



word of mouth. That relies upon our local presence and the connection to the community that is assisted through community board members.

Through our own example, we see the need for local presence and local connection through board members. We serve two rural counties but have only one main office located in Elgin County. We have a satellite office in Woodstock, the county seat for Oxford County. Both counties are similar in size and demographics, but we always serve more clients in Elgin than in Oxford. That is because we do not have an office staffed full time in Oxford County. It is clear that the connection of our board members to the community in Oxford County makes a significant difference in trying to keep our clinic on the radar of Oxford county agencies and individuals. If we did not have that, our ability to serve the low-income population in Oxford County would be severely hampered.

It is therefore clear to us that if clinics lost their local connections and local governance structure, the ability to adequately serve the low-income population in our rural areas would be significantly undermined.

3. In our opinion, specialty clinics and law reform are important for what we do on behalf of low-income residents. Through their ability to address systemic issues, there is the opportunity to make beneficial change that would not occur through individual representation. This is not only of benefit to the individuals who don't access our services, but also improves the effectiveness of the clinics to deliver services. We struggle to keep up with the demand for services that comes through our doors. We know that some clinics have to significantly restrict who they can assist due to volume. Some issues are systemic, resulting in the same problem arising over and over again. This can't be changed through individual representation but only by addressing the collective problem. The collective problem can only be addressed through law reform. If such systemic changes are made, it can free up some resources to then address other issues facing clients, as there are always other issues. This is a more effective way to address some of the legal problems of the low-income population.
4. It should be clear that there is very little waste of taxpayers' money in the legal clinic system. The cost per client for legal services in any other part of the justice system is no doubt higher. The clinic system has never been well funded, and only over the past several years has come anywhere close to having adequate funding. It is difficult to entice young lawyers to the system due to inadequate compensation. We will face difficulties over the next several years as those "boomers" who have been part of the clinics system, sometimes for decades as in the example of our Executive Director, begin to retire from a system that will not attract skilled younger lawyers. At the end of the day, it will be the low-income population who will suffer due to inadequate funding of the system.

We ask that you consider these additional points to what the ACLCO has submitted as you consider the modernization of Legal Aid in Ontario.

Yours truly,  
ELGIN-OXFORD LEGAL CLINIC

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Barrister & Solicitor  
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