

Committee Hearing on Bill 161
Deputation from the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion

The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion is an organization with a mandate to build an inclusive city. Over the years our organization has witnessed full hand the many barriers that racialized communities and other disadvantaged communities face (low income, individuals living with (in)visible disabilities). One of the many barriers, is access to justice. In Hamilton, the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic has represented and (or) worked with residents to ensure their right to justice.

As per the recommended change to the LASA, we are concerned that by changing the core mandate of Legal Aid Ontario from “promoting access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals” to “facilitating the establishment of a flexible and sustainable legal aid system that provides effective and high quality legal aid services,” will curtail and in some cases leave racialized and other disadvantages communities without any path and recourse to justice.¹

On the issue of housing, Hamilton continues to have an increasing problem with harassment and threats, illegal charges or rent increases collected by landlords and landlord’s failure to accommodate disability related needs.² Our organization sends on average 10 referrals to the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic on a monthly basis. Most of the referrals are particular in nature and the language of flexible and sustainable legal aid does not speak to the specific attention needed to provide legal services for communities living on the margins.

Our last issue involves a more inclusive approach of asking stakeholders that use the services of Legal Clinics across Ontario to inform the changes to LASA 2019. It is our estimation that not enough consultation has taken place. Until then we are asking that this committee reject Schedules 15 and 16 and connect with people, organizations, and stakeholders that work with and receive services from Legal Clinics across Ontario.

Sincerely
Kojo Dampitey



¹ Neither Smarter nor Stronger: Bill 161 is a Step Backwards for Access to Justice and Community-Based Legal Services in Ontario. <https://www.osgoode.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bill-161-Brief-March-6-1.pdf>

² Housing Rights. <https://hamiltonjustice.ca/en/services/housing-rights/>