

**COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF OTTAWA/  
SERVICES JURIDIQUES COMMUNAUTAIRES D'OTTAWA**

Minutes of the September 24, 2024,  
Annual General Meeting

Richelieu-Vanier Community Centre  
300 Des Pères-Blancs Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K1L 7L5

The AGM began at 5:00 p.m. The business meeting started at 7:15 p.m.

**Present:** Fahd Alhalak, Safaa Habach, Denis Choiniere, David Choiniere, Laurie Joe, Kaylie Chow, Clarisse Titus, Dionlalté Djedouboum, Michèle Biss, Jenny Gullen, Fatima Gimba, Alice Green, Yuriy Hillyer, Sonya Howard, Lili-Anne Kondo, Blanca Lopez de Brizuela, Roya Ghafari, Joseph Holder, Bibi Mohamed, Michael Oliver, Justin Nesbitt, Gary Stein, Anne Joyce, Andy Joyce, Aliciadeea Le Roc, Linda Martineau, Vasu Naik, Greg Newsham, Rawa Oudah, Morris Rothman, Sonya Howard, Michael St. Arnaud, Chantal Tie, Nezahat Turegun, Sarah Sproule, Nadine Edirmanasinghe, Racquel Scott-Tolson, Charles Ng, Laila Demirdache, Suzanne Larose, Angela Mooney, Rigel van der Vliet, Dawn Pennington, Isabelle Martel, Christelle Azzi, Stéfanie Morris, Sylvia Chapman, Alana Weekes, Elena Monterrosa, Vicky Watson, Nadine Atkinson (BDO Canada LLP), Kaite Burkholder-Harris (Executive Director, Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa / guest speaker).

**Regrets:** Dominique Conway, Julie Dodwell, Laura MacLean, Michael Perseo, Reem Chansedine

**The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson at 6 p.m. and was declared to be regularly constituted. Alice Green was Secretary for this meeting.**

**Before the business meeting:**

5:00 p.m. AGM Begins

- **Introductions:** Michele Biss, CLSO's Board President, welcomed everyone including guests from our community partners and LAO. Laurie Joe, CLSO staff member did territorial acknowledgement.
- **Presentation of Guest Speaker:** Kaite Burkholder Harris from Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa
  - CLSO is a member of the Alliance to End Homelessness. Harris thanked CLSO staff and board for providing assistance.
  - The Alliance predominantly works with the City of Ottawa. Harris noted that up to 3,000 people sleep in homeless shelters each night.
  - There has been a 213 per cent increase in the number of homeless people in the last couple of years.

- Harris traced the homelessness problem to the 1980s when bad policy decisions were made. The problem has been 40-50 years in the making.
  - There is not enough non-profit supply of housing, we lose 31 affordable housing units for every new one built.
  - CLSO's role of stopping evictions is key in helping many vulnerable people.
  - People earning between 51,500 and 82,000 can only afford \$1,280-2,060 for rent.
  - The Alliance is trying to slow down the number of people falling into homelessness.
  - On the building side, provincial developers cannot build at the price point, the government needs to support non-profit housing.
  - Many of the homeless young people on the streets are former wards of the Children's Aid
  - The effort to end homelessness is possible. Harris pointed out success stories in Edmonton used a system wide approach and had a 43 per cent reduction in homelessness. Medicine Hat declared an end to homelessness and Waterloo has seen a reduction. Finland has ended homelessness by investing in non-profits.
  - We need a System change and coordination, and to Scale up Non Profit Housing.
  - Clarisse, on behalf of CLSO, gave a donation to the Alliance.
- **Presentations for departing Board members:** Michèle invited Clarisse Titus and Gary Stein to do tribute for Fatima Gimba and Vasu Naik respectively.
    - Clarisse expressed gratitude to Fatima for all her hard work, her passion for social justice and anti-racism, her advocacy work, and community development work. Over the course of three years Fatima brought great insight to the CLSO Board. Fatima worked with Capital Rainbow. Clarisse presented Fatima with flowers.
    - Gary Stein pointed out that Vasu was on the board for twelve years and contributed in every way possible. She had the knack of delving into spreadsheets to ensure pay equity. In her professional life, she has provided legal advice to indigenous people, women's shelters, and the John Howard Society. He thanked her for her insights and clarity of thought. Clarisse presented Vasu with a gift on behalf of CLSO.
- **Presentations to Staff Members for Anniversaries of Service:** Presentations held for Laurie Joe celebrating 30 years of service and retiring this year. Tribute by Chantal Tai, Anne Joyce and poem by Jenny Gullen.
    - Chantal Tai, a long-time friend and work colleague of Laurie's talked about how they started together in 1983 working for the NGO Carrefour. They have known each other for 43 years, and worked together for the Annual Immigration Conferences. Chantal said that Laurie played an important role in litigation to do with women and immigrants. French content and services were important to her and she was always welcoming of new staff.
    - Anne Joyce, a social worker who works with immigrants and refugees, who knows Laurie well, gave tribute by saying that Laurie was a link for her to connect with the immigrant community. The community felt Laurie understood what it is like to come to Canada and was the person to reach out to if there was a problem. She could explain in layman's terms complex legal situations to immigrants. She was an excellent advocate and the community loves her.

## 7:00 p.m. Business Meeting

The business meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM, it was a properly constituted meeting with 2 proxies. There were 52 attendees.

1. **Approval of the Agenda:** Motion to Approve the September 24, 2024 agenda. *Moved by, Vasu Naik seconded by Alice Green, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).
2. **Approval of Minutes of October 16, 2023, Annual General Meeting:** Motion to accept the October 16, 2023, Annual General Meeting minutes. *Moved by Michèle Biss, seconded by Justin Nesbitt, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).
3. **President's Annual Report:**
  - Michèle talked about the development of the Strategic Plan and the survey that was carried out by Deloitte to support and assist CLSO to have a roadmap of initiatives.
  - The goal of CLSO is to be exemplary in its services.
  - Strategic Outcomes include improved quality, enhanced impact, a well-supported and well-equipped office staff, strengthened integration and coordination, and increased diversified funding and resources.
  - Michèle acknowledged the committee that has worked on the wellness survey. She also noted that advocacy work has included letters for alliance to end homelessness and migrant rights action.
4. **Review of March 31, 2024, Audited Financial Statements :** Nadine Atkinson from the audit firm BDO which conducted the Audit for the 2023-2024 fiscal year reported that the audit came out clean with no reservations and no concerns. All was in accordance with accounting standards. Motion to Approve the March 31, 2024, Audited Financial Statements. *Moved Laila, seconded by Morris, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).
5. **Treasurer's Report:** Justin Nesbitt read report. Review until July 2024 (4 months). Justin reported that as of July 31, 2024 there was a \$5,000 surplus and that revenues were on track, with the balance sheet being in a good position.
6. **Appointment of Auditor for 2024 - 2025 fiscal year:** Justin advised that RFP was conducted earlier this year and the Board opted to approve a submission from Truster, Zweig, Raithatha. Justin thanked BDO on behalf of the Board for the great services rendered over many years. Motion to appoint Truster, Zweig, Raithatha (TZR) as auditors for 2025-2024 fiscal year. *Moved by Justin Nesbitt, seconded by Fatima Gimba, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).

**7. Executive Director's Report:**

- Clarisse expressed thanks to the committee that arranged the AGM, as well as the the staff management team, the wellness committee, and Michèle.
- Clarisse reported that in an effort to standardize services across the three locations the CLSO has moved to integrate services by having one calendar and one number to reach all three locations.
- Caseload numbers continue to increase with 200 more cases than what they had this time last year. In terms of retained cases the percentages are the same as last year. The number of cases that have closed satisfactorily is 75 per cent, 6 per cent mostly satisfied, to make a total of 81 per cent satisfied.
- The Refugee Portal Project from Connecting Ottawa which has assisted refugees who needed help navigating the government online portal was successful.

**8. Election / Acclamation: 2024 - 2025 Board of Director:** 4 open positions.

Community Member positions: Alice Green and Justin Nesbitt were nominated for another term on the Board.

- *Motion to acclaim Alice Green to the Board of Directors moved by Vasu, seconded by Jenny, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).
- *Motion to acclaim Justin Nesbitt to the Board of Directors moved Michèle, seconded by Fatima, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).

Staff position: Esther Dionne-Desbiens nominated for a 1 year term on the Board as the staff representative. *Motion to acclaim Esther Dionne-Desbiens to the Board of Directors Moved by Kylie, seconded by Vicki, motion carried.* (Opposed - none, abstentions – none).

**9. Other business:** None

**10. Adjournment:** Motion to Adjourn the September 24, 2024, AGM. *Moved by Michael, Motion Carried.*