopher, KC  
Kelly Ann Fenney  
Kim Newsham

## FUNDRAISING

Nonye Opara (Co-Chair)  
Jeff Suerteas (Co-Chair)  
Beau Atkins  
Bruce Churchill-Smith  
Eleanor Carlson  
Ken Mills  
Olufunke Fasunon

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Anne-Marie Santorineos  
(Co-Chair)  
Carly Romanow (Co-Chair)  
Beau Atkins  
Chole Beaudet-Centomo  
Debbie Klein  
Heather Wojcik  
Lindsey Beaudry  
Nicholas Cann, KC  
Ronald Parchomchuk, KC  
Yonit Fuhrmann

## MARKETING

Davida Bentham (Co-Chair)  
Ifeatu Harris-Eze (Co-Chair)  
Charlotte Tseung

## LOGISTICS

### **PBLA Staff**

Nonye Opara  
Marilou Stegmeier  
La Salette Encarnacion  
Christian Ng  
Charlotte Tseung

### **PBLs Staff**

Carly Romanow  
Cecile Lark  
Davida Bentham  
Haley Bentham  
Lindsey Beaudry



*Thank you and See you in '24!*

SEPTEMBER 2024

# THE 9<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

📍 QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

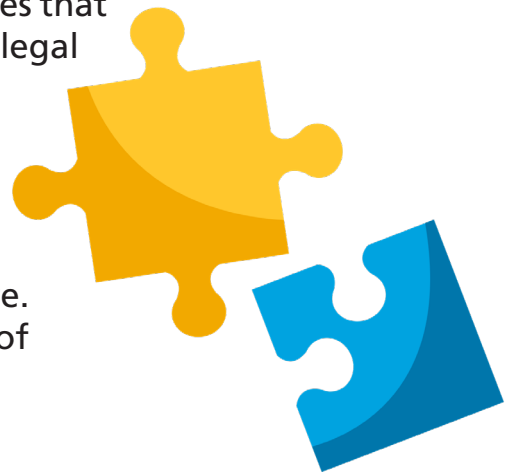


# ONGOING PROJECTS

## Volunteer Lawyer Services Roster (VLS)

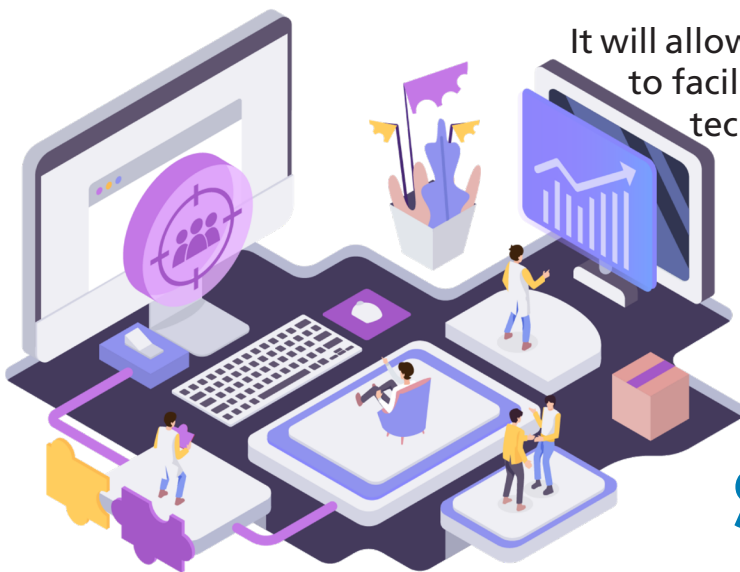
PBLA also administers a Volunteer Lawyer Services (VLS) Roster Program that tries to match volunteer lawyers with non-profits and charities that have specific legal issues and cannot afford the cost of legal services.

VLS Roster lawyers decide the scope of pro bono assistance they can provide, including by-law reviews, general contract drafting and reviews, volunteer waivers, incorporation, charitable registration and more. This program is generously funded by the United Way of Calgary and Area and the Law Society of Alberta.



## Client Relationship Management (CRM)

PBLA is implementing a CRM system that will facilitate better volunteer management, client intake, communication, documentation management, and reporting, thereby increasing supports for self-represented litigants, many of whom are low-income or vulnerable Albertans.



It will allow PBLA to increase internal staff capacity to facilitate community-facing initiatives using technology-based solutions. This increase in staff capacity and knowledge will allow the organization to adapt its governance and operations to communities' needs and changing dynamics in the delivery of court and legal services.

# STAY TUNED!



# PROMOTING #PRO BONO



## Helping the Public Navigate Pro Bono Resources

PBLA receives a number of inquiries from members of the public looking for pro bono assistance and provides informed referrals to available resources within the community. We fielded over 484 emails and 1236 calls from the public during the 2022 - 2023 fiscal year.

**1,236**  
calls  
received

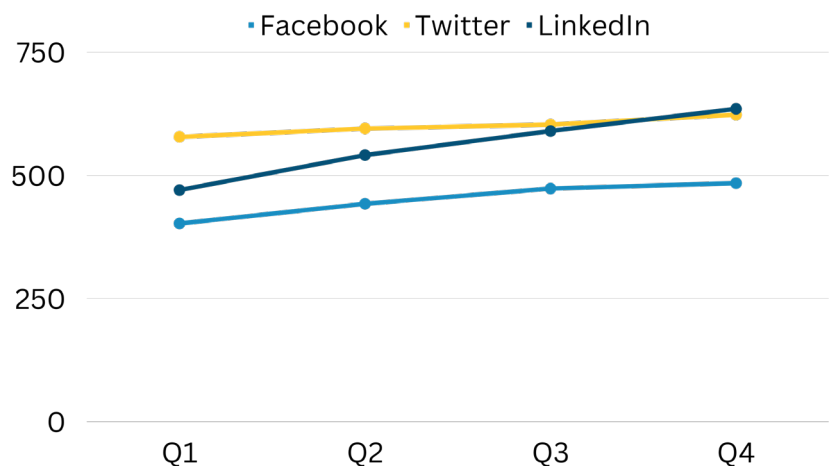


**484**  
emails  
received



## Digital Engagement

In 2018, PBLA established its presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Since then, these social media channels have experienced consistent growth, with a notable increase in digital followership and engagement from stakeholders within the legal profession and community.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## Statement of Financial Position

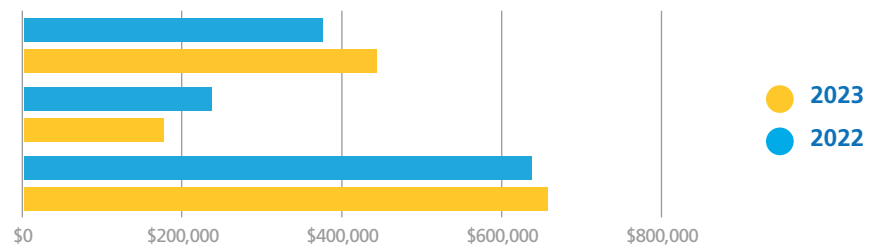
As of March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
Assets	\$629,607	\$604,544
Liabilities	\$165,407	\$216,466
Net Assets	\$464,200	\$388,078

Net Assets

Liabilities

Assets



## Statement of Operations

For the year ending March 31, 2023

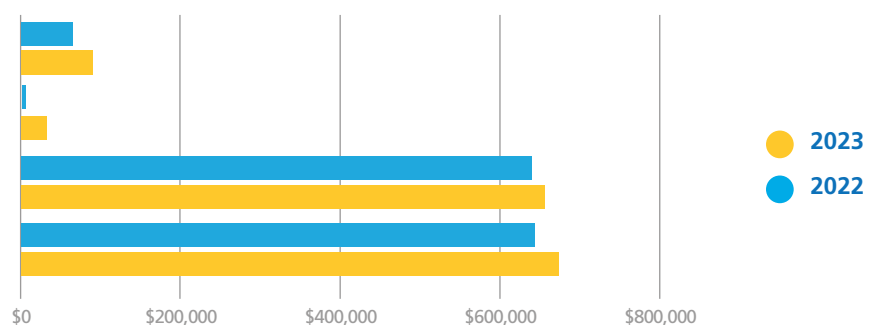
	2023	2022
Revenue	\$692,022	\$659,532
Expenses	\$650,265	\$647,426
Other Income	\$ 34,365	\$ 1,182
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$ 76,122	\$ 13,288

Excess (deficiency) of Revenue

Other Income

Expenses

Revenue



For a copy of PBLA's audited financial statements, email [info@pbla.ca](mailto:info@pbla.ca).

# THANKYOU

## Board of Directors

- Karen Fellowes, KC  
President (Calgary)
- Edwin Ma, KC  
Vice President (Calgary)
- Pam Morrell  
Treasurer (Calgary)
- Eleanor Carlson  
Secretary (Calgary)
- Brett Anderson (Calgary)
- Robert (Bob) Philp, KC  
(Edmonton)
- Marija Bicanic (Calgary)
- Judith Hanebury, KC  
(Calgary)
- J. Shay Vanderschaeghe  
(Red Deer)
- Kene Ilochonwu, KC  
LSA Bencher  
Representative (Calgary)
- Hsiu-Yan Chan (Calgary)
- Robert Neilson (Edmonton)

## Advisory Board

- Chair - The Honourable  
Mister Justice R.A. Jerke  
(Lethbridge)
- The Honourable Madam  
Justice M.S. Paperny  
(Calgary)
- The Honourable Madam  
Justice J.M. Ross  
(Edmonton)
- The Honourable Judge  
A.H. Lefever  
(Edmonton)
- The Honourable Judge  
John T. Henderson  
(Edmonton)
- Honourable J.C. (Jack)  
Major CC, KC
- Honourable Allan H.  
Wachowich, KC  
(Edmonton)
- Cheryl C. Gottselig, KC  
(Calgary)
- Phyllis A. Smith, KC  
(Calgary)
- Bruce Churchill-Smith, KC

## Staff

- Nonye Opara  
Executive Director to April 28, 2023
- Marilou Stegmeier  
Finance & Administrative Coordinator
- Christian Ng  
Program Coordinator (Calgary)
- La Salette Encarnacion  
VLS and Program Coordinator (Edmonton)
- Jolisa Odagwe  
Communications & Development Coordinator
- Charlotte Tseung  
Communications & Development Coordinator  
(Maternity Leave Cover)
- Ifeatu Harris-Eze  
Communications & Development Coordinator  
(June 13 to July 31, 2022)
- Maria Marcon  
Accounting Consultant as of March 31, 2023

## Pro Bono Community

- Association des juristes d'expression  
française de l'Alberta
- Calgary Legal Guidance
- Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic
- Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta
- Edmonton Community Legal Centre
- Fort McMurray Community Legal Clinic
- Grande Prairie Legal Guidance
- Lethbridge Legal Guidance
- Medicine Hat Legal Help Centre
- Public Interest Law Clinic
- Student Legal Assistance
- Student Legal Services of Edmonton

## Program and Project Partners

- Ackroyd LLP
- A. Farber & Partners
- Anderson James McCall Barristers
- BDO Financial Recovery Services
- Bishop and McKenzie LLP
- Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP
- Borden Ladner Gervais LLP
- Brownlee LLP
- Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP
- Calgary Public Library
- McAllister LLP
- McCarthy Tétrault LLP
- McLennan Ross LLP
- McLeod Law LLP
- McMillan LLP
- Miller Thomson LLP
- MJM Barristers
- MLT Aikins LLP
- MNP LLP
- Norton Rose Fulbright LLP
- Dentons Canada LLP
- DLA Piper (Canada) LLP
- Emery Jamieson LLP
- Field LLP
- Goodfellow & Schuett Law
- Gowling WLG
- Grant Thornton LLP
- Hudson & Company Insolvency Trustees Inc.
- Imperial Oil
- JSS Barristers LLP
- Parkland Corporation
- Parlee McLaws LLP
- Pro Bono Students Canada - National, Calgary and Edmonton Chapters
- Resolution and Court Administration Services
- Reynolds Mirth Richards & Farmer LLP
- SVR Lawyers
- Stikeman Elliott LLP
- Witten LLP

## Donors

- Benevity - Anonymous
- Edmonton Community Foundation Lawyers' Legacy Fund
- Nishi Thusoo
- Canada Online - Anonymous
- CanadaHelps - Anonymous
- United Way - Gary Clarke
- United Way - Anonymous
- Great Bar Band Battle - 2022
- Marina Giancomin

*Thank you!*



## Funders



## **Pro Bono Law Alberta**



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Pro Bono Law Alberta



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