

Annual Report

2021-2022



Pro Bono Law Alberta

Paths to possibilities

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



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Thank You
Our Team and Partners

MESSAGE FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

On behalf of the PBLA Board, I am pleased to present our Annual Report. I am writing this message in a hopeful frame of mind, looking forward to new opportunities to gather, especially at the long-awaited and twice-postponed National Pro Bono Conference in September 2022.

We continue to implement our Strategic Plan and work with our funders in order to best utilize our resources to meet the expanding definitions of need in our society.

Our Board was expanded this year as we implement diversity and excellence initiatives. We welcomed new Board members including Hsui-Yan Chan, Rob Neilson, Mike Marion QC (recently given a QC appointment then elevated to Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench), Usman Mahmood and Pam Morrell. Several Board members received honours, including a QC appointment for Kene Ilochonwu, QC, and a CBA Distinguished Service Award for Judith Hanebury, QC.

I wish to thank all of our Board members, our staff and our volunteers who have gone above and beyond showing up for our organization - you are our heartbeat and absolutely essential to our work. A special thank you to our Executive Director Nonye Opara for steering the ship through the pandemic related challenges of the last few years.

In September of 2022, we are co-hosting (with Pro Bono Saskatchewan) the National Pro Bono Conference. This conference is traditionally held every two years and rotates between locations in Canada. The last time this conference was held in Calgary was 2010. We look forward to welcoming attendees from across Canada and around the world as we explore new ways to innovate and increase access to justice through pro bono initiatives.



Karen Fellowes, QC
President

MESSAGE FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

We are still here! In 2021-22, we continued to navigate the unprecedented challenges created by the pandemic. We embraced the never-ending cycles of change and increased our resilience as an organization. In March 2020, PBLA closed its physical offices and transitioned program delivery to remote services. Nearly two years later, our programs are still being offered virtually, and despite the uncertainties and changes, we survived.

In the past year, we acted on some of our strategic goals. In August 2021, PBLA commenced the development of its Client Relationship Management (CRM) Platform that will support volunteer and client intake management. The project, which is funded by the Government of Alberta, will help PBLA build, manage, and strengthen client relationships; improve productivity by improving process and workflow efficiencies; uncover valuable insights through data analysis; and better store and manage data on volunteers and program users. Through our flagship programs and community initiatives, we continued to engage lawyers and students to offer pro bono assistance to self-represented litigants with civil matters and non-profits with legal issues. Pages 6 – 9 of this report provide a good snapshot of our program activities and their impact on program clients and volunteers.

PBLA's success is a product of people and partnerships. I am privileged to work with an amazing team - the resiliency, hard work, and commitment of our staff in the past year is unparalleled. Our Board continues to show leadership and worked especially hard to support me and the operational team as we met the challenges of the past year.

We are fortunate to have the support and commitment of our program partners and volunteers – they are the heartbeat of our programs and their generous giving of time, skills and expertise continue to make a difference for our program clients. We are grateful for the opportunities to work with other pro bono clinics and access to justice organizations and appreciate their support for PBLA's mission.

Continued funding from our main funders was crucial to our organization's success in the past year. We thank the Law Society of Alberta and the Alberta Law Foundation for maintaining funding for our mission activities and for their flexibility in allowing us apply grant funds to meet the unique needs of the past year. We are also grateful to the Government of Alberta for bolstering our technical capacity through a two-year grant that supports our CRM project. Our work in the past year was also supported by the generous giving of various individuals and organizations; we are thankful for every donation received.

The next year at PBLA is one filled with learning and growing. We also have a lot to celebrate, especially in 2022, when we mark our 15th Anniversary and co-host the 2022 National Pro Bono Conference in Calgary. We will continue to leverage the power of volunteerism and pro bono to fill service gaps and address access to justice deficits for the benefit of vulnerable Albertans.

In the following pages you will read about the accomplishments we are proud of and some of the interesting initiatives in our offering. I hope you are excited as much I am for our future and look forward to your support.



Nonye Opara,
Executive Director



PRO BONO **PROGRAMMING** POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

Court-Based Programs

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

The court based programs are delivered 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.

Civil Claims Duty Counsel Project (CCDC)

The CCDC Project was delivered virtually in 2021 - 2022. More than **362 volunteer lawyers and articling students** provided over **1367 hours of pro bono legal services** to more than **456 individuals**. A total of **24 law firms** were involved in Calgary and Edmonton this year.

Civil Claims Duty Counsel Project (CCDC)

362
volunteer lawyers
and articling
students



144
documents
prepared

1,367
volunteer
hours



190
referrals
made

29
representations



456
individuals
assisted

Queen's Bench Court Assistance Program (QB Amicus)

The QB Amicus Program assists self-represented litigants with civil matters appearing in Queen's Bench Justice and Masters Chambers in Calgary and Edmonton. In the courtroom, volunteer lawyers act as amicus curiae to assist individuals with their appearance before the court, thus streamlining court processes for unrepresented litigants. The program in Calgary also includes a "storefront" at which volunteer lawyers provide summary legal advice regarding Chambers applications and other civil matters in the Court of Queen's Bench. In 2021 - 2022 fiscal year, more than **362 volunteer lawyers, articling students and bankruptcy trustees** provided over **691.5 hours of pro bono legal services** to more than **164 individuals**. A total of **19 law firms** and **2 bankruptcy trustees** were involved in Calgary and Edmonton this year.

Queen's Bench Court Assistance Program (QB Amicus)



Volunteer Lawyer Services Roster (VLS)

The VLS Roster Program improves access to pro bono legal services for non-profit organizations by matching these entities with dedicated volunteer lawyers. Between April 2021 and March 2022, 11 non-profits were matched with volunteer lawyers and are receiving or have received assistance with reviews to program waivers, charitable status registration, employment disputes, Copyright matters, drafting employment documents, as well as Bylaw and Contract reviews. VLS Roster lawyers decide the scope of pro bono legal services they provide and volunteer opportunities can be tailored to meet the volunteer lawyers' schedule.

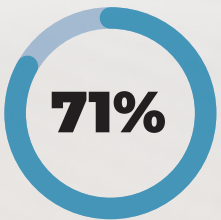
HOW WE MADE A **DIFFERENCE**



of program clients had a better understanding of the pros and cons of their legal options after meeting with the volunteer lawyer



of program clients had a better understanding of their legal rights after meeting with the volunteer lawyer



of program clients noted they were better informed about their legal issue, in a follow-up survey



of program clients noted they have taken the legal steps recommended by the volunteer lawyer, in a follow-up survey



of program clients were satisfied with the assistance they received

IN THEIR OWN **WORDS**

Thanks for the assistance it was very helpful, so that I knew what to expect and prepare better for my pre-trial. I settled out of court and am glad to put this experience behind me.

Court-based Program Client

All of you PBLA staff are wonderful, and I look forward to being a part of these amazing clinics again whenever possible. Thank you for all you do!

PBLA CLAC Volunteer

I could understand the volunteer lawyer. He explained the changes within the court system and now have a better understanding of the next steps [sic].

Court-based Program Client

The lady I spoke with gave me confidence in my case and I was able to resolve my matter.

Court-based Program Client

The volunteers were amazing! They helped provide me with really valuable information that undoubtedly helped my cause.

Court-based Program Client

Michael was excellent, he was very honest about what to expect and got through the conflict of interest stuff as quick as he could so that he could assist me more. He was also helpful with clarifying that I have two legal issues and not one as I had initially thought. Thank you so much for helping me through this! I really appreciate it.

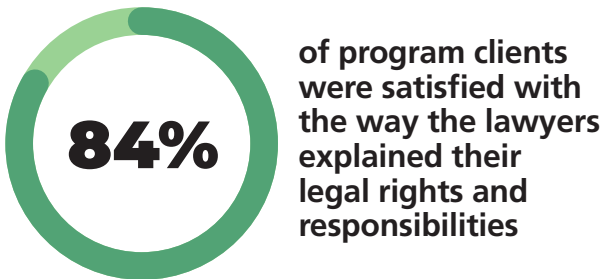
Court-based Program Client

PBLA IN THE **COMMUNITY**

Calgary Legal Advice Clinic (CLAC)

The 11th annual Calgary Legal Advice Clinic (CLAC) was a joint initiative between Pro Bono Law Alberta (PBLA), Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP (NRF) and Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG). The Clinic was held on October 28, 2021, from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm, and provided free 30-minute legal advice sessions to Calgarians. This year, assistance was provided in the areas of Family Law, Immigration Law, Landlord and Tenant Law, Civil Law, Labour Law, Wills and Estate Law and Criminal Law.

CLAC has been traditionally hosted in-person at the Calgary Public Library. However, due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Clinic hosted virtual sessions by phone or video conference for the second year.



I liked how she made me comfortable in a very trying time. She gave me the information that helped me proceed with my legal issues.

Court-based Program Client

This is a wonderful public service that helped a 97 year old man have peace of mind.

Court-based Program Client

Ask a Lawyer

PBLA's first ever, two-part, Ask a Lawyer series took place on Facebook live as part Alberta's 2021 Access to Justice Week. It presented a unique opportunity for volunteer lawyers to provide answers to general legal questions from the public. The first session was held on October 27, 2021 and featured volunteer lawyers with expertise in Criminal Law, Civil Law and Municipal By-law infractions. The second session took place on October 29, 2021 and featured volunteer lawyers with expertise in Civil Law, Employment Law and Landlord/Tenant Law.

Legal Aid Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

At the invitation of Alberta's Deputy Minister of Justice, PBLA participated in a Stakeholder Engagement Meeting as part of a Mid-term review of the Legal Aid Funding Agreement and contributed to discussions around service gaps, financial eligibility guidelines and the digitization of court services.

Collaboration on Joint Recruitment Drive

PBLA continued to collaborate with Calgary Legal Guidance, the Public Interest Law Clinic and Judith Hanebury, QC on a joint recruitment initiative to boost volunteer capacity to address anticipated increase in consumer debt matters.

Engaging with the Courts

PBLA participated in regular meetings with the Chief Justice of Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench and Members of the Civil Bar, bringing an access to justice voice to discussions, as needed. PBLA also engaged with Court Administration around resumption of in-person program supports.

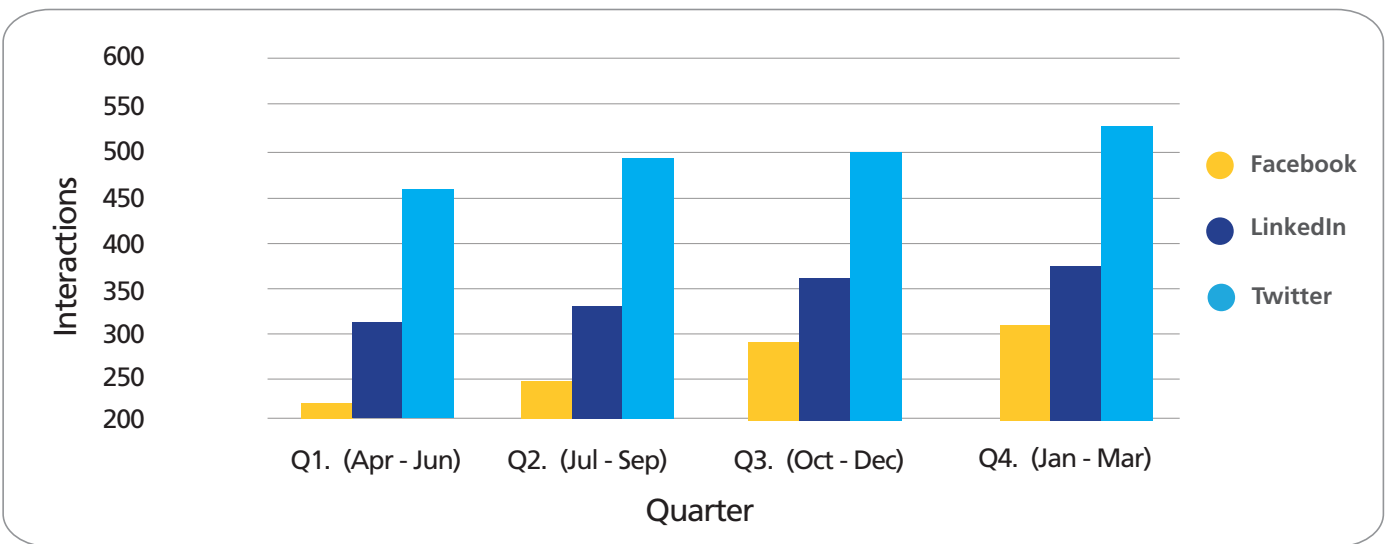
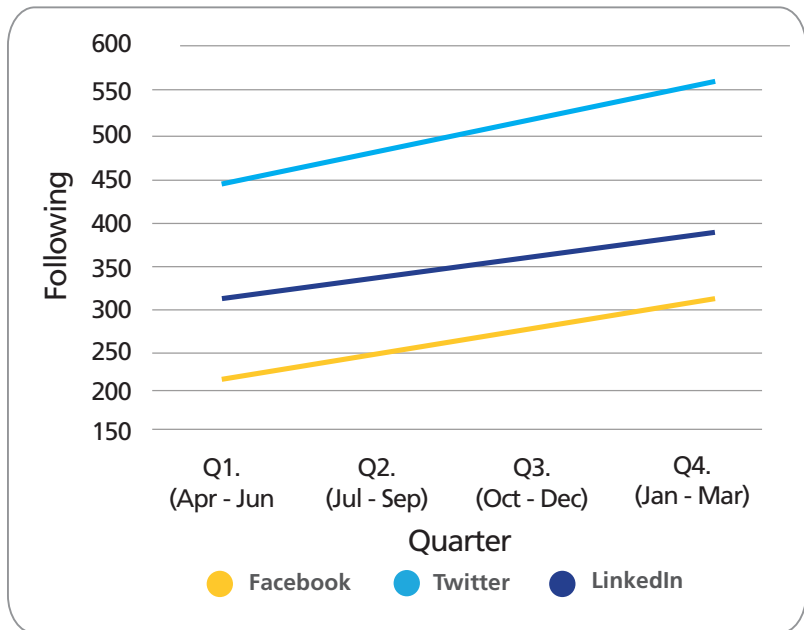
PROMOTING PRO BONO

Helping the Public Navigate Pro Bono Resources

PBLA receives a number of inquiries from the members of the public looking for pro bono assistance and provides informed referrals to available resources within the community. We fielded over 350 emails and 750 calls from the public during the 2021 - 2022 fiscal year.

Digital Engagement

PBLA continues to work on legal community engagement strategies, with a focus on promoting awareness and understanding of pro bono ethics, values, and opportunities. Since launching an official presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn in 2018, PBLA has seen consistent increase in digital followership and engagement from members of the legal profession and community. These platforms were deployed to complement existing vehicles of engagement - a longstanding vision made possible by in-house communications expertise.

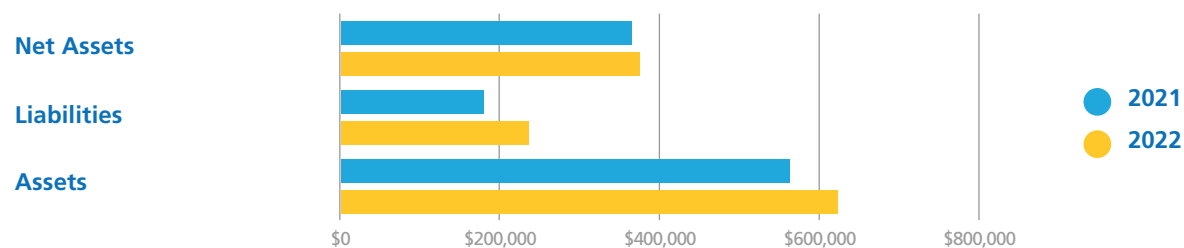


FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Financial Position

As of March 31, 2022

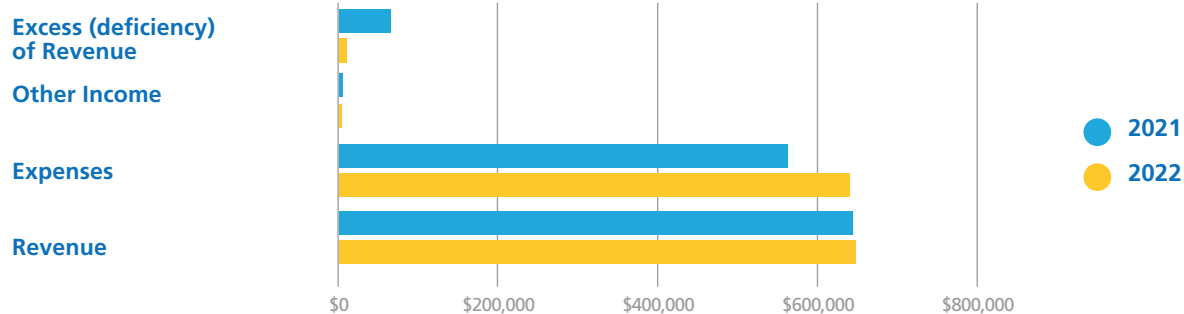
	2022	2021
Assets	\$604,544	\$561,088
Liabilities	\$216,466	\$186,298
Net Assets	\$388,078	\$374,790



Statement of Operations

For the year ending March 31, 2022

	2022	2021
Revenue	\$659,532	\$650,586
Expenses	\$647,426	\$580,117
Other Income	\$1,182	\$2,240
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$13,288	\$72,709



For a copy of PBLA's audited financial statements, email info@pbla.ca.

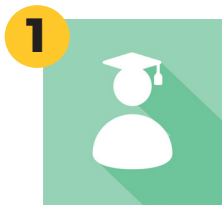
LOOKING TO THE **FUTURE**

Client Relationship Management (CRM)

PBLA is in the process of implementing a CRM system that will facilitate better volunteer management, client intake, communication, legal documentation, and reporting, thereby increasing supports for self-represented litigants, many of whom are low-income or vulnerable Albertans. The CRM System will offer key functionalities like Volunteer Management and Scheduling, Client Intake Management, Legal Document Management, including integration with e-signing application, video conference Integration, Evaluation, Report Generation, Communication/Collaboration (integration of chat, live support, etc.), Knowledge Management and Call Center Management.

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.

The CRM system will be delivered in four phases:



Volunteer Intake Management and Scheduling, Document Sharing and Management and Portal Development



Client Intake Management, Document Sharing and Management and Portal Development



Marketing Automation, Platform Integration, Knowledge Management, Collaboration and Communications and Reports and Dashboards



Integrations with Chatbot, Docusign, and hosted in Canada service

Based on current timelines, it is estimated that the deployment of Modules 1 – 3 of the CRM will be completed before the end of 2022, and that PBLA will operationalize and evaluate the impact of the system in the second half of the 2022-23 fiscal year.



PBLA Turns 15 in 2022

This year marks a major milestone for PBLA as we celebrate 15 years of promoting legal profession engagement in pro bono activities for the benefit of Albertans. We look forward to celebrating our major contributions to the pro bono sector. As an organization in its teenage years, our story is still being written and there is so much more to come.



Join Us in September 2022

National Pro Bono Conference

Co-hosted by:



This **September 21st - 23rd**, the National Pro Bono Conference is coming to Calgary with the theme, **Navigating Justice for the Future**. The pro bono sector has made significant gains over the past decade and overcome many challenges in the past two years. The 2022 National Pro Bono Conference will celebrate these gains, focus on sector challenges, and channel key learnings for future action in the areas of diversity, resourcing, collaboration and innovation.

With workshops and plenaries covering a broad range of subjects like fund development, wellness, artificial intelligence, indigenous legal services, to name a few; there is a session made for you. Additionally, The National Pro Bono Awards Banquet, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the Canadian pro bono sector will take place on **Thursday, September 22nd**.

We are bringing together over 200 pro bono and access to justice stakeholders from Canada and abroad, including legal service providers, members of the legal and paralegal professions, judges, academics, and representatives and staff from all levels of government and the courts.

Register now, at:

www.probonoconference.ca



 @probonoconference

 info@pbla.ca

 (403) 541-4804

 Hotel Arts
119 12 Ave SW
Calgary AB T2R 0G8

Thank You

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Vice President (Calgary)
- Pam Morrell
Treasurer (Calgary)
- Eleanor Carlson
Secretary (Calgary)
- Brett Anderson (Calgary)
- Robert (Bob) Philp, QC
(Edmonton)
- Marija Bicanic (Calgary)
- Judith Hanebury, QC (Calgary)
- J. Shay Vanderschaeghe (Red Deer)
- Kene Ilochonwu, QC
LSA Bencher Representative
(Calgary)
- Hsiu-Yan Chan (Calgary)
- Robert Neilson (Edmonton)
- Usman Mahmood (Calgary)
- Michael Marion, QC (Calgary)

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- 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, QC
- Honourable Allan H. Wachowich, QC
(Edmonton)
- Cheryl C. Gottselig, QC
(Calgary)
- Phyllis A. Smith, QC (Calgary)
- Bruce Churchill-Smith, QC

Staff

- Nonye Opara
Executive Director
- Alex Montiel, Director of
Projects and Engagement
- Marilou Stegmeier
Finance & Administrative
Coordinator
- Christian Ng
Program Coordinator
(Calgary)
- La Salette Encarnacion
VLS and Program
Coordinator (Edmonton)
- Jolisa Odagwe
Communications &
Development Coordinator
- Chad Erisman, Summer
Law Student (July -
November 2021)
- Femisola Aiyeleso,
Administrative
Assistant
(December 2021 -
February 2022)

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
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Palmer LLP
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Branch
- Dentons Canada LLP
- DLA Piper (Canada) LLP
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- Imperial Oil
- JSS Barristers LLP
- Legal Aid Alberta
- Legal Education Society of Alberta
- McAllister LLP
- McCarthy Tétrault LLP
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- Miller Thomson LLP
- MJM Barristers
- MLT Aikins LLP
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- Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt 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

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

Donors

- The Advocates' Society through Pro Bono Canada
- United Way of Greater Toronto - Brett Anderson
- United Way of Central Alberta - Lawyers vs Talent; A2J: Virtual Edition
- Benevity - Accenture Canada
- Benevity - Ed Ma
- CanadaHelps - Doug Yoshida
- CanadaHelps - Anonymous
- United Way of Calgary and Area - Anonymous

Funders



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