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**United Way**  
Northumberland

# THE HELP AND LEGAL CENTRE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

SEPTEMBER 2021

## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR BY BETH BELLAIRE

During the spring, summer, and fall of 2020, we not only kept our doors open during the pandemic, we also completed a comprehensive program evaluation that examined how we are regarded within the community by both our clients and our fellow service providers. We are still digesting the rich spread of information we have gleaned from this exercise, but I'd like to share some of the highlights of the client

feedback with you. It was no surprise to me that a full 98% of clients were either quite or very satisfied with our services and 94% felt that we had mostly or fully met their needs. Our staff were exceptionally well regarded: 99% of respondents indicated that staff treated them with respect and were open and honest with them, and 98% said staff responded in a timely manner. We had a large section of the survey dedicated to learning more about our clients' access to, use of,

and comfort level with technology. Again, it was no surprise that clients' preferred method of contact was either phone (54%) or in-person (45%). All clients indicated they had phones but less than 60% had a computer at home, and only a quarter had printers and fewer still had scanners. This points to the difficulty they have with such technological tasks

COVID on our delivery of support to them. More than half felt the pandemic had somewhat affected our ability to carry out our programs – not a surprising result, given their preference for in-person service. And yet, the vast majority indicated they would be very likely to recommend our services to a friend or family.

We, as a board, are using this detailed information in many ways.

In particular, we are looking at an increased focus on communications for next year. But one of our main take-aways is to



as downloading and completing forms at home or participating in online tribunals – and it underlines the need for us to continue to provide these services. We also asked our clients about the impact of

be so very proud of the work done by our staff and volunteers. They continue to go above and beyond to improve the lives of those most at risk, and for this, we are truly thankful.

## Legal Centre Report 2021 by Lois Cromarty

The pandemic created a year of challenges for Legal Centre clients and staff, like never before in our clinic's 30 year history.

Legal clinics were deemed an essential service during the pandemic so we remained open to serve clients. While the Province's directives on public health meant that our door was closed at times, we were physically in office, to answer the phone live and to deal with client emergencies. At the earliest opportunity in each of the Province's re-opening stages, we opened our doors to clients.

As predicted last year, the compounding effects of COVID-19 on our clients came about: thousands of dollars of overpayments, evictions, employment problems,

lost income, homelessness. These and other effects from pandemic such as the move to phone or video hearings had a greater impact on our clients. Clients sometimes had to wait on the phone for 6 hours to be heard in a Landlord and Tenant Board hearing, but without enough minutes on their phone to wait that long. Clients could have a videoconference hearing in which the adjudicator did not turn on their own camera, thus leaving the client talking to a blank screen. Video links were frequently dropped due to internet connectivity issues.

This and other pandemic effects stretched the grand belief in "equal access to justice for all" to the limit. Technology cannot replace the in-person service

that is required for low income persons and those with other barriers such as disability, literacy, language, rurality and connectivity. This is why the Legal Centre will continue to serve clients in person.

Despite all the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Legal Centre made a significant contribution to the wellbeing of our clients and our community last year. While the pandemic reduced the number of hearings, we closed 234 files last year resulting in \$1,408,175 in retroactive and ongoing payments to clients.

The pandemic continues to create barriers for our clients to achieve justice. New challenges are on the near horizon. We remain committed to make "equal access to justice for all" a reality.

## RentSmart & Landlord Liaison Program Mirri Lawrence,

It is hard to believe that another year has passed already since our last annual newsletter. 2020 has been a very hard year for everyone, especially for people that are looking for housing within Northumberland County. The pandemic has caused us to look at different outlets to provide services to clients, landlords, and community members. Most of our services have been provided through Zoom/Microsoft Meets, telephone calls, and emails. Recently, with the COVID restrictions receding, we have been able to provide some outreach services. With the real estate market thriving, some landlords have taken ad-

vantage of selling their investment properties. This has caused major issues for tenants that have been living in these units for many years, at rental amounts that they can afford. Now, these tenants are expected to find housing in a rental market where vacancies are very low, and also unaffordable for anyone that is on a fixed or limited income. The Landlord Liaison continues to work with local landlords within Northumberland County to gain access to the hidden rental market. This working relationship with local landlords allows our clients "first

access" to a rental before it has been advertised publicly. This strategy has been proven effective with housing 9 clients successfully through the Landlord Liaison Program this year.

The Landlord Liaison continues to be an active facilitator of RentSmart Northumberland. These sessions are offered throughout the County, free of charge for participants. Within the 2020-2021 year of this program, 12 participants completed the RentSmart Basic program, and 2 participants completed the RentSmart Certification program. All these participants had completed their programs virtually through Zoom

## An unprecedented year... Patricia Orantes, Executive Director, The Help

2020-2021 has been an unprecedented year for everybody in the community. While we didn't know how the year was going to unfold, The Help Centre continued to offer the programs and services, despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic. With tremendous effort, dedication, creativity and flexibility of our staff and volunteers, we have been able to consistently provide our programs and services remotely. Clients, stakeholders and community members are able to reach out to our staff, as well as to access our valuable programs and services by phone, email or video platforms.

During this uncertain time, The Help Centre has been also actively participating in vari-

ous working groups, committees and/or partner collaborations to ensure that our clients receive quality of services and their needs are being timely ad-

ressed. Innovation and transformation have been important concepts for The Help Centre throughout this year. The strength and resilience from our staff and volunteers has been exceptional while supporting our

clients during this ever-changing reality.

The invaluable financial support of our core funder Northumberland United Way (NUW) is the cornerstone for the growth and operation of this agency since 1986. NUW has also awarded us with additional financial support from their Community Resilience Fund, CAMECO Grant and the Emergency Community Support Fund I & II. The Reaching Home Project, Rural and Remote, as well as Northumberland County, Community and Social Services granted our agency with further funding to continue delivering our programs and services and provide financial relief to our clients. Thanks to all our funders and donors for your trust and continuous support.

### THC at a glance...

- 50 housing clients successfully housed
- 30 new seniors were assisted in our senior program
- 166 clients applied for OESP
- 152 clients were assisted with advocacy and grants for their electricity arrears
- 205 clients participated in our financial literacy program
- 8 new newcomers registered in our ESL class and the class was provided through the zoom platform
- 1,332 Income Tax returns prepared and brought back \$3,415,668 into the commu-

## Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policies in the Workplace By Sharee Bhaduri

The Ontario government recently issued a Directive, which will take effect on September 7, 2021, requiring certain health care and some covered organizations to implement and comply with a vaccination policy for their employees, staff, contractors, volunteers and students.

The policy will require proof of full vaccination status or regular antigen testing.

However, with no legislation in place for many other sectors, many are still concerned about their legal rights and

whether or not following their workplace policy could lead to job loss. There is legislation such as *The Ontario Human Rights Code*, which prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on grounds such as disability and religion. There is also a legal obligation for an employer to accommodate an employee up to the point of undue hardship. Having said that, employers are also required to maintain a safe workplace. With no legal decisions addressing the enforceability

of a mandatory vaccination policy this is challenging. However, based on the recent developments regarding health care settings it looks like it may depend on the type of workplace and the job duties of an employee. For more information on your rights as an employee please contact the Northumberland Community Legal Centre. We offer free and confidential legal advice.

## Housing Program Debbie Wood, Housing Support Worker

The last year has been trying on all levels for housing clients due to the pandemic. Through the year we have seen property values go up in our county due to more people moving from the city and being allowed to work from home. Leading landlords to sell their units and forcing many who have lived in these units for a number of years to find housing at double or triple the cost of what they have been paying in rent. We have also experienced landlords evicting people to move either themselves or family members into the units. Our county has been gradually through the years seen a shortage in affordable housing for low income and with the pan-

demic we are now in a housing crisis.

Since April THC has adapted to how meet with clients outdoors which is much appreciated by our clients. In the beginning of the pandemic we worked closely with all of our community partners to make sure the vulnerable were safe and had a roof over their head. This was made possible by having space made available at Cobourg Collegiate East High School, along with warming and cooling rooms being made available. If COVID-19 has taught me one thing it would be how amazing our community of agencies are.

We all love a good news story and mine came from housing a senior client who had been part

of the hidden homelessness in our county for 3 years and on top of that, the client qualified for the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit, thus allowing the client the opportunity to rent a safe place to call home.

Our clients are amazing and respectful of keeping us all safe when we meet by social distancing and wearing a mask. We all miss the face to face contact in our lives so we are grateful to get to spend time with our clients during these times. Our clients know that we are here to support them, whether it is helping them with housing, food support or just taking time to spend some time with them, whether it is on the phone or face to face. Our vulnerable in our community need us to be there for them more than ever.

### WSIB and COVID 19 Teresa Williams, CLW

As of August 23, 2021, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (“WSIB”) has received 29,432 claims related to workers contracting COVID-19. Of those, 2,160 have been denied. Not surprisingly, more than one third of claims are from employees working in nursing and residential care facilities and hospitals.

For a COVID-19 claim to be allowed at the WSIB, “evidence must show that the person’s risk of contracting the disease through their employment is greater than the risk to which the public at large is exposed and that work **significantly contributed**” to

the Claimant’s symptoms from COVID-19. This means that while more than 27,000 claims have been allowed, not everyone will have received a loss of earnings benefit, or health care benefits, etc. That will have been determined on a case-by-case basis by each case manager of a claim.

For claims that are not COVID-19-related, the WSIB says that “while COVID-19 has had an impact on a small number of claims, the pandemic has not had any systemic impact on return-to-work outcomes for non-COVID-19 claims.” It has been

brought to our attention that this may mean that during a provincial lock-down, injured workers may face cancellation of benefits if they are unable to comply with return to work obligations because of the global pandemic. The WSIB goes on to say that their “approach to return-to-work claims management during the pandemic has been no different than before.”

As of August 30, 2021 we are not aware of any decisions made by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (“WSIAT”) that are related to COVID-19 claims or related to return to work obligations during any pandemic-related restrictions.

## Digital First Approach Denies Vulnerable Tenants Justice by Sarah Cooling, Lawyer

The “digital-first” approach to LTB hearings where all hearings are now conducted over the computer via Zoom or on the telephone makes it more difficult for low-income tenants facing technological hurdles to stay housed.

Many Tenants do not have a computer, they may not have internet access that is reliable, they are often not technologically knowledgeable, they have phones that require pay as you go minutes or have limited data plans. As such this approach which has now become the standard for hearings is also creating extra expenses for resource-strapped legal clinics in trying to provide tech support and hardware for tenants on top of legal services.

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants

Ontario (ACTO) has indicated that the digital first approach has “seriously compromised access to justice for low-income tenants,” including those with mental health issues, language barriers and limited literacy.

“In-person hearings must be the default, with digital hearings an option where appropriate,” the report stated.

The Landlord and Tenant Board was created to enhance access to justice and the digital strategy has resulted in a clear disconnect from this mandate. The entire process has been digitalized including document submission and evidence and many Tenants have no access or lack the ability to effectively advocate for themselves in this

digital climate.

This has been particularly difficult for rural clients where internet is spotty and access is difficult. Those without internet access or telephones “may be accommodated” with terminals at Hamilton, London, Ottawa and Toronto LTB centres to take part in hearings. However there is no access for Tenants outside those urban centres, resulting in what Tribunal Watch Ontario called a “restricted and discretionary access”.

The Legal Centre continues to assist Tenants with their electronic hearings in addition to providing Tenant Duty Counsel Services virtually.

## Senior Service Help Program by Krysta Southwell, Senior Service Worker

It has been well over a year now that the pandemic has begun and even with the vaccine rollout a clear end is nowhere in sight. Throughout this trying time the Senior Service Help program has been there to assist low-income seniors through it all. From providing, phone call wellness checks, grocery shopping supports and booking COVID-19 vaccinations for seniors who do not have access to technology. The low-income older adult population has been one of the most impacted demographics

during the pandemic. Access to resources were limited unless seniors had access to technology. Older adults’ overall well-being has declined as their physical, emotional, social and psychological needs were compromised by the lack of community resources. This program has been working to counterbalance those impacts by getting seniors connected to accessible resources and providing socialization. Northumberland County is already experiencing the drastic outcome the pandemic has caused financially. Rental units have skyrocketed making it unaffordable for seniors on a fixed

pension to find somewhere to live that is sustainable and accessible. The cost of food has increased due to supply and demand. The Help Centre received a grant during the winter to purchase grocery gift cards to help with food insecurity with seniors. The gift cards were extremely helpful as older adults were able to afford nutritional foods that they normally would not be able to afford on a monthly basis. Overall, this program continues to grow with its challenges to better support the senior population of Northumberland County.

## English as a Second Language Program by Sarah Forrest, English as a Second Language Facilitator

In normal circumstances learning a new language, a new culture, and a new way of life is challenging; add in a global pandemic and more often the difficulties feel insurmountable. As this past year commenced The Help Centre's ESL program took the learners and the volunteer tutors on a journey that reinforced community and learning together, while continually finding new ways to adapt to the ever-changing COVID-19 landscape.

We spent the majority of the year on Zoom learning everyday vocabulary, English grammar, practicing conversation,

and about Canada's geography, history, and culture. Unfortunately, not being in person, our out-of-class activities were limited so we became immersed in various web-based platforms that offered interactive learning leading to thoughtful and engaging questions and conversations.

This summer, we were able to meet in person again and started by having classes in Victoria Park. By the end of July, and well over a year since we left our classroom, we returned to Trinity United Church. This was a momentous occasion for everyone to finally be back in the space where they could sense and receive English directly.

Delightfully over the past year, and despite the limitations, we have seen the learners continue to build and gain skills that have helped them to pursue employment, start businesses, engage in with their neighbours, manage the altering circumstances the virus devised, all the while continually moving forward to forging a resilient life in Northumberland County. Our learners come from all over the world with abilities, knowledge, and heart to participate in their new country that shines through with determination to keep learning despite the obstacles.

## Extension of Federal Covid-19 Benefits by Dawood Nasir, Lawyer

The Federal government has announced that programs which were introduced to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic will be extended until

**October 23, 2021.**

These measures were initially supposed to come to an end in September 2021.

The three benefits currently available are the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB).

The CRB is available to workers who are not employed or

self-employed for reasons related to Covid-19 or have had their income reduced by at least 50 percent due to Covid-19. This benefit only applies to individuals who are not eligible for Employment Insurance. The amount paid depends on why the application for CRB was made.

The CRSB provides \$500 per week for up to a maximum of four weeks for workers who are not able to work for at least 50 percent of the week because they contracted Covid-19, are self-isolating for reasons related to Covid-19 or are more susceptible to Covid-19.

The CRCB provides \$500 for up

to 42 weeks per household for workers who are unable to work at least 50 percent of the week because they have to care for a child under 12, or other family member because schools, day-cares or care facilities are closed due to Covid-19, or because the child/family member is sick and/or required to quarantine or is at high risk of serious health implications because of Covid-19.

Contact us if you have any questions about federal benefits. Our phone number is 905-373-4464 or toll-free at 1-800-850-7882.

## Changes to OW And ODSP by Peter Vance, CLW

Doug Ford's government unveiled proposed changes earlier this year to the way that social services will be delivered in Ontario. The changes were outlined by the province in a February 2021 document entitled "Recovery & Renewal: Ontario's Vision for Social Assistance Transformation". While much of the document is focused on the provincial government's plan to shift the administration of social services over a period of several years, the document also included important changes to Ontario Works (OW) employment assistance.

The Ford government plans to replace the current "employment assistance" program under OW with a new "employment and life stabilization assistance" program, which the government says will involve "prescribed assistance to help a person to become and stay employed". It is unclear, however, what the government means by "prescribed assistance" and there is concern amongst OW recipients that the change may result in more hoops for recipients to jump through in order to receive their benefits. Other proposed changes to social assistance include a change

to the way in which overpayments are defined. The Ford government has implemented changes that will allow those overpayments to be deemed as Crown debts, which means that they will be debts owed directly to the Province of Ontario, and will therefore be collectible through the Canada Revenue Agency.

A final change of note is that the Ford government has amended the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act* by repealing the sections of that piece of law that prevented disabled Ontarians from accessing ODSP benefits as people experiencing of substance addiction. Those sections were found to violate the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and were, therefore, not enforceable.

**The Northumberland Community Legal Centre invites you to:**

### **The Annual Justice Forum**

**Date: Thursday, October 21, 2021**

**Time: 1:00 PM-4:00 PM**

**Location: Zoom**

**Northumberland Legal Centre is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.**

**Topic: The Northumberland Community Legal Centre's Annual Justice Forum**

**Time: Oct 21, 2021 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89533196392?pwd=NFIXNmJCeWtoZEgxUk9VRUtONWN6UT09>**

**Meeting ID: 895 3319 6392**

**Passcode: 486554**

**Topic: POVERTY LAW & INEQUALITY FOR LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS DURING CHALLENGING TIMES**

**Please join us on Thursday, October 21, 2021 for this Public Legal education session and discussion regarding poverty law and inequality amongst low-income individuals and the effects of COVID-19.**

## Energy Assistance and Money Management Programs, Karin Cummings, Senior Program Coordinator

We all recognize that 2020/21 was an exceptional year with lock downs, shut downs and many losing their livelihoods to no fault of their own. Recognizing that Canadians needed help in this time of need, many new Federal and Provincial assistance programs became available and The Help Centre was a connection to many of these programs. Those that found themselves at home or working from home, and with reductions or loss of income, saw their electricity and heating needs increase resulting in high arrears. Families struggled to pay for these necessities but were able to keep their lights on and heat flowing by accessing Provincial programs such as the COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program – (CEAP), a temporary measure to support energy customers

through pandemic lockdowns. Help was also accessed through the Low-income Energy Assistance Program – (LEAP). As the need for help increased, a Thank you goes to Lakefront Utility Services Inc. for the additional LEAP funds that were made available.

These funds helped more families in our community stay safely housed. Reviewing the family's financial health is part of the application processes and with government supports winding down for some and work still not up to what it was prior to the pandemic, some are just not able to make ends meet. Spending time reviewing their spending patterns and helping to create and follow a working budget is sometimes all that is needed to make it work. These services are available to anyone that wants to take better control of their money or are facing

changes in income or family structure.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges to assisting our clients as we are not spending the face to face time that we would like, to personally access and address their needs. New processes were created and through fax, email, phone and picture sharing, most energy and money related issues have continued to be addressed throughout the pandemic. In the 2020/21 fiscal year, through energy assistance, money management sessions and other applications for financial assistance, we were able to offer 865 individual services to community members, helping them to successfully manage their money and their households.

## Migrant Workers in Northumberland County by Sharee Bhaduri, Lawyer

As of August, 2021, there are approximately 93 workers in the Northumberland County region, spanning as far east as Brighton to the west in Wesleyville and Osaca, and as far north as Garden Hill. The majority live in Colborne and Port Hope, working on vegetable and apple farms. As per usual, migrant workers in the Northumberland County region hail from Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Almost all the migrant workers in the region flow into Northumberland County via the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) on three-six month placements.



The Legal Centre in partnership with Horizons of Friendship continue to facilitate and deliver legal services to migrant farmworkers across Northumberland County.

This partnership has been intact for almost

10 years. Due to the pandemic, we have had to recently move to a virtual and telecommunications

format offering legal supports to workers in the region. This includes assistance with Canadian Pension Plan applications and worker rights. This year we have assisted a few workers with issues relating to workplace reprisals and have also assisted with human rights issues. In addition, the Legal Centre continues to work with organizations like the Migrant Rights Network in advocating for migrant workers across the country in working for justice. This includes, but is not limited to ensuring access to vaccines, income support, decent work laws etc.

## Rental Housing Crisis and Bad-Faith Evictions by Dawood Nasir, Lawyer

As many of you know, there is a crisis happening throughout Ontario: the severe lack of affordable rental housing. This is not a new development, but the problem has become more severe in recent years, and has only become worse with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Northumberland is no exception. The Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC) recently reported that the average market rent in Northumberland is more expensive than surrounding com-

munities like Peterborough and Hastings County, and vacancy rates remain low with virtually no new primary market rent units built since 2016.

How low is that vacancy rate exactly? Based on available data, the NCHC estimated that it was approximately 1.3% in 2020. For the same period, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimated that the vacancy rate for all of Ontario was 3.2%. Those numbers make it clear: the rental housing crisis is hitting Northumberland harder,

on average, than the rest of Ontario. Landlords in Ontario are allowed to seek evictions for tenants when the owner requires the unit for their own use (or a qualifying family member's use) or when they need to do major repairs or renovations that require vacant possession of the unit.

There is a process that landlords have to follow, and protections for tenants throughout that process. In many cases, though, landlords choose to ignore that process, or make up a false reason as a pretext for removing a tenant, without actually moving in or following through on the renovation/repair.

## Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act take effect September 1, by Sarah Cooling, Lawyer

### Landlord claims against former tenants

Previously, the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) could only consider an application made by the landlord claiming rent arrears or compensation if the tenant was still living in the rental unit when the application was filed. Claims made after the tenant moved out had to be made at Ontario Small Claims Court.

As a result of the amendments to the RTA, a landlord can now file an application claiming rent arrears or compensation up to one year after the date the tenant moved out. The tenant must have moved out of the rental unit on or after September 1, 2021. The landlord can ask for any of the following in the application filed against a former tenant:

1. Rent arrears and/or compensation for the use of the rental unit. s.87(1) & s.87(3)
2. NSF cheque charges. s.87(5)
3. Compensation for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses a landlord has incurred as a result of conduct

by the former tenant, their guests or occupants that has substantially interfered with the landlord's reasonable enjoyment or another lawful right, privilege or interest of the landlord. The landlord must prove that they incurred the expense as a result of the former tenant's conduct. s.88.1

4. Compensation for expenses the landlord has incurred as a result of the former tenant's failure to pay utilities. s. 88.2  
Compensation to replace or repair undue damage caused by a former tenant, guest or occupant. s. 89(1)

### Tenant claims against landlords

1. Tenants filing a T5 application claiming that the landlord served a N12 notice (for own use/purchaser's own use) in bad faith and failed to move into the unit after the tenant vacated, can claim compensation equivalent to as much as 12 months' rent. This is in addition to the remedies a ten-

ant could seek previously. s.57(3)

2. Tenants filing a T5 application claiming that the landlord served an N13 notice (for demolition/conversion/renovation) in bad faith and failed to demolish or renovate after the tenant vacated, can claim compensation equivalent to as much as 12 months' rent. If a tenancy is terminated because the landlord intends to do major repairs (N13 notice), the tenant has the right to move back when the repairs are completed if they have given the landlord written notice. If the landlord does not allow the tenant to move back in, the tenant can file a T5 application up to 2 years after they moved out. Previously, the tenant only had 1 year to file the application. s. 57.1(2)

### Landlord claims against tenants

A landlord can now claim for compensation for expenses they have incurred as a result of the tenant's failure to pay utilities. Before September 1, 2021, unpaid utility claims had to be made at Small Claims Court. s. 88.2

## Employment Law Update: by Sharee Bhaduri, Lawyer

### New Temporary Paid Sick Leave Program in Ontario

Many employees in *Northumberland County* as a result of the pandemic, relied on job protected leaves. For many, this was due to their employer temporarily closing the business, wage reductions, and or reduced hours amongst many other barriers including contracting COVID-19. In order to assist vulnerable employees, Ontario implemented amendments to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (“ESA”), which now provides employees with up to three days of paid leave. This allows for employers to receive reimbursement for three days of paid leave given to employees. This job protected leave is for any period between April 19, 2021 and September 25, 2021. Employees are able to take this leave if they are going for a COVID-19 test and staying

home to await results, diagnosis of COVID-19, obtaining COVID-19 vaccines and or to recover from Vaccine side effects amongst other reasons. The paid sick leave benefit amounts to a maximum of \$200 per day. Employees do not have to provide a medical certificate to access the paid sick leave. Employees who are sick for longer than three days can apply for the Federal program, the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. This program provides up to \$500 for one week of additional coverage. If the situation is ongoing for longer than one week, the employee can apply again for coverage.

### Employment Insurance Benefits and Severance Package

During this difficult time for those precariously employed, we are also seeing a huge increase in employees being terminated. We have assisted many employees with severance package negotiations and access to Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. In order to assist employees with

income maintenance, the rules have been temporarily changed in Canada to allow employees to access EI benefits even when they receive a severance package. Prior to this, an employee was not able to receive EI benefits while receiving their severance/termination pay entitlements referred to as “double dipping”. Previously this may have resulted in an overpayment and an employee may have had to pay their EI benefits back to Service Canada. However, this temporary change by the Federal government has assisted some of our clients especially those who plan to retire to have some financial security as they cope with the pandemic. This will remain in effect until September 25, 2021. Please ensure you get independent legal advice prior to accepting any package/settlement from your employer.

## SHAPE By Marisa Conlin, Community Legal Worker

The Legal Centre is leading a project of 20 community legal clinics to provide public legal education and advice related to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. Our new campaign name is SHAPE which stands for Sexual Harassment Advice Prevention and Education. Please follow us on social media to access the campaign content. We will be

launching a new website for this project in the near future. The goal with this project is to prevent and address sexual harassment at work by providing information and resources to employers and workers about their rights and responsibilities. We provide free, confidential legal advice to workers who are or have been sexually harassed. We are also working on a secondary project about sexual har-

assment of workers in non-traditional fields, for instance women working in construction. We offer a variety of training opportunities including workshops for employers about harassment policies, procedures and training obligations, bystander training and sessions for workers in provincially or federally regulated workplaces. Please contact us at 905-373-4464 if you would like a workshop for your group.

## The Indian Day School Claims Deadline is July 13, 2022

Telling your personal story takes time.

**Claimants have until July 13, 2022, to submit their Claim Form.**



It can take time to write your story. Claimants have until July 13, 2022, to submit a claim. Please take the time you need to prepare a thoughtful and complete Claim Form. The Northumberland Community Legal Centre can assist. Call us to schedule an appointment at (905) 373-4464 or 1-800-850-7882.

This document contains a list of Mental Health Support service providers by province: <https://bit.ly/3qB1S3v>

### Facing The Truth About Residential School by Lois Cromarty, ED

Many non-Indigenous Canadians were shocked, angered and dismayed by the reports of mass unmarked graves of 215 Indigenous children in Kamloops followed by news of graves at other residential schools across the country. (The number of graves recently surpassed 6,509 children)

The ground-penetrating radar used at Kamloops only documented what was already known. It offered tangible evidence of the devastating effect of institutional racism and genocide. The survivors of residential schools across publicly shared their memories and the traumas of residential schools before this year. The proof graves should not have been needed for the rest of the country

to be shocked and outraged.

Survivors spoke this truth formally to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the abuse suffered and of children going missing from those institutions. The residential schools took more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children between the 1870s and 1990s. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 2015 report estimated that the number of children who died while attending residential schools could be 6,000 or higher.

Many in Northumberland may not realize that the residential school system and its horrible legacy existed here. The Alderville Manual Labour School was established in 1839

by Wesleyan Methodist missionaries to assimilate children into the Euro-Canadian society and to eradicate the traditional Indigenous way of life. Each of us must educate ourselves about the steps we need to take on the journey to reconciliation, such as taking action to get the TRC Calls to Action implemented by both the provincial and federal governments.

We mourn for the children who died and for those who were harmed at the residential schools, and we grieve with their families and communities. May their memory continue to fuel each of us in our collective and individual actions toward reconciliation.



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Fax: 905-373-4467



**The Help Centre**  
(A Proud United Way  
Member Agency)  
Tel: 905-372-2646  
1-888-698-3382  
Fax: 905-372-2205

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