

The Human Rights  
Legal Support Centre's

**2023-2024**

**ANNUAL**

**REPORT**

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HRISC | Human Rights Legal Support Centre

CAJDP | Centre d'assistance juridique  
en matière de droits de la personne

Ontario 

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# Land Acknowledgement

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The Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC) provides services throughout Ontario and has lawyers located in Toronto, Guelph, Hamilton, London, Thunder Bay, and Windsor. Accordingly, we acknowledge our presence on the traditional territories of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabeg, Attawandaron and Leni-Lunaape, the Métis homeland and particularly the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The place now called Ontario is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and operate in this land.

The HRLSC also recognizes and acknowledges that we are in the territory subject to the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishinaabeg and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the land and waters of the Great Lakes region.

# 1. Messages from our Executive

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## Message from our Chair

The HRLSC achieved several human rights successes and confronted a major obstacle in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Like many public institutions in recent times, the HRLSC suffered a cybersecurity incident in October that temporarily suspended our services. For an organization such as ours, that is dedicated to promoting the public interest, these digital challenges can be so demoralizing, yet the HRLSC's staff persevered to actively tackle human rights concerns across Ontario.

Whether pressing forward with the daily work of supporting callers from the intake stage to early resolutions, or settlements and wins on cases before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), the HRLSC remained committed to its mandate of supporting rights-seeking individuals in Ontario. From engagement with organizations and stakeholders throughout the province, to victories in the Ontario Courts, in 2023-2024 the HRLSC team continued to exemplify that we are human rights leaders championing equity in multiple arenas.

In the realm of HRTO decisions, the HRLSC provided effective legal representation for cases that engaged with numerous human rights issues of public importance in Ontario.

Year after year, disability remains the most cited ground revealing that removing accessibility barriers, failure to accommodate and negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are chronic problems in the province. In the case of *Robinson-Cooke v. Ontario (Community and Social Services)*, 2023 HRTO 1133, the HRLSC client applied for a provincial Guide Dog Benefit to cover the costs of maintaining her trained service dog. The HRTO found that the HRLSC's client was discriminatorily denied the funding because her service dog was not trained by a specific accredited facility due to the client's particular disability-related needs.

Eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace is one of the permeations of gender-based violence that people across Ontario are committed to fighting. In the case of *Kreps v. AHMIC Maintenance & Storage Ltd.*, 2024 HRTO 214, the HRLSC's client, a young summer employee, was subjected to unwanted sexual comments, advances and physical contact by the owner of the business. The HRTO noted that "the fact that the most heinous incident occurred while the applicant was alone with the respondent in an isolated area is a serious aggravating factor."

Regrettably, escalating xenophobia permeating Canadian society is evidenced too in the mounting hostility seen towards newcomers, international students and temporary foreign workers. In *A.A. v. Vilma Canizalez*, 2023 HRTO 1353, the HRLSC's client, the father and litigation guardian of a child, was told to "go back to your country" by the child's teacher. The HRTO considered the fact that the child had to be moved to a new school and that the client was forced to deal with the police because of the discriminatory incident as traumatizing factors.

Along with these notable HRTO decisions, the HRLSC provided legal representation for cases being heard by the Ontario Courts which held provincial and national implications for the realm of human rights and beyond. The HRLSC continued its work to successfully assert the jurisdiction of the *Human Rights Code* for unionized employees in the case of *London District Catholic School Board v. Weilgosh*, 2024 CanLII 20606 (ON SCDC).

The HRLSC achieved a landmark win at the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Haseeb v. Imperial Oil Limited*, 2023 ONCA 364, positively transforming the landscape of pre-employment requisite

citizenship conditions for international students. The Court of Appeal upheld the original HRT0 ruling that job openings necessitating Canadian citizenship by requiring permanent residency are discriminatory. Describing his experience, this HRLSC's client expressed gratitude for the HRLSC's services, noting that, "this case stands as a beacon of hope for many international students in our beautiful country, and illuminates a system built on fairness and equality and inclusivity and support."

The HRLSC's legal representation services were supported by our community engagement efforts through the exceptional work of other HRLSC staff, including the Indigenous Services and Outreach Committee (ISOC) and the Sexual Harassment Assault and Resource Exchange (SHARE) project. SHARE's work in the 2023-2024 fiscal period was the final chapter of its four-year run of funding provided by the federal Department of Justice. The HRLSC remains committed to carrying on its work to advance sexual harassment protections.

Importantly, the HRLSC initiated a long overdue Strategic Planning process involving extensive consultations with external stakeholders and staff. From this process, we are eager to implement a renewed direction for the HRLSC and commit to increasing outreach, engagement and access to our services for Ontario's most marginalized communities, and to data-driven and evidence-informed approaches that are grounded in people's lived experience, while also building our organizational capacity and investing in our employees.

As we look to this future being forecasted by our new Strategic Plan, we are thankful for our Board members and staff for getting us to this point. I wish to commend the involvement of Patrick Nadjiwan who, after 14 years, completed his final term as a Board Member in 2023, along with Sharmaine Hall, our longtime Executive Director. We are thankful for their years of service, especially through navigating the challenges of the COVID pandemic. In January 2023, we welcomed Interim Executive Director Dr. Remi Warner. We are pleased to have his enthusiasm, expertise and commitment to the HRLSC and Ontario's human rights system as we enter the new era following our strategic planning.

In a year filled with challenges, changes and also many success stories for the HRLSC, we can again point to the dedication of our staff and Board to the cause of human rights in Ontario. We are grateful for their work. Without their efforts, we could not have persisted in the face of adversity as we have this year.

With this incredible HRLSC team, Interim Executive Director Warner's wisdom and the support of our stakeholders and stewardship of the Board, the HRLSC is well positioned to address the challenges before us. I remain proud of our track-record of delivering services and representation to our clients through the HRT0 application process and beyond. We are consequently pleased to submit our 2023-2024 Annual Report.

Sincerely,

*Eva Chadha*

## Message from our Executive Director

As someone who has spent much time working and collaborating in Ontario's human rights system, I am excited at the opportunity of working with the clients, partners, staff and Board at the HRLSC. It is a wonderful opportunity to be another champion for the Centre: supporting its vital work and helping it plan for its near and longer-term future through our Strategic Planning process. I also look forward to continuing the work of supporting the HRLSC's staff, its operations and expanding its collaboration with other organizations whose mandate and work intersect with those of the Centre.

Upon my arrival to the HRLSC in January of 2024, I stepped into a role that has already been held with distinction by my predecessors, Sharmaine Hall and Kathy Laird before her. I am very thankful for their foundation-building work leading up to my hiring, including for Sharmaine's management of the fallout from the cybersecurity incident on October 3, 2023, and her deft navigation of the numerous and varied challenges posed by the COVID pandemic. In the context of this Annual Report, we have had to contend with the loss of some of our service-related data for this fiscal year. While this has made analysis of this year's performance a challenge, it has also provided us with a unique opportunity to further reflect on our longer-term performance data (for example see subsection 4.8 for a 10-year analysis of our service delivery).

In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, despite the disruption to our services from this cybersecurity incident for over a month and a half, the HRLSC provided service to over 20,000 people seeking assistance regarding their experiences of discrimination and harassment. This increase in the previous years' service demand was paired with the time and labour-intensive process of recovering our IT network and documentary records, demonstrating not only the continuous and growing demand for HRLSC services but also the great dedication of our staff in serving the public, including in challenging circumstances.

Indeed, the recovery of our IT systems, along with notifying our clients and fulfilling our pre-existing service obligations to them became among our most formidable projects for the HRLSC in 2023-2024. These were monumental tasks, undertaken with much urgency and care by our staff. We commend our staff for the work they have done to respond to the incident, including their efforts to restore services, keep client files going and ensure the public remained informed about these efforts.

Our ability to navigate the challenges of recent years, whether through COVID, this year's cybersecurity incident, or the annual rigours of supporting clients at the HRTO, highlight the importance of ensuring our staffing and material resources are responsive to the public's needs. Going forward, it will be critical for the HRLSC to grow its resources, partners and strategic vision to ensure ongoing relevancy and responsiveness to an evolving context and evolving client needs, and to match the efforts our staff and Board have shown in the face of adversity.

In recognition of the critical role and contributions of our legal staff, the HRLSC entered into a voluntary recognition agreement in the last quarter of this past fiscal year with the Centre's lawyers, whom will now be represented by a new OPSEU bargaining unit at the Centre. It is our mutual hope that such measures will help to continue to make the HRLSC an employer of choice for human rights advocates in this Province.

The HRLSC also began critical and essential work on a new multi-year Strategic Plan in the latter half of the 2023-2024 fiscal period. It was heartening to see such engagement with our partners, clients and stakeholders and the crucial input of Board and staff in discussing a collective vision

for the HRLSC's future. While drafting a final Strategic Plan is a task for the next fiscal year, the progress made to date on this Plan with the assistance of our consultants is already providing valuable insights and new directions for our operations and organization that the Centre is keen to act upon.

In closing, I am looking forward to the opportunity to work closely with our community partners and stakeholders, Board and staff, and existing and prospective funders on a renewed and transformational strategy and vision for the Centre that optimizes the delivery of our services for rights-seeking individuals and communities across Ontario.

Sincerely,

*Remi Warner*

## 2. Fulfilling our Mandate

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*“...[E]very interaction with HRLSC rekindled my spirit, reminding me of the silent champions by my side, ensuring I stayed the course.” – HRLSC client*

### 2.1 Our New Strategic Plan

In August 2023, the HRLSC’s Board engaged the consulting firm Vision and Results to initiate and facilitate a strategic planning process to identify the Centre’s future priority areas – those where proactive and sustained work can have an impact. It is a project that has been years in the making, given that our previous plan dates back from 2013. In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, despite the cybersecurity incident, we were able to hold the time, space and resources necessary to complete this critical process.

We engaged more than 130 individuals, including staff, clients, human rights service providers, community organizations, partners and funders, through focus groups, interviews and surveys. We heard about growing discrimination and listened to concerns about the erosion of our human rights system and protections. We also heard that the HRLSC, as a trusted and credible organization, is uniquely positioned to advance a more equitable society.

As of the end of the 2023-2024 fiscal period, we have completed our research and consultations and are in the final stages of drafting the HRLSC’s new Strategic Plan. Through these consultations, stakeholders and the public shared much excitement and anticipation regarding opportunities to partner and collaborate in the promotion of the HRLSC’s public presence and service footprint. Stakeholders emphasized the need for the HRLSC, as the provincial centre of human rights excellence, to advance its early resolution services and supports, public interest advocacy and research, and targeted outreach, education, media and communications to improve access to human rights supports and service options for people across Ontario, especially for those who are most marginalized and vulnerable to discrimination. To help ensure continued responsiveness to growing and evolving public demands for new and different kinds of human rights support services, it was also widely shared and recognized that the HRLSC will need to seek out creative means and partnerships to diversify its funding base in order to expand its resource capacity. It will also need to advance targeted, data-driven, evidence-based and priority-informed approaches to service delivery, so as to put the HRLSC on a more intentional and sustainable footing, including as a human rights employer of choice.

This collaborative, consultative process involving the HRLSC’s stakeholders, clients, Board and Staff will inform the Centre’s service delivery, operations, infrastructure, and human resource strategy for the next five years, and shape our evolving mission, vision and values. As we develop our Strategic Priorities in our plan from these consultations, we reflect with immense gratitude on the time and thought put into our consultation process by the stakeholders we engaged throughout the province and beyond.

We are grateful in particular for the engagement of the following organizations in this process:

- 2 Spirited People of the First Nations
- Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
- BC Human Rights Clinic
- Canadian Centre for Housing Rights
- Canadian Human Rights Association



- Chiefs of Ontario
- Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
- Community Justice Collective
- Community Legal Education Ontario
- Don Valley Community Legal Services
- Elizabeth Fry Society of Northwestern Ontario
- HIV AIDS Legal Clinic of Ontario
- Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario
- IAVGO Community Legal Clinic
- John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area
- Justice for Migrant Workers
- Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic
- Legal Aid Ontario
- Metis Nation of Ontario
- Ministry of the Attorney General
- Ontario Human Rights Commission
- Osgoode Hall Law School
- Parkdale Community Legal Clinic
- Pro Bono Students Canada
- The 519
- University of Toronto Faculty of Law
- University of Windsor Faculty of Law
- Workers Action Centre

We also thank the numerous key informants who met privately with our new Interim Executive Director to support his onboarding process and share feedback on the past and potential futures of the Centre.

To help us further assess future HRLSC strategic directions, informed by this stakeholder feedback and reflection on our past and current service trajectory, we have included a new section in this Annual Report featuring a 10-Year Analysis of the HRLSC's services (please see subsection 4.8 of this Report). This analysis is a first step in the process of transparently sharing information with our stakeholders and providing an assessment of our services as we embark upon our new strategic plan.

## 2.2 Summary of Mandate and Services

### Code-related Discrimination

Under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (or *Code*), one of the key requirements of establishing discrimination is determining if an organization or individual is treating someone unfairly because of a personal characteristic (or prohibited ground). These 17 prohibited grounds are:

- Age,
- Ancestry,
- Citizenship,
- Colour,
- Creed (including religion),
- Disability,
- Ethnic origin,
- Family status,
- Gender expression,
- Gender identity,
- Marital status,
- Place of origin,
- Race,
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only),
- Record of offences (in employment only),
- Sex (including solicitation, sexual harassment and pregnancy),
- Sexual orientation.

Discrimination can occur if a policy, practice, or program unfairly affects someone, or a group, based on one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination listed above. Discrimination can also happen when someone's particular needs are not accommodated based on one of the grounds of discrimination listed above.

Some *Code*-related discrimination can be intentional and is directly targeted at a person or group. Discrimination can also be unintentional: when someone is indirectly or accidentally singled out or excluded, based on their identity, or when an individual or an organization does not know or understand their duty to accommodate someone.

A second key requirement for establishing if discrimination is *Code*-related, is confirming that it has taken place in one of five social areas as set out in the *Code*:

- Housing (including buying, selling, renting or being evicted from an apartment, house, condominium or hotel room),
- Employment (including the hiring process, during the employment and post-termination),
- Services, goods and facilities (such as schools, transit, police, hospitals, stores, recreational facilities and restaurants),
- Contracts,
- Vocational/occupational associations (such as unions or professional associations).

### The HRLSC's Mandate

The HRLSC is an independent agency funded by Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) to provide free human rights advice and legal support services throughout Ontario.

#### **Legislative Mandate**

Through the *Human Rights Code* (Part IV.1), the HRLSC was established, receives funding and is directed to provide services across Ontario under our Legislative Mandate:

*The HRLSC provides free and confidential legal advice, support services and representation to individuals whose rights may have been violated under the Code.*

#### **Vision**

As part of its Memorandum of Understanding with MAG, the HRLSC adopts the principles found in the introduction of the *Code*. These principles are reflected in our vision statement:

*The HRLSC strives to be a leader in advancing equality, in protecting human rights, and in supporting every person's right to live and work with dignity and respect.*

#### **Mission**

The Memorandum of Understanding between MAG and the HRLSC also lays out several core values for its service delivery. These core values can be found in our Mission statement:

*The HRLSC advances equality and protects human rights by providing a range of accessible, high quality legal advice and support services to those who have faced discrimination contrary to the Code.*

### Services

The HRLSC provides free legal advice and support services to individuals across Ontario who may have experienced discrimination. The HRLSC initially provides services over the phone (alternative accommodations are available) in the form of summary legal support and information. If a caller needs further support or assistance, the HRLSC can provide in-depth advice and services including but not limited to legal representation for HRTO mediations, HRTO hearings, or both, as well support seeking early resolutions.

## **Types of Services:**

The key service-delivery requirements for the HRLSC are outlined under section 45.13 of the *Code*. The HRLSC must provide advice and assistance for people experiencing *Code*-related discrimination and services to people that wish to or who have filed applications with the HRTO.

The HRLSC delivers five types of services under the *Code*:

- Advice and support for resolving disputes involving discrimination, harassment, or reprisal and in filing human rights applications, motions, and submissions at the HRTO;
- Negotiating settlements;
- Providing legal representation for HRTO mediations and hearings;
- Enforcing HRTO orders;
- Representation at judicial reviews and appeals; and
- Other informational services.

Additionally, the HRLSC helps people who have human rights concerns by:

- Providing a pathway to Ontario’s human rights legal system through up-to-date, user-friendly online resources available on the HRLSC website and social media platforms (for information on website traffic please see subsection 4.7 – Statistics); and
- Conducting educational outreach to community and service organizations, including to increase awareness and understanding of HRLSC’s legal support services, as well as the rights and responsibilities set out in the *Code* and Ontarians’ legal redress options through the HRTO application process (for information on the HRLSC’s outreach, public education and engagement with stakeholders, please see Section 3 – Activities).

## **3. Activities**

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*“The services were exceptional and very accommodating.” – HRLSC Client*

Through speaking and outreach opportunities, as well as building connections with community partners, HRLSC representatives find ways to share information about our work and achievements across Ontario.

### **Strategic Planning Consultations:**

As part of the development of our Strategic Plan, during the 2023-2024 fiscal period, the HRLSC consulted with our clients, Board members, staff, our funder, our fellow Three Pillar organizations and other relevant stakeholders working in Ontario, as well as in the human rights sector across Canada. For more on this process, see section 2.1.

### **3.1 Speaking Events**

Along with its provincially available legal advice and support services, representatives of the HRLSC engage with members of the public, community stakeholders and their peers in the legal community. Some examples of our engagement events and partners this past year included:

- Participated in OHRC Roundtable on Anti-Black Racism LSO’s 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights Summit
- Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- Little Native Hockey League

- Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Festival
- Toronto Metropolitan University Streetfest
- Mississauga Community Legal Services
- COSTI Immigrant Services
- OBA Annual Update on Human Rights
- Osgoode Hall Law School Women's Network Own Your Career
- Osgoode Certificate for Human Rights Educators
- South Asian Bar Association Toronto

## 3.2 Partnerships and Programs

### Ontario Human Rights Commission – Community Advisory Group

The HRLSC remains a valued member of the OHRC's Community Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG represents diverse constituencies including community service providers, representatives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, individuals with lived experiences relating to discrimination prohibited under the *Code*, social justice organizations in Ontario, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission and provides advice relating to the OHRC's strategic priorities.

This year in its role as a CAG member, the HRLSC provided insights from its services to support the OHRC's initiatives around anti-hate, fostering well-being in housing and mental health. The HRLSC's Executive Director also participated in a roundtable on Anti-Black Racism in Education.

### Indigenous Services and Outreach Committee:

The Indigenous Services and Outreach Committee (ISOC) provides culturally appropriate services in order to increase usage of the human rights system by Indigenous peoples. The work of ISOC is in recognition of the unique history and disadvantage of Ontario's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and their historic underuse of the human rights system.

#### **Patient Ombudsman**

In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, staff with ISOC worked to develop a new relationship with the Patient Ombudsman that will lead to warm referrals to the HRLSC, public legal education provided by staff from the Centre and create opportunities for further partnerships in the future.

#### **Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO) – Prison Project**

The DJNO advocates for a more just and inclusive Ontario. The DJNO's Prison Project aims to support self-advocacy for racialized individuals with disabilities who are incarcerated in correctional facilities. ISOC staff have set up a warm referral process with the DJNO and the Centre has already received some referrals as a result. The Prison Project has also expanded to three other regions which may produce more referrals in the upcoming fiscal year.

#### **Tribunals Ontario – Indigenous Services**

ISOC has included the Indigenous Services Lead at Tribunal's Ontario into two of its meetings. These meetings are used by ISOC to share updates on their work and discuss developments about Tribunals Ontario's Indigenous Services.

#### **Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) – Indigenous Justice Coordinators**

ISOC continues to build and nurture its relationship with the OFIFC. Their work with the OFIFC has provided opportunities for ISOC to engage in outreach, which in the 2023-2024 fiscal period included the Little NHL Tournament and the 2-Spirited Powwow.

### **Chiefs of Ontario**

A management representative from ISOC and the HRLSC's Executive Director met with the Director of Policy and Communications for Chiefs Ontario. ISOC provided an overview of Indigenous Services and self-identification practices at the HRLSC and discussed potential future project specific collaboration focused on bolstering the HRLSC's delivery of services to individuals from First Nations.

### **Indigenous Human Rights Program (IHRP) – Pro Bono Students Canada**

As the IHRP works to restart its work after a brief pause, ISOC resumed its role on the Advisory Committee. The IHRP has shifted to a private bar focus as supervisors over the student work.

### **Anti-Discrimination Intensive Program**

The Anti-Discrimination Intensive Program (ADIP) entered its 12th year of operation. ADIP remains a highly successful mentorship program providing students from Osgoode Hall Law School with hands-on experience at the HRLSC in anti-discrimination and administrative law. As with previous years, 12 students in total worked at the HRLSC over the fall, winter and summer semesters, providing support on the Centre's intake phone lines and working with lawyer mentors.

### **Windsor University Student Placement**

The Windsor Law Social Justice Fellowship Program supports students interested in obtaining exposure to social justice advocacy and to enhance the capacity of future social justice lawyers to work towards the protection of human rights and the pursuit of social justice goals. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC hosted a student placement from this program. The student supported both the HRLSC's intake and outreach services.

### **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic provides trauma-informed legal services, counselling and multi-lingual interpretation and drives system change to support women and gender-diverse clients who have experienced violence.

The HRLSC and the Clinic continued co-referrals in 2023-2024. The HRLSC referred clients to the Clinic for services including family and immigration legal advice and representation, support through the family court process, and counselling services. The Clinic referred clients with human rights complaints to the HRLSC, especially related to sex and gender-based discrimination. These mutual referrals reduced client intake time and increased efficiencies for staff to assist clients in accessing remedies. The HRLSC received 8 warm referrals from the Clinic in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

### **SHARE**

For the past four years, the HRLSC operated a specialized team, known as the Sexual Harassment and Assault Resource Exchange (SHARE). It was a free service that not only provided legal advice and support, but also outreach and education to young workers and students, giving them the language, legal options and, when required, referral to free legal representation to address sex and gender-based harassment, discrimination, and violence they experienced in their workplaces.

Through the work of SHARE's education and outreach initiatives it:

- Reached over 7,370 participants;
- Participated in 238 legal education sessions; and
- Provided legal advice to over 1,600 clients.

SHARE's public legal education sessions created a pipeline for additional follow-ups and provided information about the legal assistance that HRLSC provides through the SHARE program. SHARE offered its legal services in over 141 languages and included services specifically supporting Indigenous community members. SHARE also provided access to supports and referrals to facilitate survivors' effective and efficient navigation of Ontario's human rights system as well as the rest of Ontario's legal system. Most importantly, SHARE provided trauma informed, culturally relevant support for individuals that had experienced sexual harassment and assault.

By the time SHARE's federal funding had ended after March 31, 2024, it had struck working agreements to provide legal education to organizations as large as the Toronto District School Board. During its initial run SHARE's outreach team engaged with unions as well as several other labour, trade and worker advocacy organizations, 2SLGBTQIA+, Francophone and Indigenous communities, settlement agencies and newcomer communities, and sexual and gender-based violence support centres.

To learn more about the HRLSC's contingency plan for the closure of SHARE, please see our "Organizational Projects" section.

## 4. Operational Performance

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*"Thank you for representing me. YOU ARE AN AMAZING LAWYER. You provided more substance than I could have imagined... Again, thank you for all your assistance, I will be forever indebted to you." – HRLSC client*

### 4.1 Judicial Reviews

#### Court of Appeal agrees with HRTO on citizenship-based discrimination in Haseeb case:

The HRLSC successfully appealed at the Ontario Court of Appeal following the judicial review of the Ontario Divisional Court's decision in *Imperial Oil Limited v. Haseeb* 2021 ONSC 3868. The Divisional Court had overturned the HRTO's original decisions (interim decision: *Haseeb v. Imperial Oil Limited*, [2018 HRTO 957](#); remedy decision in *Haseeb v. Imperial Oil Limited*, [2019 HRTO 271](#); and reconsideration decision: *Haseeb v. Imperial Oil Limited*, [2019 HRTO 1174](#)).

In a unanimous decision in May 2023, in *Imperial Oil Limited v. Haseeb*, [2023 ONCA 364](#), the Court of Appeal agreed with the HRLSC, upholding the HRTO's decision that Imperial Oil's policy discriminatorily denied eligibility for a position only to non-citizens. The Court also agreed that the fact that one class of non-citizens (permanent residents) was accepted did not insulate its policy from being discrimination based on citizenship. Policies that discriminate based on a prohibited ground are not saved because they only discriminate against some members of a protected group,

as opposed to all members. The Court of Appeal's decision means stronger protections against discrimination for international students eligible to work in Canada.

### Judicial review confirms union members can access rights through HRTO:

In March 2024, the Divisional Court upheld the HRTO's ruling in *London District Catholic School Board v. Weilgosh*, [2024 CanLII 20606 \(ON SCDC\)](#). The judicial review found that the HRTO's conclusion that it maintained concurrent jurisdiction with labour arbitrators in Ontario was correct.

The Divisional Court agreed with the HRLSC, upholding the HRTO's decision that there was clear legislative intent under Ontario's *Human Rights Code* for concurrent jurisdiction in the deferral and dismissal powers set out in sections 45 and 45.1 of the *Code*. This conclusion was different from the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Northern Regional Health Authority v. Horrocks*, [2021 SCC 42 \(Horrocks\)](#), whose ruling referred the question of jurisdiction between human rights tribunals and labour arbitrators back to the provincial and territorial superior court systems.

With the HRLSC's successful legal advocacy, the Divisional court decided that the HRTO still has the jurisdiction to decide claims of discrimination and harassment even if the issue can also be decided in a labour arbitration under a collective agreement. As a result, unionized employees in Ontario have the choice of pursuing human rights claims either by way of a grievance or an application to the HRTO.

## 4.2 Settlements

### Pregnant Temporary Worker Requested Safety Accommodations, Lost Job Placement:

Employment/Pregnancy

The applicant was a temporary worker placed with an employer (the respondent) through an employment agency. When she became pregnant, she advised the respondent she was concerned about exposure to certain chemicals in the workplace that she understood posed a serious risk to pregnant women. The respondent told the applicant it had no obligation to accommodate her because she was a temporary worker. The employment agency terminated her placement with the respondent shortly afterward.

The applicant's former employer agreed to:

- Financial compensation for general damages; and
- For the applicant to return to her work placement after the conclusion of her maternity leave.

### Hospital Patient Repeatedly Misgendered and Unable to Provide Preferred Gender Identity, Name or Pronouns:

Services/Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Race, Colour

The applicant was racialized and identified as non-binary, pangender and trans. The respondent was a local hospital. The applicant was repeatedly misgendered by the respondent's staff. When they raised the issue with the respondent, they were told that the computer system only had binary gender markers and did not allow for a patient to indicate their gender identity or preferred name and pronouns.

The hospital agreed to pay financial damages to the applicant.

## 4.3 Hearings

### Employer to pay \$39,000 in damages after they sexually assaulted employee:

In *Kreps v. AHMIC Maintenance & Storage Ltd.*, 2024 HRTO 214, the applicant alleged that the respondent regularly made inappropriate and suggestive comments to her and used her position of employment with his company to repeatedly create opportunities to be alone with her. His behaviour culminated in a trip to the respondent's remote trap camp, which was unreachable by cell phone. While at the trap camp, the applicant alleged the respondent sexually solicited and assaulted her.

The HRTO found that the applicant had faced discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment in her workplace. The HRTO ordered the respondent to:

- Pay over \$39,000 in damages including compensation, loss of income and the costs of counseling for the applicant; and
- Complete the Ontario Human Rights Commission training modules on sexual harassment at work, including: 1) OHRC and HRPWA Webinar on Preventing Sexual Harassment at Work and 2) Preventing Sexual Harassment at Work: An Overview.

### Xenophobic comments made by school staff member to father of student:

In *A.A. v. Vilma Canizalez*, 2023 HRTO 1353, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) ruled on an incident of race, colour, creed and ethnicity-based discrimination over comments made at a school by a staff member towards a parent and a student. The applicant included a parent – who served as a litigation guardian for his son and is a recent immigrant to Canada from Pakistan – who identifies as a Muslim man with brown skin.

During a disagreement about the student's clothing and alleged behaviour while playing before the start of school a staff member allegedly said: "We have rules here. If you don't like them, go back to your country." Following this incident, the staff member complained to police, who then visited the applicant. In its follow-up investigation, the school found that the parent's account of the incident was verified, but the school did not share its reported findings with him.

The Tribunal's decision awarded the applicants general damages in the amount of \$5,000 for the parent and \$1,000 for his son. The HRTO ordered the respondent to complete the Ontario Human Rights Commission's "Human Rights 101" online eLearning course.

### HRTO finds denial of benefit for service dog was disability-based discrimination:

In *Robinson-Cooke v. Ontario (Community and Social Services)*, 2023 HRTO 1133, the HRTO considered a claim of discrimination against the applicant on the prohibited ground of disability. The applicant argued that the respondent, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services had discriminated against her by requiring a service dog with specific certification, which due to her disabilities, she was unable to get and was thus subsequently unable to apply for the Ontario Disability Support Program's Guide Dog Benefit.

The HRTO found the denial of the benefit was discrimination based on the ground of disability. The applicant's disabilities were a factor in the denial of the benefit, as it was not possible for her to obtain a dog trained by an Assistance Dogs International-accredited facility because of her disability-related needs.



The applicant was awarded:

- \$20,000 in general damages; and
- \$5,040 to compensate for the lost benefits.

The HRTO also ordered a public interest remedy against the respondent in order to promote future compliance with the *Code*.

## 4.4 Enforcement

### HRTO orders completion of training and new damages in enforcement against grocer:

Four years prior to the subsequent enforcement order, the applicant had finalized a settlement with the respondents, a grocery store which had agreed to:

- Pay the applicant a financial settlement; and
- Retain an expert to conduct training for all staff on unconscious bias and human rights and to conduct a review of the corporate respondent's anti-discrimination and loss prevention policies.

The applicant confirmed that they had received the payment but stated that their counsel had never been provided with confirmation that the remaining terms had been satisfied. The applicant requested an order requiring the respondents to comply with the minutes of settlement.

The HRTO found the respondents had breached the minutes of settlement by failing to retain an expert to conduct the training and policy review that had been agreed to in the settlement. The HRTO ordered the respondents to comply with these terms and pay an additional amount to compensate the applicant for the breach but declined to award compensation for expenses.

The grocery store was ordered to:

- Confirm in writing that the training and policy review have been completed or complete these requirements within six months; and
- Pay \$2,000 in general damages to the applicant.

## 4.5 In the Media

A key aspect of the HRLSC's work is providing public education and information about human rights in Ontario. The HRLSC's insights with respect to HRTO decisions and processes, our services and human rights claims (with the permission of our clients) are sought by the media.

Here is a snapshot of this fiscal year's media coverage:

- [An editorial from our Chair, Ena Chadha on the impact of the \*Haseeb v. Imperial Oil\* Court of Appeal decision and the need for human rights protections for international students and other foreign residents in Canada;](#)
- [An article by New Canadian Media about housing discrimination that discusses the mechanics of filing a human rights application and seeking assistance from the HRLSC;](#)
- [An article by the Pointer about Ontario's anti-racism initiative that mentions the HRLSC's participation in a recent OHRC report on anti-Black racism;](#)

- [An article profiling the win by the HRLSC’s client in the case of \*Robinson-Cooke v. Ontario \(Community and Social Services\)\*](#);
- [An article profiling the win by the HRLSC’s client in the case of \*Kreps v. AHMIC Maintenance & Storage Ltd.\*](#); and
- [An article profiling the Ontario Divisional Court’s decision to dismiss the judicial review in the case of \*London District Catholic School Board v. Weilgosh.\*](#)

For measurements and evaluation of the HRLSC’s 2023-2024 media exposure, please see our “Performance Measures” section.

## 4.6 Organizational Projects

### Strategic Planning

In early 2023, the HRLSC commenced a Strategic Planning Process. However, this process was paused after the cybersecurity incident in October 2023. Following the resumption of services in November of that year, the HRLSC resumed its Strategic Planning process. The HRLSC hired the consulting firm Vision and Results to facilitate and prepare the Centre’s strategic planning process.

The consultations for and development of the Plan during this past fiscal year provided an important opportunity for the HRLSC to more intentionally consider its current and future priorities. These consultations and brainstorming sessions also allowed for the HRLSC to reflect on its work, its accomplishments, and the value of its services and programs to Ontarians. So far, the HRLSC has held discussions with external stakeholders, clients, and members of the Board and staff of the HRLSC and expects to have a new Strategic Plan released in the upcoming fiscal year.

### Cybersecurity Strengthening

Following the October 2023 cybersecurity incident, the HRLSC sought to strengthen its existing security systems, and act upon recommendations provided to it by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and cybersecurity IT consultants. The HRLSC also worked with the Cyber Security Centre of Excellence unit to ensure compliance with IT standards (in this new environment of cybersecurity threats) and identify ongoing training for the HRLSC staff on raising awareness on cybersecurity.

As one of the first steps in its response to this incident, the HRLSC retained cybersecurity legal support to work with HRLSC’s executives on recruiting and retaining cybersecurity IT consultants and assist with its communications strategy in response to the incident. The IT cybersecurity consultants ensured the removal of the threat actors, along with the stabilization, restoration, and rebuild of our systems. These IT consultants worked closely with the HRLSC’s existing IT service provider and implemented enhanced security measures for its IT systems.

The HRLSC will carry over its efforts to identify and implement preventative measures and best practices for monitoring activities into future fiscal periods. The HRLSC has also recruited an IT security consultant to inform and coordinate these measures. Additionally, this IT consultant is developing a detailed cyber security incident plan, which will include threat monitoring, further regular testing, and assessment of its IT security systems and respond to potential future cybersecurity events and any potential new emergent threats to our IT security. The HRLSC will use these IT measures to reduce its attack surface with respect to remote exploits and to ensure that its operating systems are kept up to date.

The HRLSC also followed Information Privacy Commissioner's (IPC) recommendations around notifying clients and members of the public about the cybersecurity incident. The HRLSC worked on a communication plan and utilized its website to provide regular & timely updates and FAQs to ensure up to date information was made available.

The HRLSC and MAG worked closely together during the recovery and rehabilitation processes following the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident. The HRLSC is grateful to MAG for the one-time funding that was made available to support the expenses and consulting services following the cybersecurity incident.

With the efforts and hard work of HRLSC's executives, management, staff and support of our key stakeholders, the HRLSC was able to resume operations and services in a timely manner.

### Closure of the SHARE program

This fiscal period was the last year of federal funding for the SHARE program. While it continued its outreach and intake services late into the 2023-2024 fiscal period, ultimately the HRLSC had to make the difficult decision to integrate the work of its SHARE project back into its regular service delivery and outreach work. This required the movement of SHARE's online materials to other sections of the HRLSC's website, along with the redirection of calls to the Centre's regular intake line. Additionally, the HRLSC was required to scale back its outreach and public legal education work with several of SHARE's longtime community partners.

### Staff training

The HRLSC provided its staff with the following training:

- Mandatory ongoing training through Cybersecurity Ontario, started as of December 2023
- Anti-Asian Racism Training in May 2023
- Summer Solstice Seasonal Feast and Teachings in June 2023 (organized by ISOC)
- Antisemitism training in Sept 2023

The HRLSC also continued to provide the following trainings for new staff:

- The Path Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training
- LivingWorks START Suicide Prevention E-Learning Course
- Ontario *Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act* – Worker Health and Safety Awareness

## 4.7 Statistics

The HRLSC provides legal services for thousands of people across Ontario every year. To track the impact of this work, the HRLSC utilizes its Client Tracking Tool (CTT) and cloud-based phone software, online surveys, web analytics as well as manual data input from staff.

Results for some of this year's statistics and performance measures were impacted by the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident (see our "Performance Measures" in the next section of this Annual Report). Quarterly data that was lost has been calculated based on averages taken from available Q1 and Q4 data. The percentages and numerical totals presented for this fiscal year reflect the mixture of these available and projected estimated numbers. Additionally, available statistics may be subject to change, as staff carry on the work of recovering and confirming the entry of all available data for the 2023-2024 fiscal year (including where possible for the currently missing Q2 and Q3 data).

### Initial phone calls received:

**23,193**

The HRLSC's initial service delivery is provided over the phone.

While the HRLSC received a total of 23,193 phone calls in the 2023-2024 fiscal period, it answered 88% of these inquiries (or 20,425 phone calls).

This is a 9% increase over the number of inquiries answered by HRLSC intake staff from the 2022-2023 fiscal period (18,721). What makes this increase notable is that it occurred during a period that included the temporary closure of the HRLSC's intake line for six weeks due to the October 3, 2023, cyber security incident, which demonstrates a growing demand for HRLSC's service.

### Website visits:

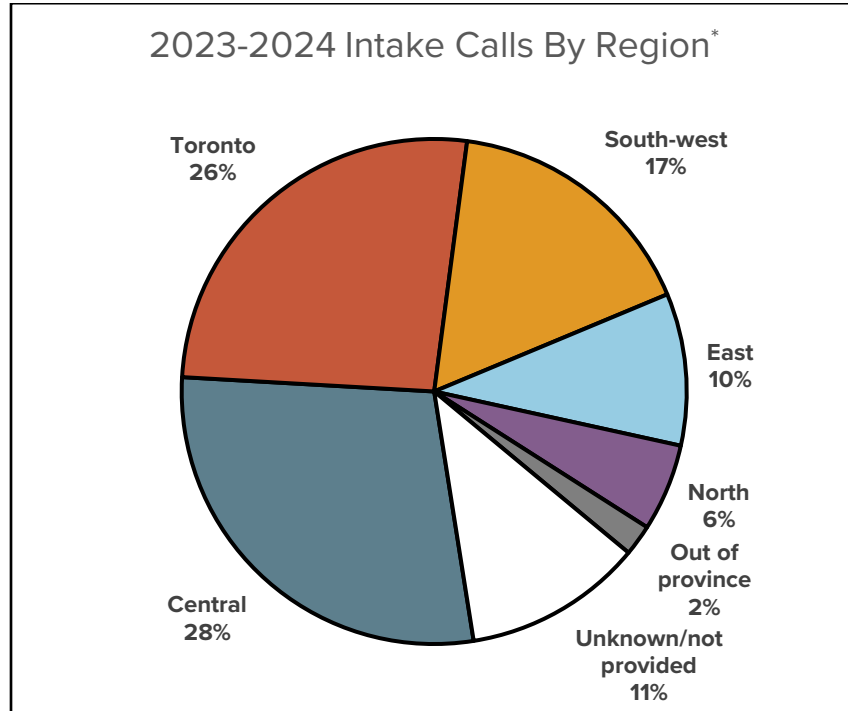
**144,012**

To help measure public interest in its services, the HRLSC has historically tracked the number of "sessions," or the number of times a user opens and keeps open the HRLSC website in a given time period. Between 2021 and 2022, along with the redevelopment of its new website, the HRLSC was required to adopt new website analytics software (which changed with Google Analytics' phasing out of its Universal Analytics program in favour of Google Analytics 4). Through this new software, Google improved its tracking for individual website users.<sup>1</sup> This resulted in a reduction in website visits from the 2022-2023 fiscal year, which totalled 170,187 sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Google Analytics has reduced the duplication of sessions caused by user inactivity, time spent on a website before and after midnight, and activity travelling between different targeted sections of a website being tracked by Google through website engagement campaigns. Equally as important, Google's analytical software has been upgraded to better filter out irrelevant non-human web traffic.

Region:



**Figure 1: 2023-2024 Intake Calls by Region**

From available data\*, the HRLSC's highest number of intakes in the 2023-2024 fiscal year appears to be from Central Ontario (which includes the city of Hamilton, as well as the regions of Niagara, Halton, Peel, Durham, Dufferin and York Regions, and Simcoe County) with 28% of calls. Calls from the Toronto area (previously reported as the "GTA") followed closely as the second most frequent region from which calls were received by the HRLSC. The HRLSC will carry on with its outreach through connecting with local organizations across Ontario.

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\* Includes only data from November 2023 – March 2024; due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

Social Areas:

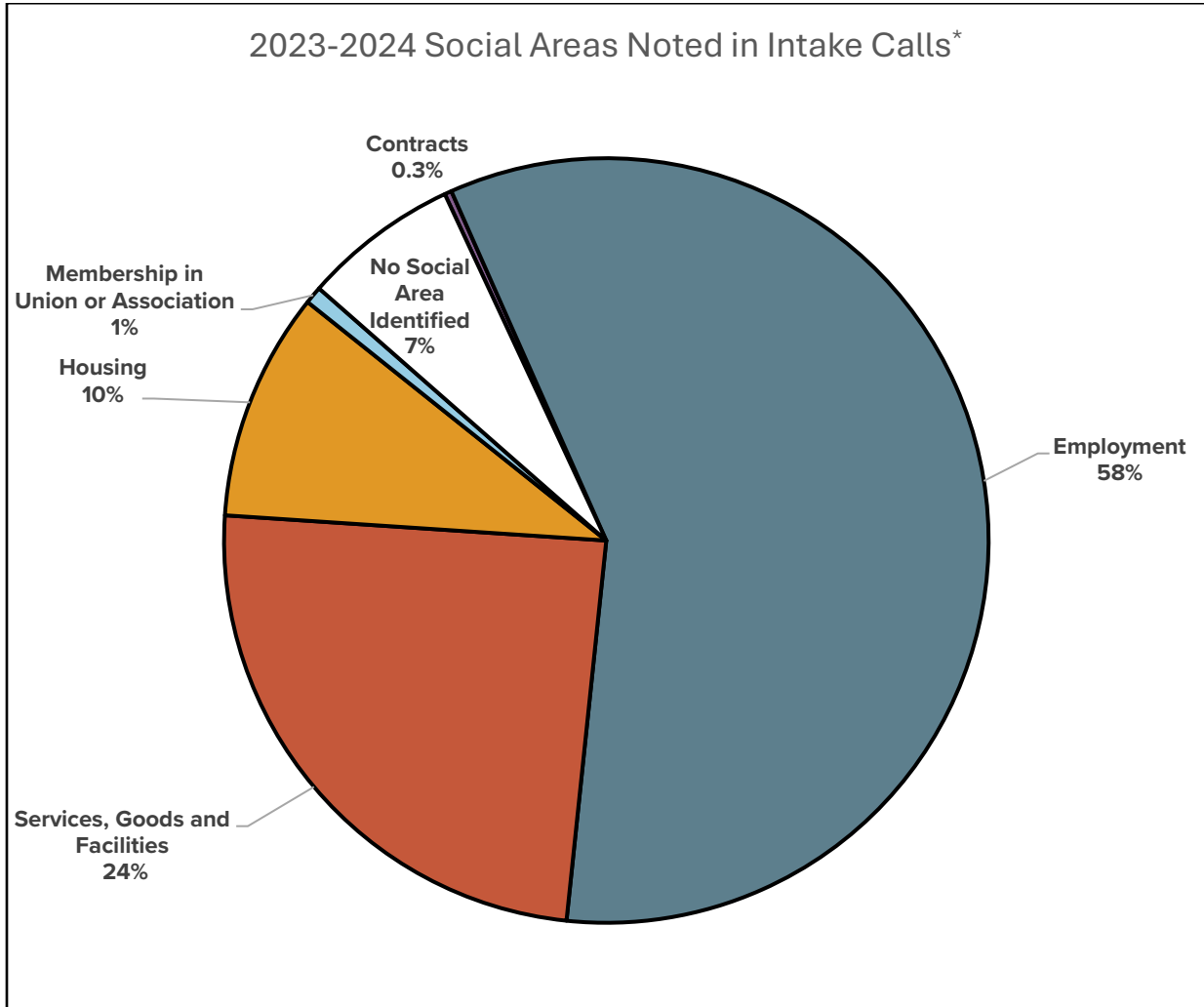
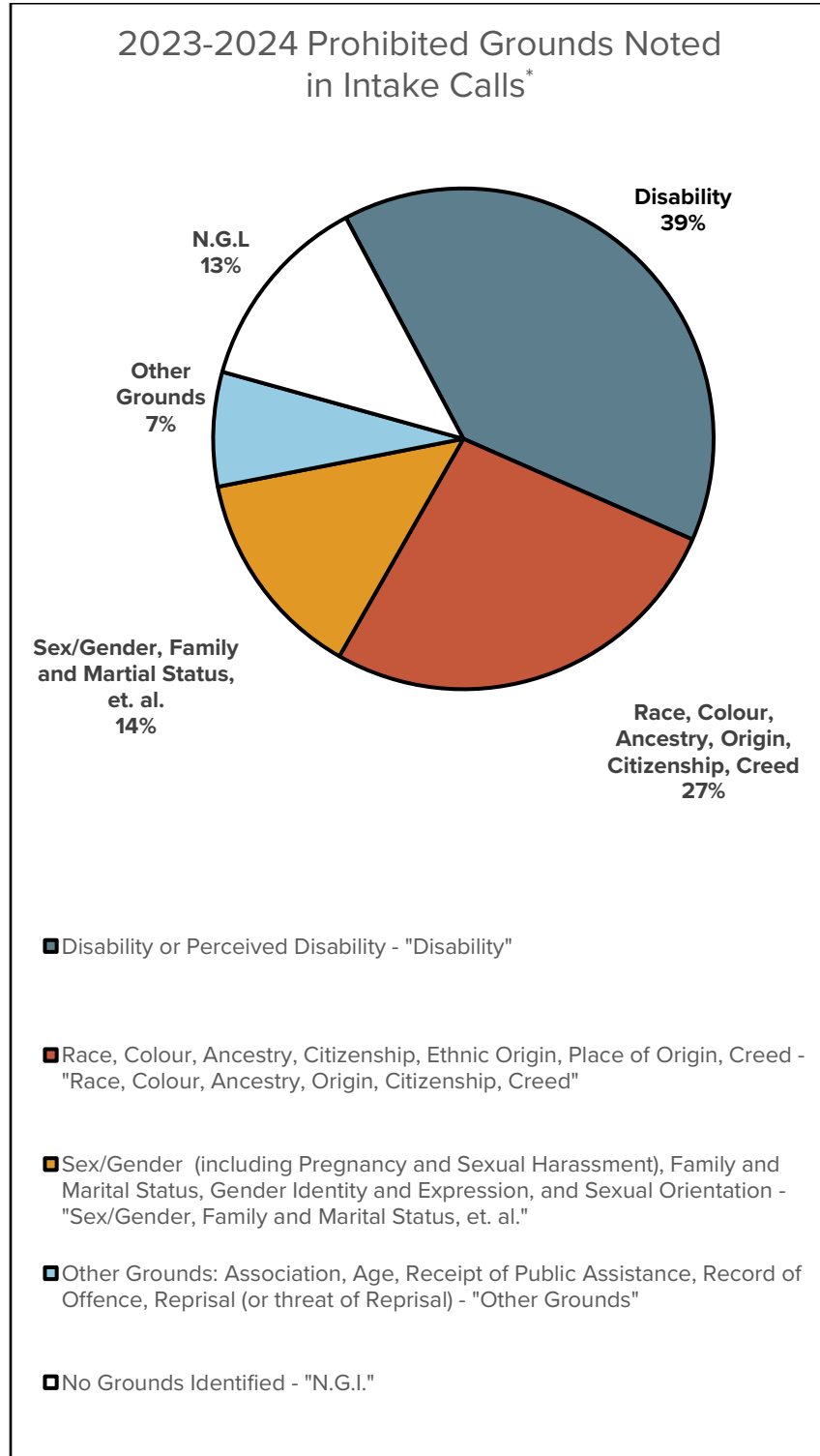


Figure 2: 2023-2024 Social Areas Noted in Intake Calls\*

\* Includes only data from November 2023 – March 2024; due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

Prohibited Grounds:



**Figure 3: 2023-2024 Prohibited Grounds Noted in Intake Calls \***

From the available data, calls involving the ground of disability remain the highest ground referenced at intake, followed by race-related cases and gender and sex-related cases, consistent with the historical trend at the HRT0 and HRLSC.

\* Includes only data from November 2023 – March 2024; due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

**Table 1: 2023-2024 Prohibited Grounds Noted in Intake Calls (Disaggregated by individual ground) \***

<i>Prohibited Grounds</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>
Disability	5,246 (39.3%)
No Grounds	1,720 (12.9%)
Race	1,145 (8.6%)
Colour	653 (4.9%)
Sex, Gender, and Pregnancy	645 (4.8%)
Ethnic Origin	543 (4.1%)
Place of Origin	476 (3.6%)
Reprisal or Threat of Reprisal	430 (3.2%)
Family Status	416 (3.1%)
Sexual Harassment	387 (2.9%)
Age	376 (2.8%)
Creed	345 (2.6%)
Ancestry	287 (2.1%)
Sexual Orientation	138 (1%)
Sexual Solicitation, Advances, or Reprisals	124 (0.9%)
Citizenship	105 (0.8%)
Marital Status	88 (0.7%)
Gender Identity	85 (0.6%)
Gender Expression	64 (0.5%)
Receipt of Public Assistance (in housing)	60 (0.4%)
Record of Offences (in employment)	21 (0.2%)

\* Includes only data from November 2023 – March 2024; due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

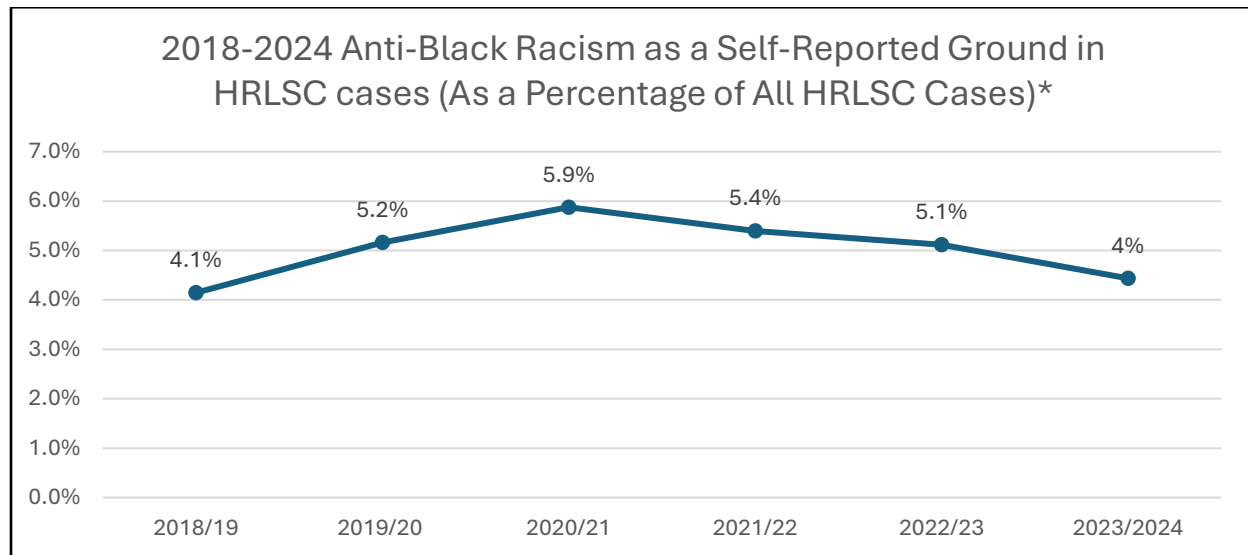


**Anti-Black Racism Sub-Ground:**

Anti-Black racism was the most frequently cited race-related sub-ground noted in HRLSC intake calls, consistent with previous years’ observations. Consequently, for the past several years, the HRLSC has kept track of intakes reporting experiences of anti-Black racism.

**Table 2: Calculating Anti-Black Racism as Percentage of all HRLSC cases (2018-2024)**

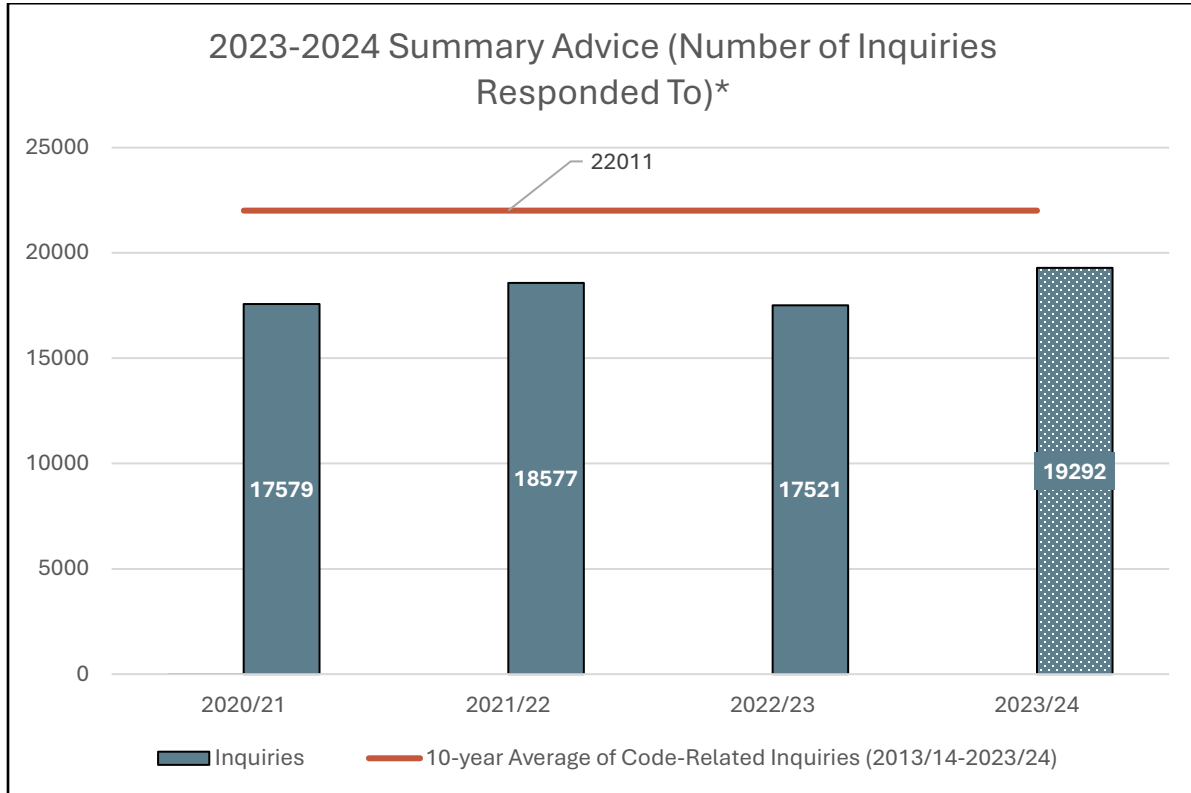
<i>Fiscal Period</i>	<i>2018-2019</i>	<i>2019-2020</i>	<i>2020-2021</i>	<i>2021-2022</i>	<i>2022-2023</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>
<i>Number of reports of Anti-Black Racism as noted in Intake Calls</i>	965	985	1033	1002	896	856*
<i>ABR reports compared to total number of intakes for summary advice per year</i>	965/ 23279	985/ 19084	1033/ 17579	1002/ 18577	896/ 17521	856/ 19292*
<i>As a percentage of all grounds mentioned at intake</i>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>4%*</b>



**Figure 4: 2018-2024 Anti-Black Racism as a Self-Reported Ground in HRLSC cases (As a Percentage of All HRLSC Cases)**

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

## Summary Advice:



**Figure 5: 2023-2024 Summary Advice (Number of Inquiries Responded To)**

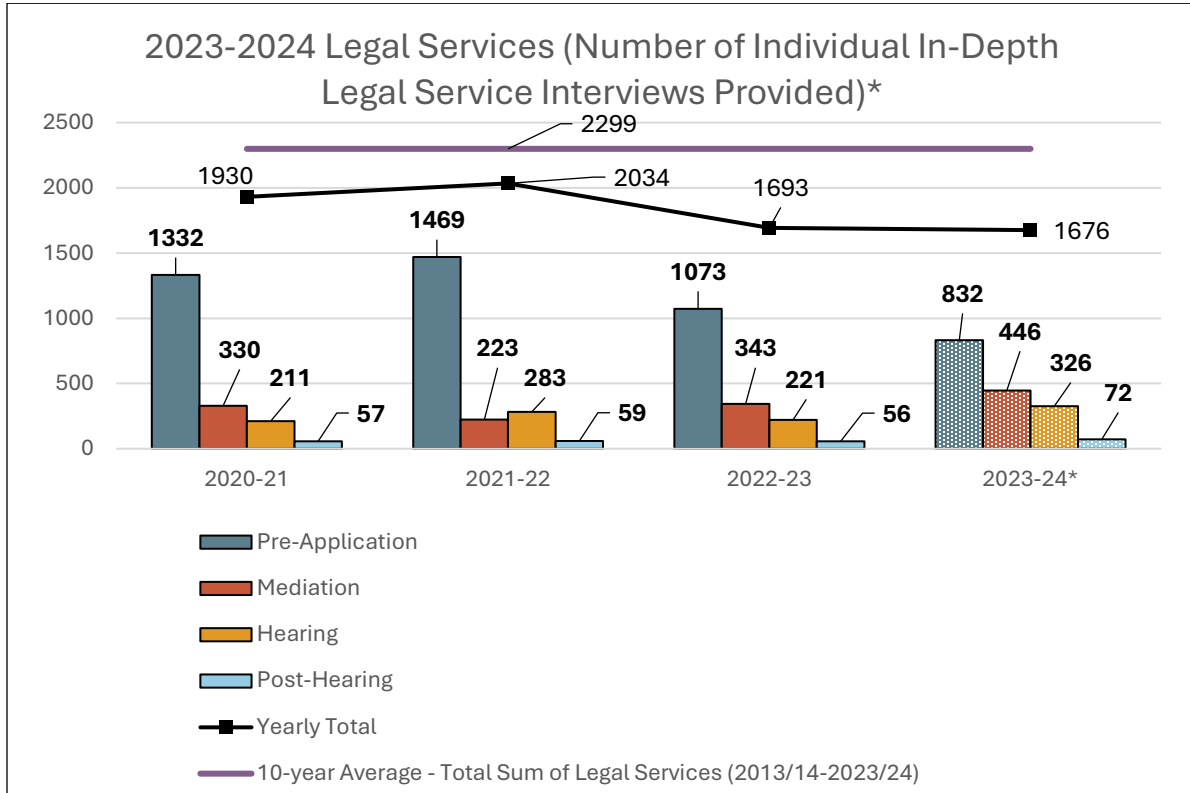
Summary advice includes the number of responses to initial phone inquiries to an “intake” (case) which can include a series of phone calls between the HRLSC’s staff and a caller about the caller’s human rights concerns and issues.

Despite the October 2023 cybersecurity incident, which shut the HRLSC down for about six weeks, this summary advice (measured by the number of intakes) is estimated\* to be higher than the previous three fiscal periods.<sup>2</sup>

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike previous year’s reports, this year’s comparison of year-to-year summary advice (by number of inquiries) includes calls to our SHARE team, to ensure parity of analysis with our 10-Year Analysis in Section 4.7. Even excluding the 314 inquiries received from SHARE this year (which compares to 394 last year), the HRLSC still fielded more inquiries this year than last year.

## Legal Services:



**Figure 6: 2023-2024 Legal Services (Number of Individual In-Depth Legal Service Interviews Provided)**

The total number of individual in-depth legal service interviews that the HRLSC is estimated\* to have provided to clients in the 2023-2024 fiscal year —1,676— is calculated to be nearly equal in volume to the number provided by staff in the previous year (1,693), despite the cybersecurity incident resulting in a six-week closure of services.

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.

## Mediations Attended:

The HRLSC's attendance at HRTO mediations in the 2023-2024 fiscal period is estimated\* to have again increased as compared to the last three years. This trend could be attributed to the increase in the number of mediations scheduled within 180 calendar days of an application being filed at the HRTO in the 2023-2024 fiscal period, and the HRTO's more recent practice of offering multiple mediation opportunities throughout the application resolution process.

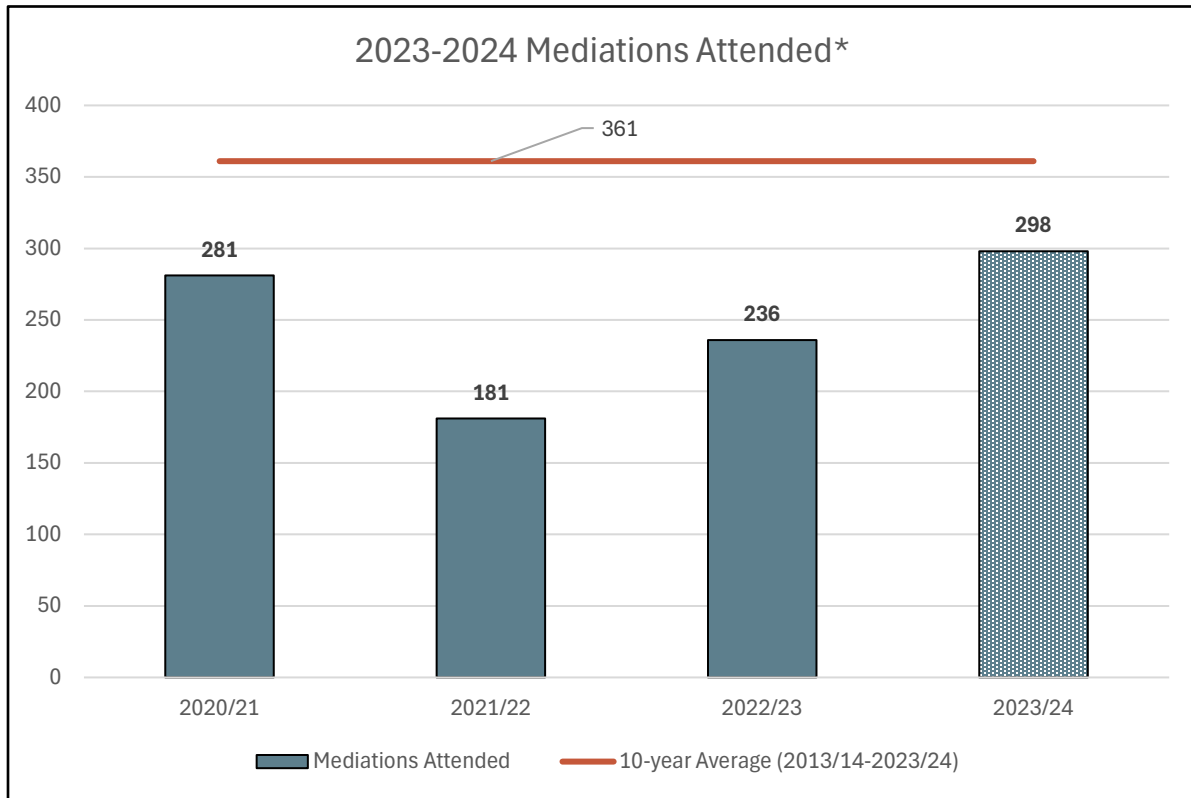
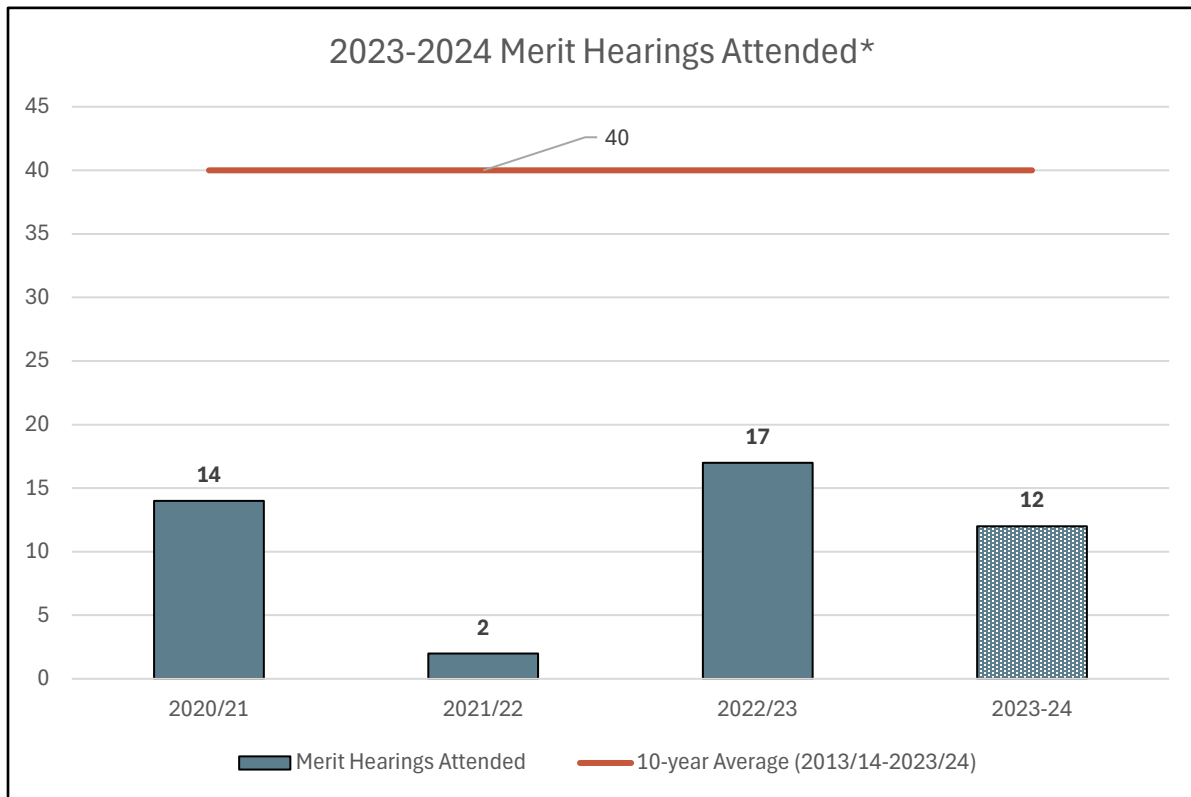


Figure 7: 2023-2024 Mediations Attended

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.

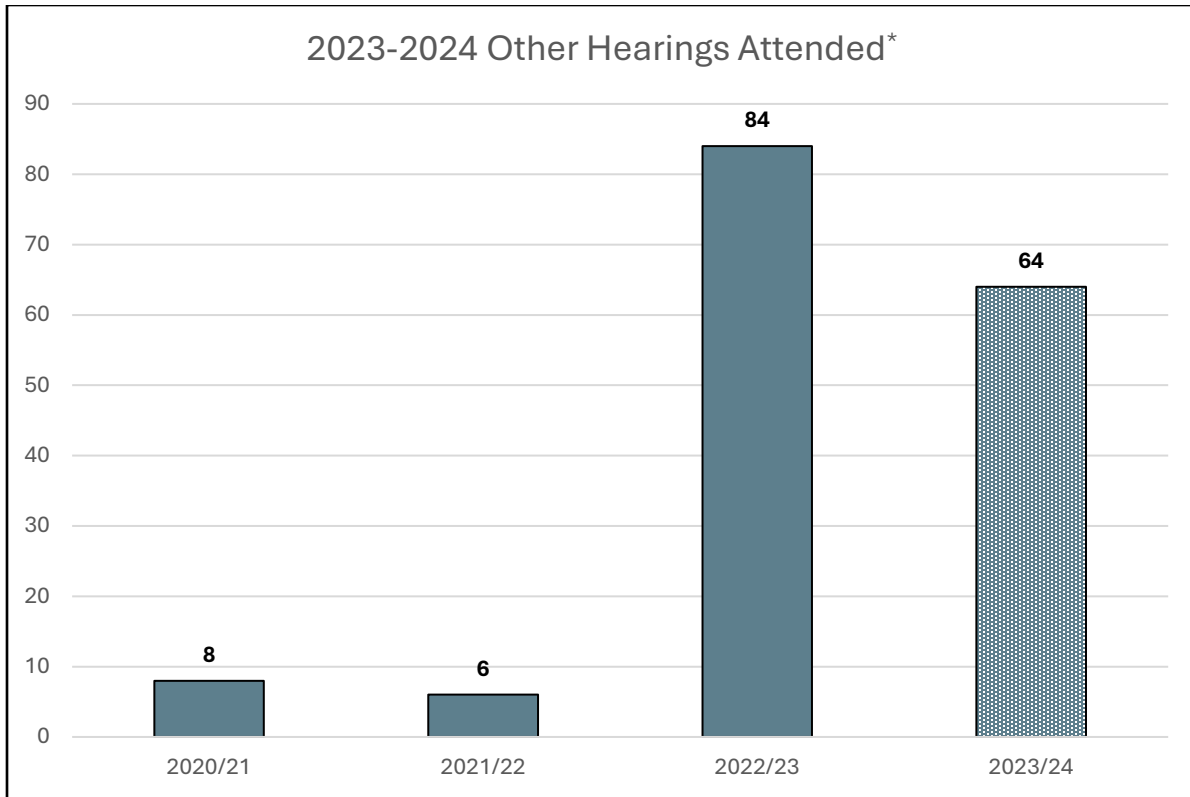
## Hearings Attended:

We have estimated\* that the number of merit hearings the HRLSC attended in 2023-2024 to be lower than in the 2022-2023 fiscal period. Potential causes of this reduction in the HRLSC’s merit hearings could include: the general decrease in merit hearings at the HRTTO and increase in case processing times and preliminary triaging resulting in greater numbers of pre-hearing procedural hearings (see “Other Hearings Attended” discussed below), as well as potential hearing deferrals caused by the HRLSC’s October 2023 cybersecurity incident. Additionally, as mentioned above, the large increase in mediations the HRTTO undertook could also be attributed to a lower number of merit hearings between 2023 and 2024 for the HRLSC.



**Figure 8: 2023-2024 Merit Hearings Attended**

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.



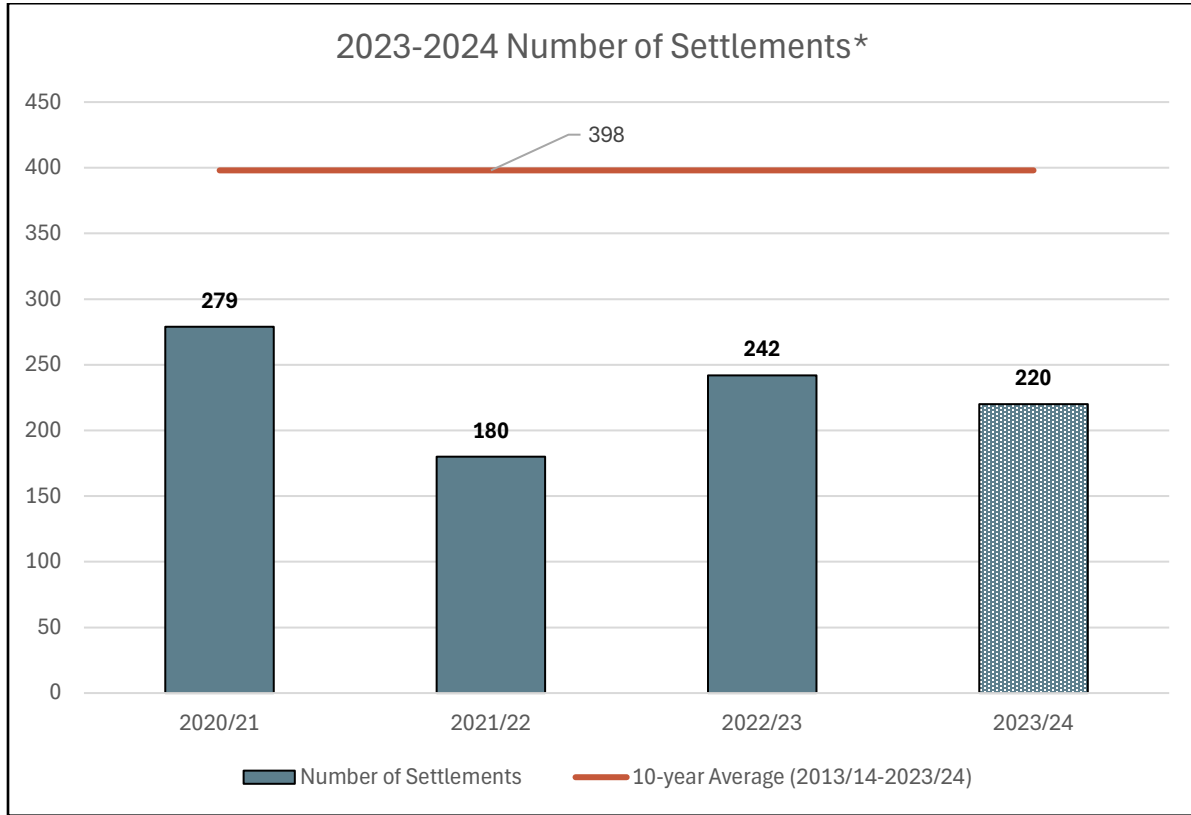
**Figure 9: 2023-2024 Other Hearings Attended**

During the 2022-2023 fiscal period, the HRLSC began reviewing how it tracked hearings at the HRT0 from the previous year. The new tracking framework considered the increase in pre-hearing procedural activities for applicants retained by the HRLSC for legal representation. From these newly tracked activities, the HRLSC saw a significant increase in ‘Other Hearings Attended’ beginning in the 2022-2023 fiscal period when this was first tracked. The category of ‘Other Hearings Attended’ mostly consisted of, and reflected the growing number of, pre-merit procedural hearings at the HRT0, but also includes judicial reviews, stated cases and enforcement hearings.

Examples of such procedural hearings included supporting clients in response to Notices of Intent to Dismiss (NOIDS) including based on Rule 13 jurisdictional issues raised by the HRT0 and the growing number of Case Management Conference Calls (CMCC’s) which the HRT0 first introduced in 2018 but is now using more frequently. The number of these activities in the 2023-2024 fiscal period is estimated\* to have stayed high in the 2023-2024 fiscal period.

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.

## Settlements:



**Figure 10: 2023-2024 Number of Settlements**

The number of settlements in the 2023 to 2024 fiscal period is estimated\* to be slightly lower than the previous fiscal year. Most settlements historically happen at the mediation or pre-hearing or pre-application stage. The HRLSC continues to feel the effects of attrition of several senior lawyers with extensive mediation experience, which may impact settlement rates going forward.

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.

## Indigenous Services:

According to the HRLSC's estimations<sup>\*</sup> for the 2023-2024 fiscal period, Indigenous Services and Outreach Committee (ISOC) is projected to have again seen an increase in the number of hearing and mediation interviews for the 2023 to 2024 fiscal period, as compared to the previous (22/23) fiscal year. Additionally, ISOC is projected to have improved upon the number of mediation and hearing interviews from the previous year. These projected increases may be attributed in part to ISOC's extensive outreach and collaboration activities in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 fiscal years (see the Activities" section for further details on this work.

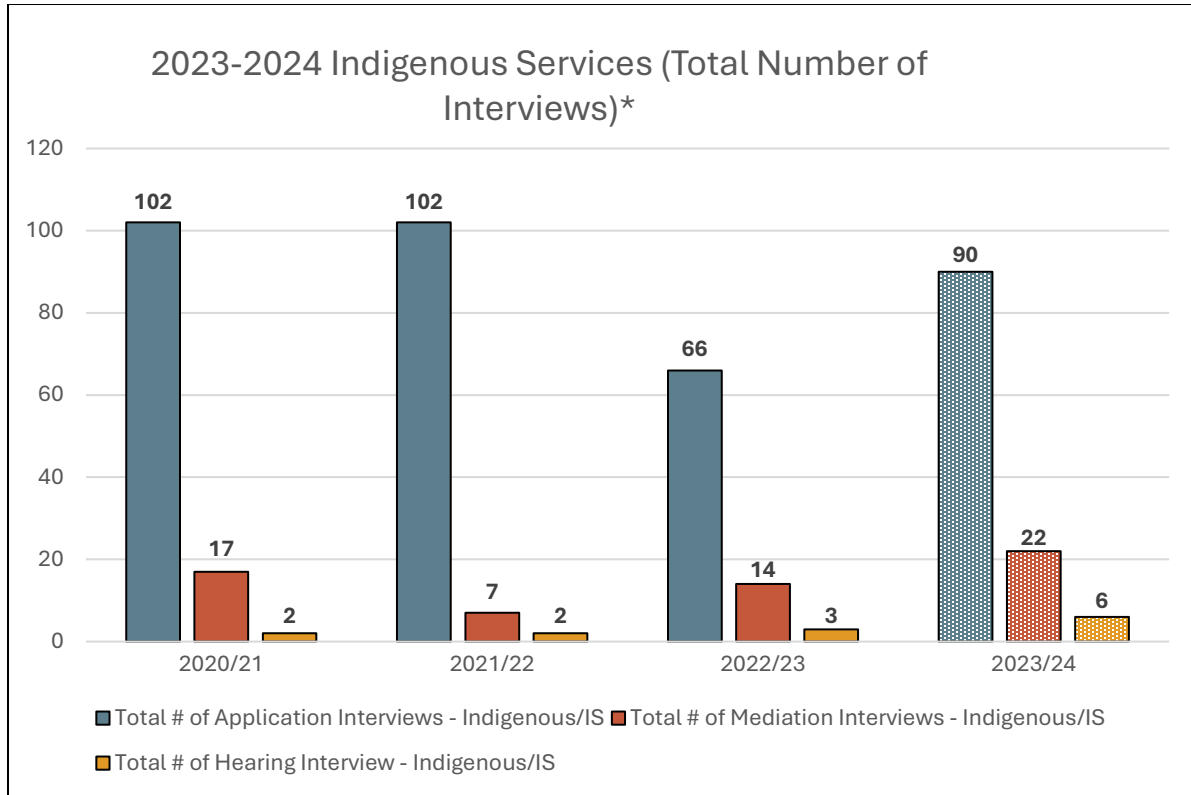
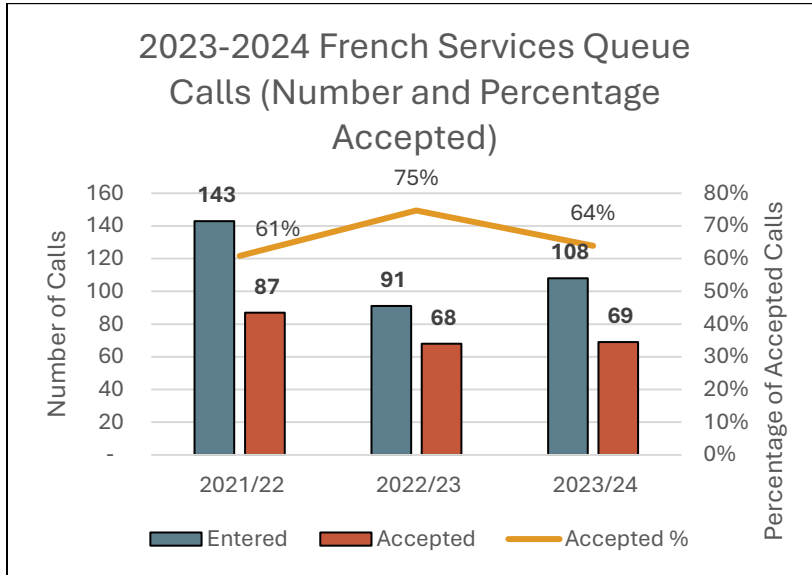


Figure 11: 2023-2024 Indigenous Services (Total Number of Interviews)

<sup>\*</sup> This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved. Data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period graph is a lighter shading, versus a solid colour, to reflect the projected nature of the data this fiscal year.



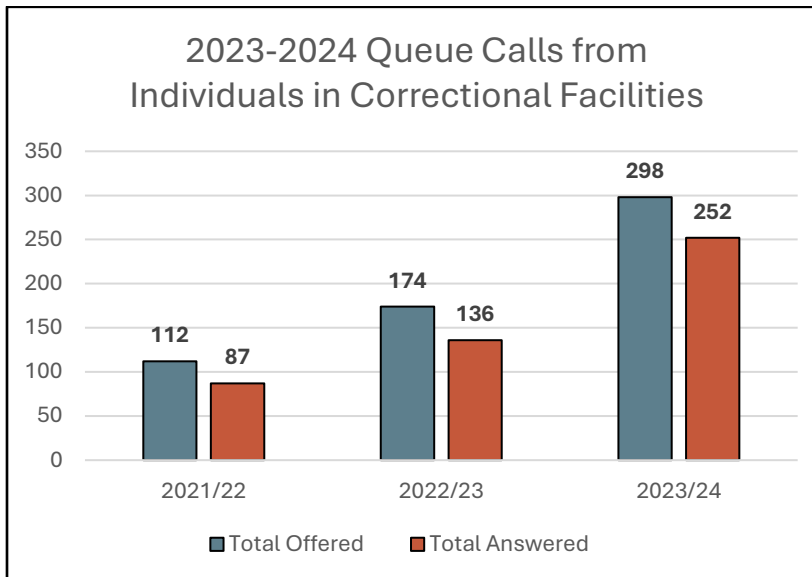
French Language Services:



**Figure 12: 2023-2024 French Services Queue Calls (Number and Percentage Accepted)**

The HRLSC seeks to grow the number of French-language calls it takes on. However, the opportunity to deliver additional services to Francophone callers is impacted by funding-related capacity challenges, including our ability to recruit and retain bilingual legal staff.

Service Line for Individuals in Correctional Facilities:



**Figure 13: 2023-2024 Queue Calls from Individuals in Correctional Facilities**

According to its phone queue data for the 2023-2024 fiscal period, the HRLSC again saw an increase in calls from incarcerated individuals this past year, despite being closed for six weeks due to the cyber security incident. The increase is

likely in significant part the fruit of the HRLSC’s recent poster campaign initiated in 2022 in collaboration with the Ministry of Solicitor General, which expanded awareness of HRLSC’s legal services among those involved or held in correctional institutions. Additionally, the upgrades to the HRLSC’s phone system in 2021, which streamlined calls from correctional facilities, may have supported the ability of HRLSC intake staff to handle the priority phone line dedicated to incarcerated individuals.

## 4.8 A Ten-Year Review of the HRLSC:

The 2023-2024 fiscal period was marked with challenges and opportunities for sustaining HRLSC service delivery, especially following the October 2023 cybersecurity incident. This incident compromised the integrity of the data included in this year's report. In cases of missing data, we have utilized projections.

To help buttress our analysis of this year's projected data, we have included the below retrospective 10-year window on our service delivery levels, to provide a better understanding of our current performance and trajectory in historical context. This lens will also help to inform how we move forward under the auspices of our new and forthcoming multiyear Strategic Plan, to be completed in the coming year.

Overall, the data presented below exhibits a few broad generalizable trends across the different HRLSC service areas profiled. These include an overall general decline in service levels to the public, beginning and remaining fairly consistent from 2019-2020 to the present, as compared to the 2013-2014 to 2018-2019 fiscal periods. Factors potentially impacting these trends include:

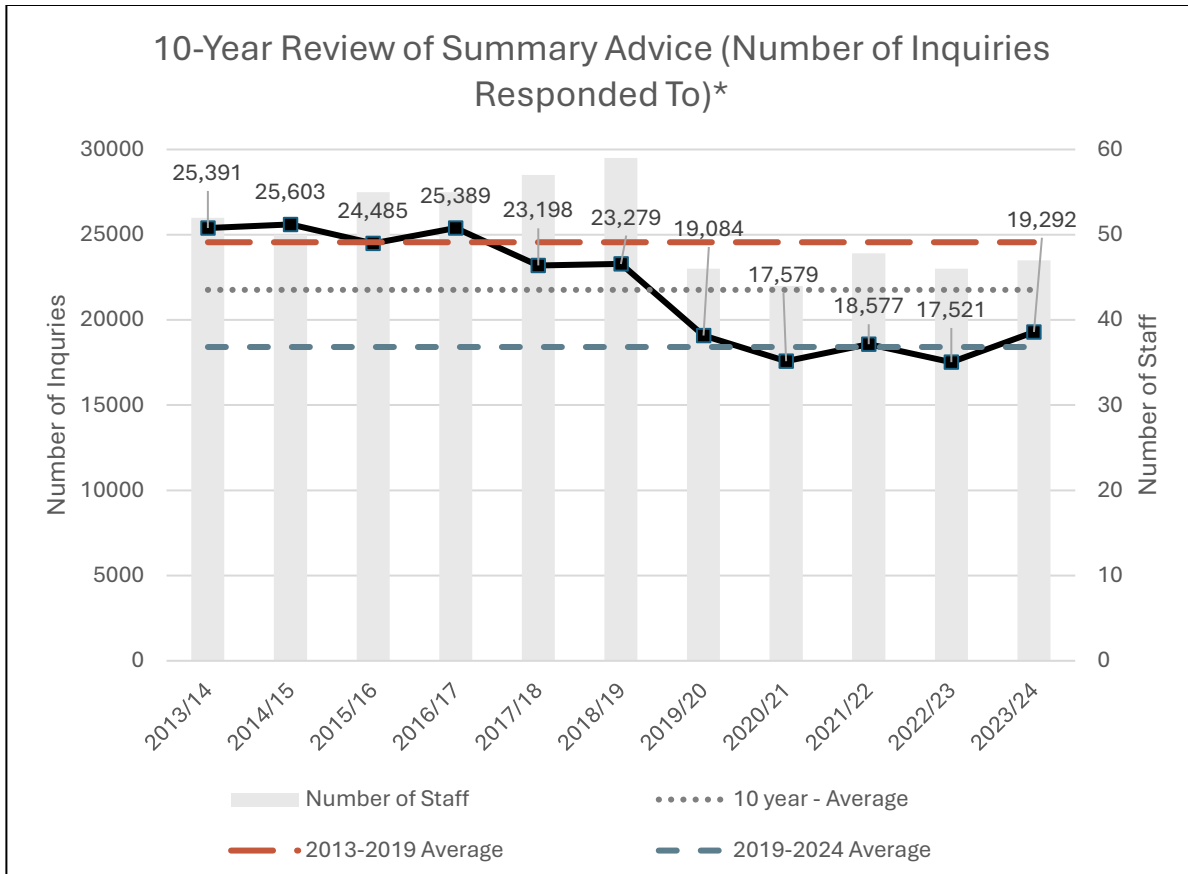
- Declining staff numbers, resulting from the HRLSC's static budget since 2008, and associated inflationary and sustainability pressures, and the ending of the HRLSC's (2013-2014 to the 2018-2019 fiscal year) Mediation Program funding as of the March 31, 2019 (at a loss of \$572,000 per year in annual funding), which have significantly impacted our ability to recruit and retain staff. For example:
  - During the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, when staffing levels were highest, the HRLSC had an average of 55 staff, reaching a peak of 59 staff in 2018-2019.
  - In the period following the 2018-2019 fiscal period (2019 to 2023) the HRLSC has consistently retained anywhere from 44 to 47 staff overall.
- Additionally, slowdowns at the HRTO, including during the COVID pandemic beginning in 2020, also impacted the volume of applicants for whom HRLSC could provide supports at mediations and merit hearings before the HRTO.

These trends are generally consistent across the different types of service areas profiled below.

### 1. Advice and support for resolving disputes involving discrimination, harassment, or reprisal and in filing human rights applications, motions, and submissions at the HRTO:

The first step for individuals looking to resolve a human rights issue is calling the HRLSC's intake line for summary legal advice. Through our free, confidential phone line, callers can receive guidance about their legal options for the human rights concerns that they are experiencing. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC provided summary legal advice to an estimated 19,292\* intake cases. This compares to 17,521 last fiscal year, a growth of 10%, despite the closing of our services for six weeks following the October 2023 cybersecurity incident.

While this represents a year-over-year growth in summary legal advice, it remains below the historical average for the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, when staff provided summary advice for an average of 24,558 inquiries per year (see Figure 14 below).



**Figure 14: 10-Year Review of Summary Advice (Number of Inquiries Responded To)**

Between the 2019-2020 and 2023-2024\* fiscal periods, the average number of inquiries that the HRLSC has been able to provide summary human rights advice for has dropped by 25 percent, down to 18,411 per year, from the 2013-14 to 2018-19 fiscal period average of 24,558.

The ability of the HRLSC to provide summary advice has depended upon having enough staff with subject matter expertise, including to respond to a high volume of calls. The creation and funding of specialized teams to support frontline services including summary advice is critical to the HRLSC’s success. One such team was created through the HRLSC’s Mediation Program initiative, which provided frontline support and legal services to clients looking for guidance and possible legal representation through the HRT0 mediations process.

As of the 2018-2019 fiscal period, the HRLSC’s Mediation Program funding was terminated resulting in a 15% loss of the HRLSC’s staff. As Figure 14 shows, this reduction in the number of inquiries appeared to directly follow this drop in staff.

The HRLSC also expressed concern about this trend in its 2019-2020 Annual Report. In that 2019-2020 Report’s Operational Performance section, the HRLSC found that the loss of staff due to the end of its Mediation Program had created a knock-on effect for frontline services provided by the Centre: “Internally, less in-depth legal service available required the inquiry line staff to spend more

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

time with callers, which increased the length of calls and reduced the number of inquiries that could be answered. Turnover of inquiry line staff also periodically reduced our capacity.”<sup>3</sup>

The HRLSC found that the end of the Mediation Program caused the greatest impact on the delivery of summary advice, even given the sizeable shock caused by the COVID pandemic. The HRLSC’s 2020-2021 Annual Report noted the direct impact of COVID upon the Centre’s capacity to provide summary advice and noted that services rebounded in the second half of that year after an initial decrease due to social distancing measures.<sup>4</sup> While the 2020-2021 Report was also concerned about COVID’s impact on the HRTO during this time, the subsequent 2021-2022 fiscal period again saw growth of summary advice inquiries.

The issues highlighted in the 2019-2020 Annual Report regarding the impact of the termination of the Mediation Program have remained a troubling issue for the HRLSC. As noted in this year’s Financial Analysis, the HRLSC continues with a static budget at 2008 levels, which perpetuates the dual challenges of retaining and recruiting staff to support its capacity to provide summary advice and other services, as noted in our further analyses below.

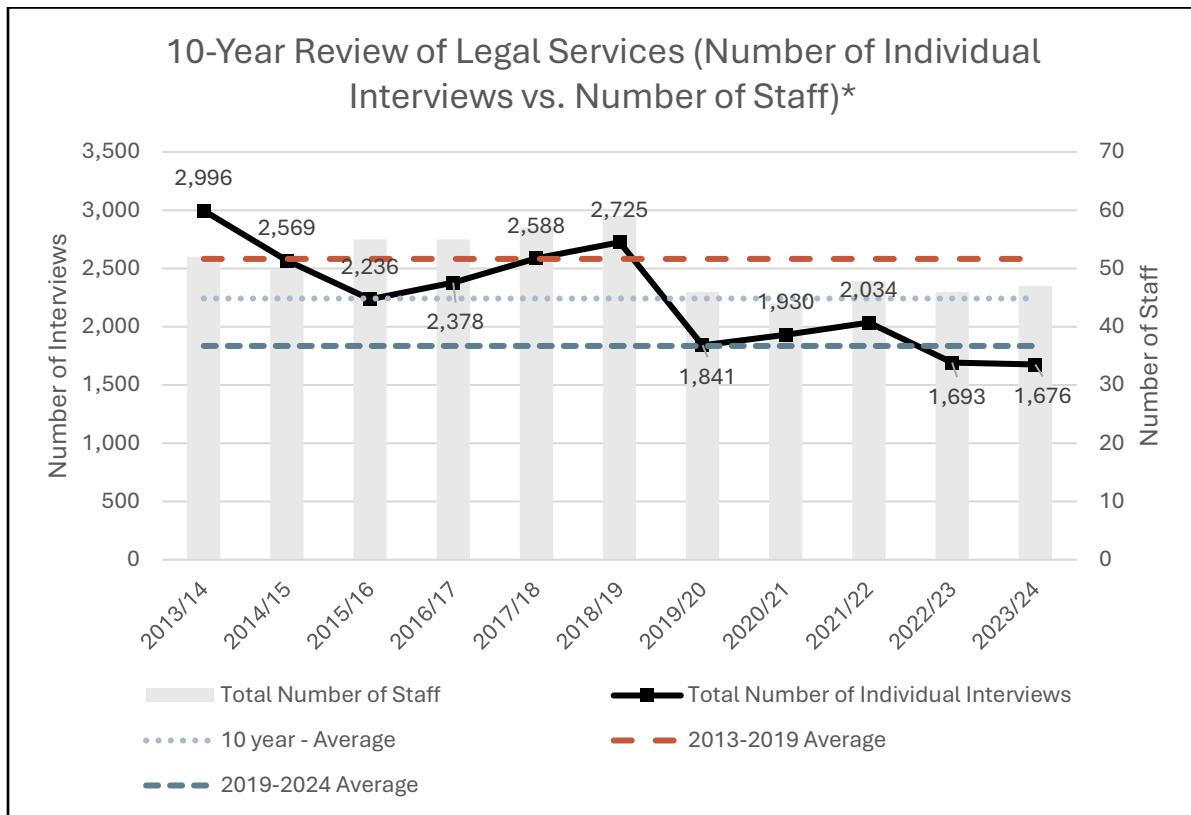


Figure 15: 10-Year Review of Legal Services (Number of Individual Interviews vs. Number of Staff)\*

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

<sup>3</sup> Page 26, [HRLSC Annual Report 2019-2020](#)

<sup>4</sup> Page 27, [HRLSC 2020-2021 Annual Report](#)

The number of legal interviews for in-depth legal services has taken a similar path over time. The HRLSC is estimated\* to have provided 1,676 legal interviews to HRLSC clients in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, compared to 1,693 last fiscal year. Historically, between the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, the HRLSC handled on average 2,582 interviews per year. However, this number has dropped to an average of 1,835 per year between the 2019-2020 to 2023-2024 fiscal periods.

Again, this data aligns with the previously noted decrease in staffing and the impacts that were first laid out in our 2019-2020 Annual Report. The 2019-2020 Report again attributed the decrease in the provision of in-depth legal services to the conclusion of the HRLSC’s Mediation Program. As with summary advice, the number of individuals assisted by the HRLSC’s in-depth legal services changed year-to-year, independently of any closures or slowdowns at the HRTO or as social distancing and pandemic restrictions tightened or loosened. With these critical front-end services so impacted by the end of the Mediation Program along with the recurring issues of retaining and acquiring experienced, qualified staff caused by the static budget, the HRLSC has also had to do its best to navigate additional unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances, such as the COVID pandemic and its secondary impacts upon service user demands, as well as a growing backlog and significant reductions in the HRTO’s case scheduling.

## 2. Negotiating settlements:

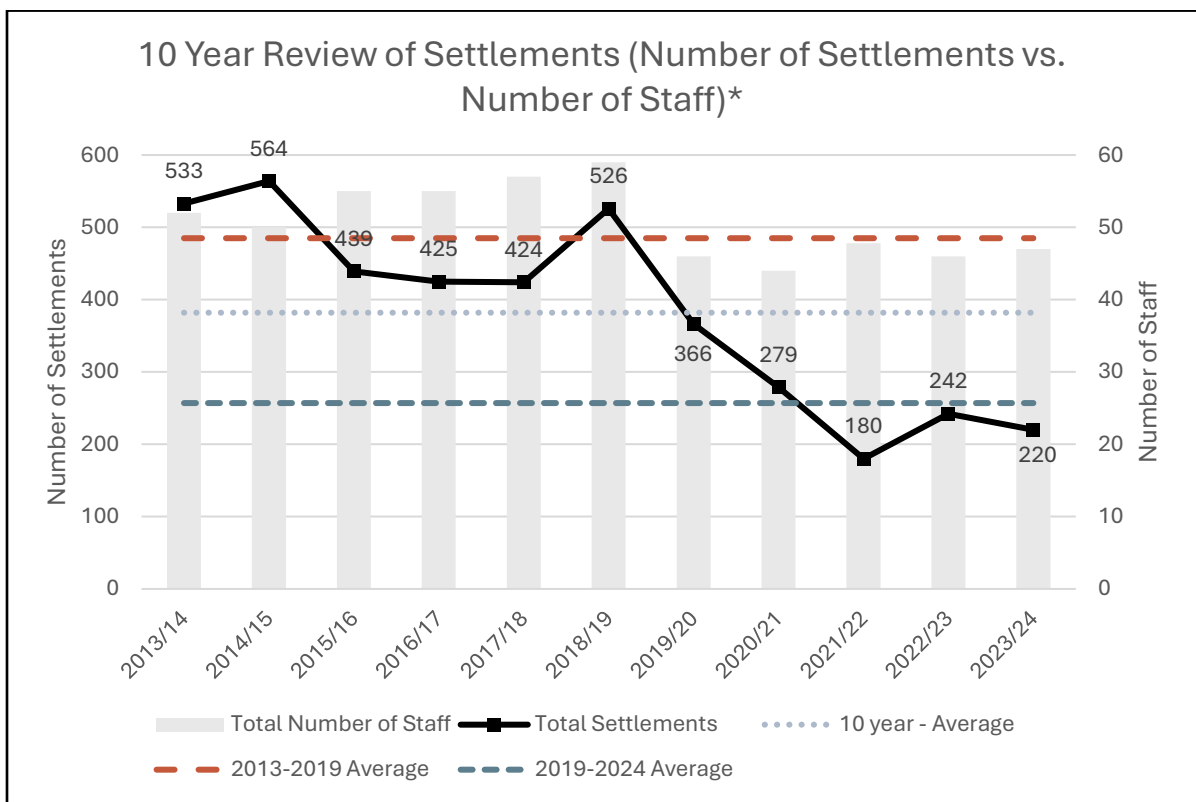
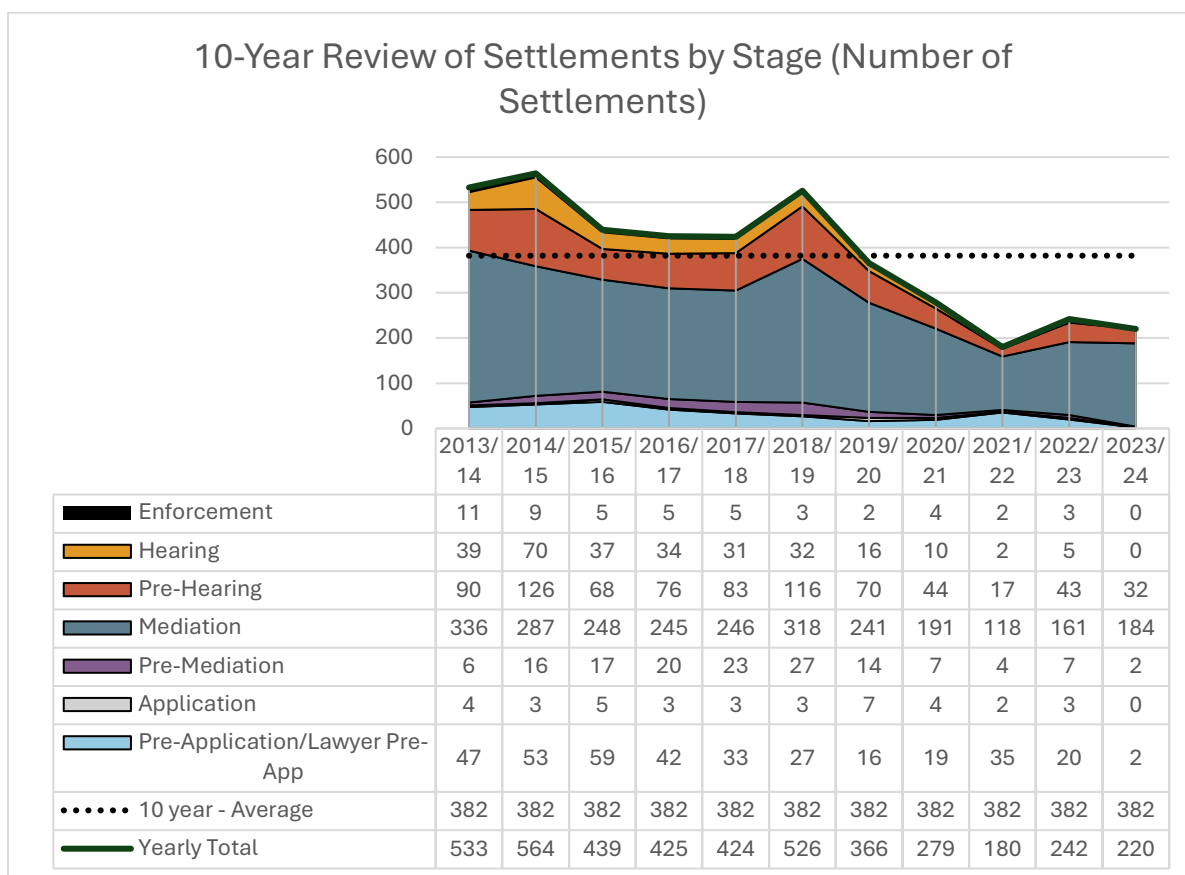


Figure 16: 10 Year Review of Settlements (Number of Settlements vs. Number of Staff)

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 2023 cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC settled an estimated 220\* case for its clients. This compares to 242 last fiscal year.

The HRLSC averaged a total of 485 negotiated settlements (at any stage in the application process, which includes clients at the pre-application stage, and post-hearing enforcement stage) per year between the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods. As the HRLSC’s 2019-2020 Annual Report noted, the key factor in the higher level of settlements (at any stage in the application process) during this time was the operation of the HRLSC’s Mediation Program which provided additional staff and support for clients looking to negotiate with respondents. Following the conclusion of this program in the 2018-2019 fiscal period due to loss of funding, the HRLSC negotiated an average of 257 settlements per year between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024\*.



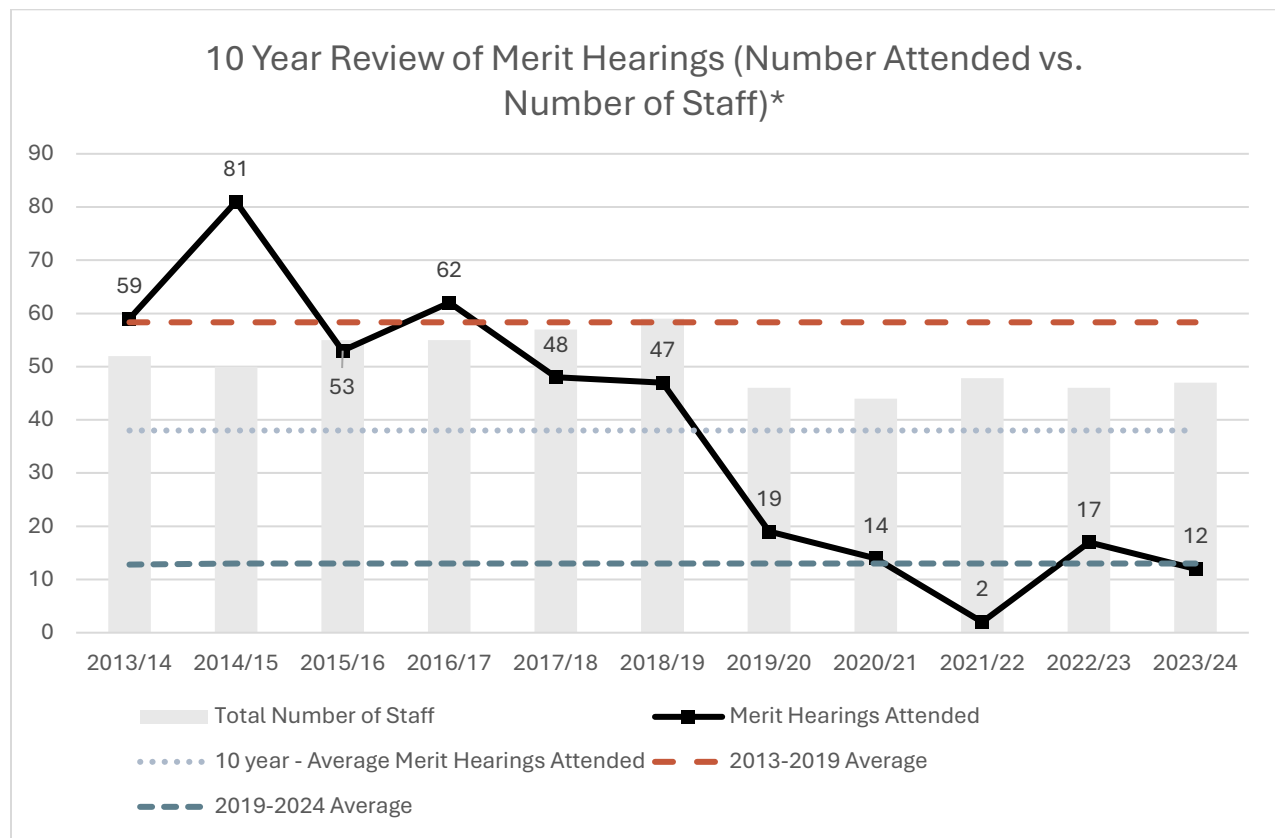
**Figure 17: 10-Year Review of Settlements by Stage (Number of Settlements)**

The termination of Mediation Program funding – together with other ongoing inflationary pressures negatively impacted the HRLSC’s ability to retain staff to provide services to hundreds of applicants in support of early resolutions, mediations and settlements before or during HRTTO hearings. As Figure 16 shows, following the ending of the Mediation Program, the HRLSC saw marked long-term decreases in the yearly number of settlements before or at hearings, before or at mediations and at the pre-application stages.

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

The loss of this funding, together with inflationary pressures from a static budget, has continued to reduce the HRLSC’s capacity to retain and recruit staff experienced in providing advice, support and representation for clients looking to settle human rights issues (prior to filing an HRT0 application) or HRT0 applications. Staff reductions relating to resource limitations have also increased the caseloads of remaining lawyers and legal staff that were handling all other client inquiries. The impact of COVID closures and significant reductions in HRT0 adjudicative staffing beginning in the 2019-2020 fiscal year also likely contributed to declines in the number of mediations scheduled thereafter, resulting in a corresponding decline in available mediation opportunities for the HRLSC.

### 3. Providing legal representation for HRT0 mediations and hearings:



**Figure 18: 10 Year Review of Merit Hearings (Number Attended vs. Number of Staff)**

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC represented an estimated<sup>\*</sup> 298 clients at HRT0 mediations and 12 at HRT0 merit hearings. This compares to 236 clients at mediations and 17 at hearing in the last fiscal year.

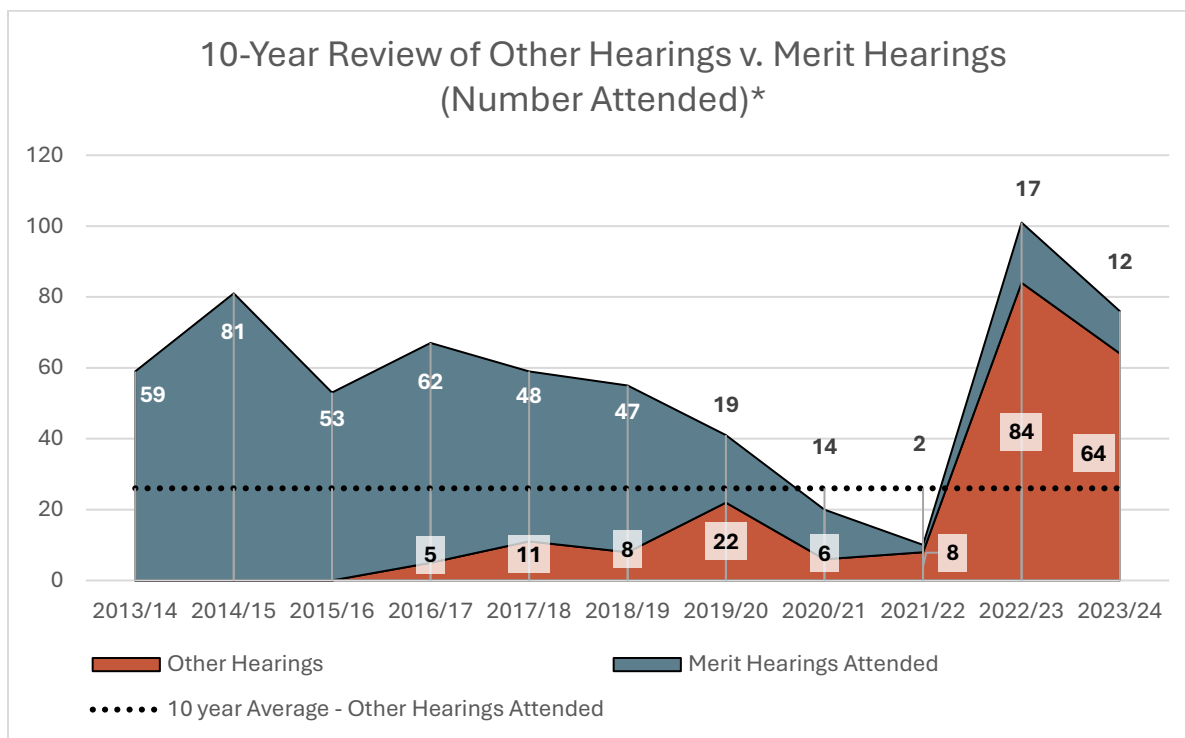
Between 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, the HRLSC represented clients before the HRT0 in an average of 58 hearings per year. Between the 2019-2020 and 2023-2024 fiscal periods, the HRLSC’s average yearly appearances at hearings dropped to 13.

<sup>\*</sup> This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

The substantial drop in the number of HRLSC Merit Hearings attended since 2018-2019 has likely been significantly impacted by the decline in numbers of merit hearings being scheduled at the HRT0 overall in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

Previous HRLSC Annual Reports have further noted the significance of COVID safety protocols and scheduling changes at the HRT0 between 2019-2024 as factors in limiting the number of all merit hearings, including those for which the HRLSC has been retained as legal representatives by applicants. However, as the HRLSC’s 2019-2020 Annual Report notes in its Operational Performance section, in addition to “reduction in requests for representation at the hearing stage because of delays at the Tribunal,” the Centre’s “loss of senior counsel through the year also reduced our capacity to provide representation at merit hearings” which occurred following the end of the HRLSC’s Mediation Program; this is a trend that continues to the present.

As a means of mitigating the reduction in requests for representation at the hearing stage, the 2019-2020 Report outlined the HRLSC’s efforts to increasingly support settlements, in addition to “summary hearings.”<sup>6</sup> However, such ongoing efforts continue to be challenged by declining HRLSC numbers of experienced legal counsel available to support this work (including the loss of five counsel positions in the 19/20 fiscal year alone), combined with a growing demand for client support at other hearings at the HRT0, which have increasingly displaced appearances at merit hearings, reflecting developments at the HRT0 (including an increasing focus on jurisdictional or procedural hearings in recent years; see Figure 19 below and Section 4.7 “Other Hearings” above).

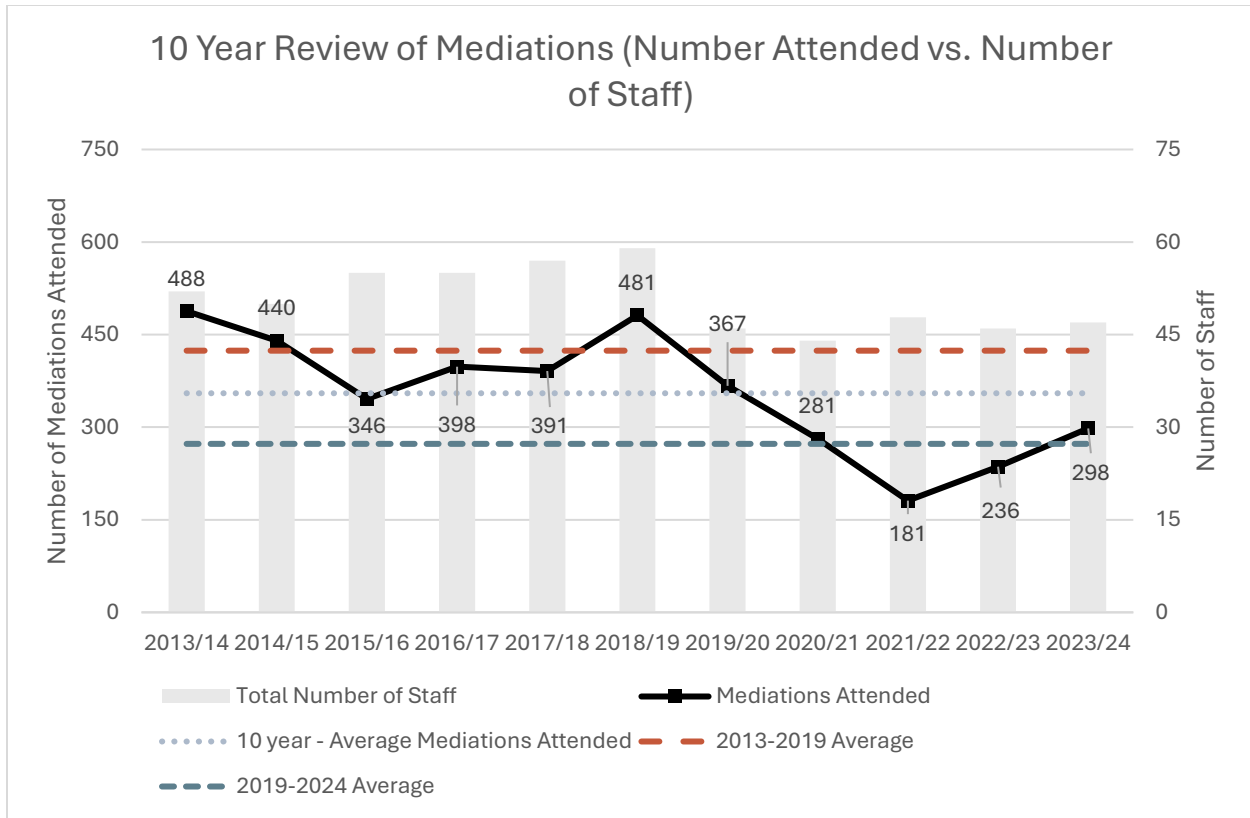


**Figure 19: 10-Year Review of Other Hearings v. Merit Hearings (Number Attended)**

<sup>5</sup> See Poziomka, Wade, “HRT0: A Look at the Numbers,” presented to the *2024 OBA Annual Update on Human Rights*, (May 24, 2023) for further, recent analysis on the subject of HRT0 merit hearing scheduling.

<sup>6</sup> [Page 29, HRLSC 2019-2020 Annual Report](#)





**Figure 20: 10 Year Review of Mediations (Number Attended vs. Number of Staff)**

Between the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, the HRLSC attended an average of 424 mediations per year. In the subsequent fiscal periods between the outbreak of COVID and the post-pandemic period (2019-2024<sup>1</sup>), the average number of mediations attended per year dropped to 273 per year.

As the HRLSC’s 2019-2020 Annual Report notes, the termination of funding for the Mediation Program caused the loss of experienced staff, in particular lawyers with mediation experience, as well as reductions to legal staff providing initial support at intake and in providing in-depth legal services for clients looking for guidance through the HRTO mediation process.

The 2019-2020 Annual Report also points to a slowdown in mediations at the HRTO during this time, which came after the highest ever number of mediations scheduled for the HRLSC during the 2018-2019 fiscal period.<sup>6</sup> While the HRLSC in the 2019-2020 fiscal period looked to scheduling coordination with the HRTO to “plan and allocate staffing to respond to periodic fluctuations in the number of mediations held,”<sup>7</sup> the HRLSC no longer has a dedicated team to support clients as

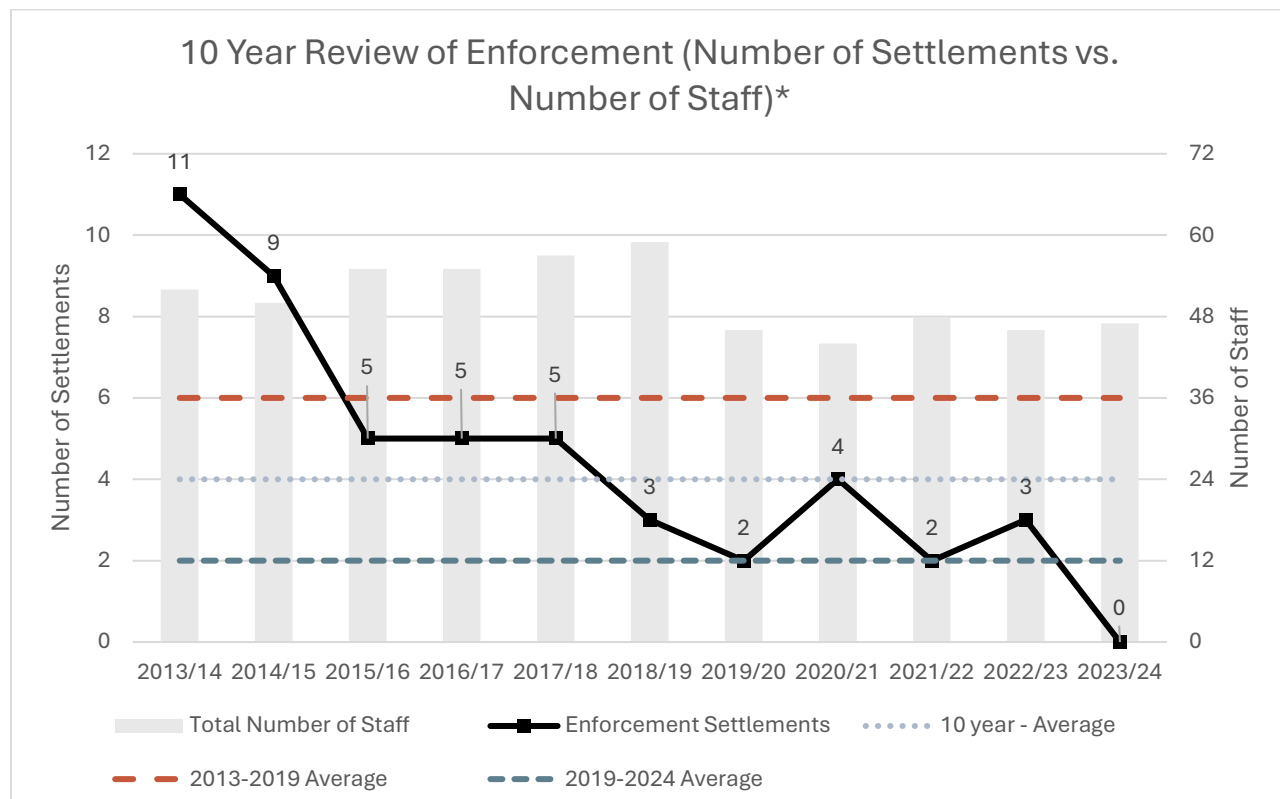
<sup>1</sup> This data for 2023-2024 fiscal year included in this calculation required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

<sup>6</sup> See Page 28, [HRLSC Annual Report 2019-2020](#) and Page 16, [HRLSC Annual Report 2018-2019](#).

<sup>7</sup> Page 28, [HRLSC Annual Report 2019-2020](#)

effectively as it did during the run of its Mediation Program, or to handle high fluctuations in the number of mediations scheduled by the HRTO similar to what occurred between 2018 and 2020.

#### 4. Enforcing HRTO orders and other post-hearing services including judicial reviews and reconsiderations



**Figure 21: 10 Year Review of Enforcement (Number of Settlements vs. Number of Staff)\***

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC provided legal advice to 72\* clients regarding enforcement or other post-hearing issues. In the previous year, the HRLSC provided legal advice to 56 clients regarding enforcement or other post-hearing issues and represented 3 clients in settlements related to enforcement of HRTO orders.<sup>8</sup>

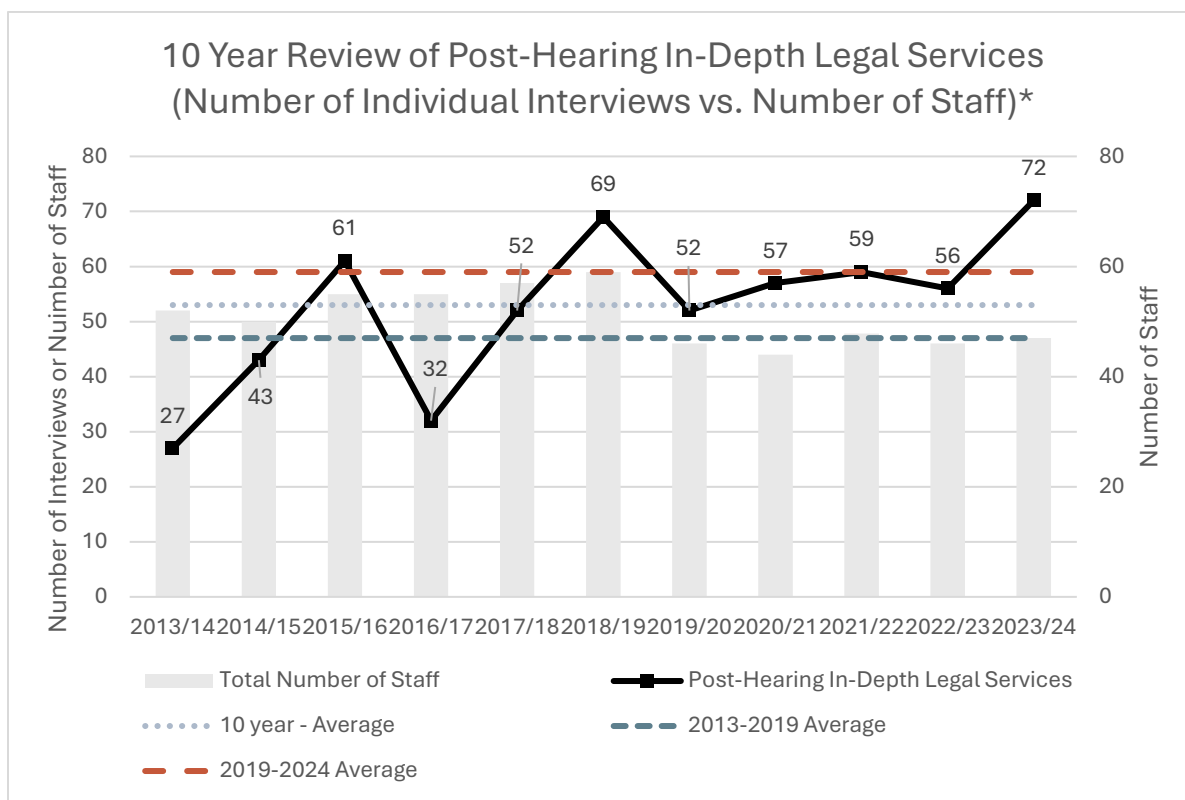
Between the 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 fiscal periods, the HRLSC had an average of 6 enforcement-related settlements per year. Settlements at enforcement can be achieved before or during an enforcement hearing before the HRTO.

The HRLSC has had greater difficulty in getting settlements at the enforcement stage of applications in recent years— averaging only 2.2 annually over the 2019-2020-2023-2024 period, with none this past year— despite growing client demand for post-hearing legal assistance overall (see Figure 22 below). As with the HRLSC’s 10-year metrics regarding settlements, mediations and

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

<sup>8</sup> Figure 21 covers only enforcement settlements and does not reflect the total number of enforcement hearings.

hearings, this decrease in HRLSC enforcement settlements has likely been impacted by the conclusion of the Mediation Program and reductions in budget and staffing.



**Figure 22: 10 Year Review of Post-Hearing In-Depth Legal Services (Number of Individual Interviews vs. Number of Staff)**

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC provided in-depth legal services to an estimated\* 72 clients regarding enforcement or other post-hearing issues including judicial reviews and reconsiderations. This is an increase from 56 the year before. During the 2019-2020 and 2023-2024 fiscal periods, the HRLSC provided legal advice to an average of 59 individuals on the subject of enforcement or other post-hearing issues, which is up from the 2013-2019 period average of 47 individuals. Fluctuations year-to-year in this category of service make it difficult to offer any general conclusions as to what is impacting these numbers.

It is notable, nevertheless, that this relative uptick in HRLSC’s provision of in-depth legal support services relating to post-hearing issues has come in the wake of corresponding decreases of HRLSC in-depth legal support services at the pre-application, mediation and hearing stages, as illustrated in Figure 23 below, combined with relative increases in other kinds of hearings which are mostly procedural in nature (as represented by the substantial growth in HRLSC legal supports for clients in Other Hearings graphed in Figure 19, consistent with broader trends at the HRTO).

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

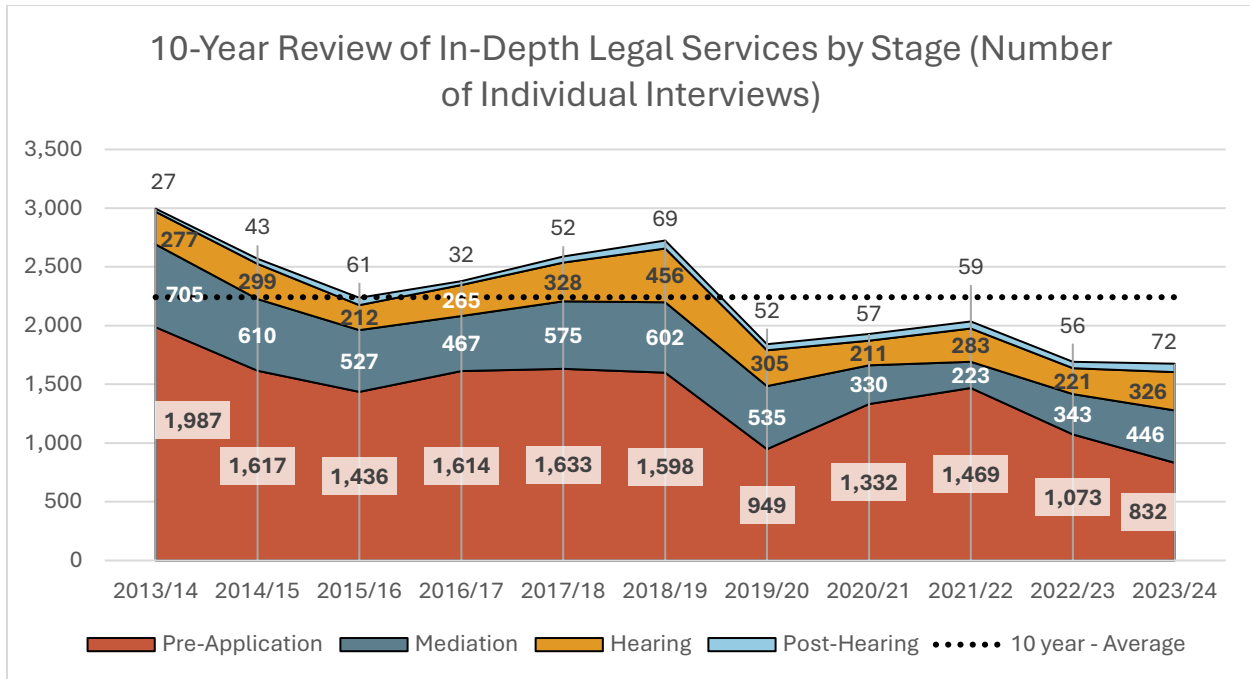


Figure 23: 10-Year Review of In-Depth Legal Services by Stage (Number of Individual Interviews)\*

## 5. Performance Measures

*“Everything was seamless and the lawyers were amazing and supportive.” – HRLSC client*

### Call-Answer Rate:

The first point of personal contact with the HRLSC for people looking for human rights legal advice and support services is through our phone system. Given the importance of this point of service, every year the HRLSC tracks the percentage of phone calls its staff receives and answers for members of the public.

**2023-2024 Target: 80%**

**Result Achieved: 88%**

As part of the HRLSC’s efforts to incorporate new digital tools into our services for the benefit of service users and our staff, the cloud-based phone system and features including our automated call-back feature allowed for high call-answer rates. Additionally, the HRLSC’s online client portal system, which was in service prior to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, allowed for the exchange of information between service users and staff about new intakes online and for better time-management during calls.

\* This data required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

## Client Service Ratings

Following the completion of legal representation from our staff (“closed files”), the HRLSC asks clients who received retained HRLSC legal services to review our services through an online survey. One of the questions asks clients to rate our services as either “good,” “very good,” “poor,” or “very poor.” The HRLSC tracks percentages of clients that decide to review the HRLSC’s services and responded positively (either “good or very good”).

**2023-2024 Target: 85%**

**Result Achieved: 100%**

In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, despite delays and a temporary shut-down of service due to the cybersecurity incident, the HRLSC’s clients for closed cases that responded to our exit survey all rated our services “good” or “very good.” This provides some insight into the dedicated efforts of our staff to ensure good communication with our clients during the technical disruptions we experienced and the continued level of excellence for services and legal representation for retained clients of the HRLSC.

## Positive Media Coverage

An important way for the HRLSC to grow public knowledge about the need to fight discrimination, the human rights system and the Centre’s services is through the publication of positive human rights stories. The HRLSC tracks mentions of the HRLSC and its cases in the media each fiscal year.

**2023-2024 Target: 7**

**Result Achieved: 6**

The HRLSC continues to receive media coverage in its efforts to promote public awareness of its services and the province’s human rights system. This past year, HRLSC had 3 media stories wherein we were explicitly mentioned, and another 3 media stories which profiled HRLSC cases. The Centre regularly looks to pitch stories to both established and new media sources and is vigilant in ensuring that the human rights system and the HRLSC are appropriately represented to the public. The development of a new Strategic Plan will be instructive in directing and expanding these activities going forward.

## Settlement Rate at Mediation

A key measure for the HRLSC is its record at mediations, an alternative to HRTO hearings. This statistic provides one metric for the speed of justice for Ontarians and increased efficiency and capacity in the human rights system through early resolution of human rights cases.

**2023-2024 Target: 70%**

**Result Achieved: ~ 62%\***

The percentage of mediations resulting in settlements in 2023-2024 is estimated to have fallen short of its target by 8%. This relative reduction in the numbers of mediated settlements in part reflects the fact that there were more mediations overall attended by the HRLSC this year (184 versus 160 last year). Although only 63% of these cases settled (or 184 cases) in the 2023-2024

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\* These performance measures required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

fiscal period, this is actually an increase in absolute terms over last year (when 160 cases were settled at mediation).

## Settlement Rate at the Beginning of Hearing

Like the previously mentioned measurement for the rate of settlements at mediation, the HRLSC tracks the number of cases settled at the pre-hearing stage (when a hearing notice is given) and the beginning of a hearing. This statistic is again used to help measure the access to and speed of justice for Ontarians in the human rights system.

**2023-2024 Target: 65%**

**Result Achieved: ~ 73%\***

In 2023-2024, the HRLSC's percentage of cases settled at the pre-hearing stage (when a hearing notice is given) and throughout the beginning of a hearing was 73%; this is 8% higher than the target for 2023-2024.

## Cases Settled at Any Stage of the Application Process

The HRLSC also tracks the number of settlements at any point in the application process.

**2023-2024 Target: 325**

**Result Achieved: ~ 220\***

As we have noted earlier in this report (see our "Fulfilling our Mandate" section), following the termination of the Mediation Program funding (which ran from the 2013-2014 to 2018-2019 fiscal year) resulting in diminished staffing numbers and capacity, the HRLSC has not represented over 300 clients at mediations each year since the 2019-2020 fiscal period, just after the Mediation Program ended.

## 6. Mandate Letter Priorities

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*"Every contact for help and the lawyer who assisted me through settlement at mediation, provided excellent service." –HRLSC Client*

In addition to its province-wide legislative mandate and mission and vision, the HRLSC gets additional, yearly direction from the Ministry of the Attorney General through Mandate Letters.

In MAG's Mandate Letter to the HRLSC for the 2023-24 fiscal period, it outlined several key focuses for the Centre. The bullet points below outline how the HRLSC met those MAG priorities.

### Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation through partnerships, where appropriate:
  - In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC again made use of the last year of the funding provided by the federal government's Department of Justice for its SHARE program.

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\* These performance measures required estimations: based on actual Q1 and Q4 data combined with the average of these two quarters, which was then projected to provide numbers for Q2 and Q3. Due to the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, data before November 2023 cannot be retrieved.

The HRLSC also remained active in seeking the renewal or alternate sources of funding for the continuation of this program.

- Identifying efficiencies and savings through innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability:
  - In this fiscal period, the HRLSC again benefitted from co-op work-placement partnerships such as ADIP and the Social Justice Fellowship Program, with post-secondary institutions to support the work of its staff during the summer, fall and winter academic semesters.
- Operating within the agency's financial allocations:
  - The HRLSC operated within its yearly budget and sought measures to expand its base funding and find additional funding for specialized programs (such as SHARE).
  - Through its Board, the HRLSC again assessed other methods of cost efficiencies.
  - The HRLSC also continued to have an annual external audit, which is included in its annual report and submitted to MAG.

## **Governance: Transparency, Accountability**

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting:
  - The HRLSC complied with government policies and directives by holding most of its official Board business virtually, to reduce travel and lodging expenses.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable:
  - The Board continued to respond diligently to the recommendations in the HRLSC's 2020 Audit Report.
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the Board's role in agency governance and accountability:
  - The HRLSC's Board again received a yearly orientation as well as training on risk management and governance principles.

## **Governance: Risk Management**

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of agency risks:
  - The HRLSC's Board received orientation as well as training on risk management and governance principles.
  - The HRLSC's executive team, management and Board monitored and assessed risks to operations on a quarterly basis.
  - The HRLSC's Board structure provided effective risk management through risk mitigation planning and the operation of its committees (including its finance, internal risk, and executive steering committees) that are struck as needed to provide advice and organization-level responses to risk issues.

- Following the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, the HRLSC also used its resources to retain IT expertise and legal advice to direct its investigation and response to the cybersecurity incident, including responding to clients under the direction of the IPC.

## Workforce Management

- Optimizing organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery:
  - The HRLSC maintained an adaptive and dynamic human capital plan with a view to preserve service delivery.
  - The HRLSC continued to ensure it had Indigenous and Francophone staff at every level of service and to support their capacity to provide services to clients requiring linguistic and cultural accommodations.
  - Where resources allow, the HRLSC also has staff operating in some locations around the province to support access to its services.

## Diversity and Inclusion

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives and adopting an inclusion engagement process:
  - The HRLSC provided ongoing professional development for staff and its Board in accordance with its commitment to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice.
  - Staff engagement and wellbeing was supported through the HRLSC 's mental health and wellness hub, as well as through support for important seasonal celebrations and observances.
  - The HRLSC ensured accessible, multi-language services for clients.

## Data Collection

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting:
  - The HRLSC continued to expand its service data (such as the introduction of tracking non-merit hearing appearances) through CTT and its digital platforms to inform its requisite operational and financial reporting through its published materials shared on its website and with MAG.
  - The collection of statistical information from its services and communications helped inform the decision-making of the HRLSC's management and Board.

## Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery:
  - The HRLSC continued to explore and implement services and platforms (such as the relaunching of its online Client Portal), create new content, and update IT infrastructure to grow and optimize its digital service delivery.
  - Following the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident, the HRLSC also used its resources to retain IT expertise and legal advice to direct its investigation and response



- o to the cybersecurity incident, including responding to clients under the direction of the IPC.
- o The HRLSC also has introduced additional staff training, introduced new security software and hardware and retained an IT advisor as further steps to secure its client data. The HRLSC is also working with MAG's Justice Technology Services as an additional security measure for its data security.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery:
  - o The HRLSC has provided additional security measures for its IT infrastructure, as well as taking on subject matter experts to support updates to existing cybersecurity and data security policies and procedures.

## 7. Risk Events

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### Workforce Management

The HRLSC provides an assessment of the immediate risks to its workforce management through its annual Human Capital Plan provided in its yearly Operational Business Plan (OBP), as well as through its ongoing maintenance and updating of a Risk Registry that is reported to MAG, our funder quarterly. Additionally, HRLSC tracks potential future long-term trends and threats to its workforce through the OBP's Environmental Scan.

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the HRLSC continued to experience significant challenges to financial sustainability which continued to negatively impact staff recruitment and retention leading to significant and consistent high workforce turnover. The HRLSC is actively seeking to increase and diversify its funding to ensure future capacity to hire and retain critical staff positions at competitive market salary rates.

### Bargaining

In 2023-2024, the HRLSC continued negotiating a collective agreement for the non-lawyer unionized staff with their bargaining agent OPSEU. The previous collective agreement ended at the end of December 2021. Under the requirement set in the Province's 2018 Fall Economic Statement, the HRLSC Board of Directors and Treasury Board Secretariat were required to approve the negotiated collective agreement prior to ratification.

Additionally, on March 28, 2024, the HRLSC entered into a Voluntary Recognition and Framework Agreement with OPSEU who will now represent all non-management lawyers employed by the HRLSC. This development followed the latter's filing of an Application for Certification on September 13, 2023, at the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The HRLSC looks forward to working with its counsel and their new OPSEU bargaining agent to make the HRLSC an employer of choice.

### Competitiveness and Sustainability

The HRLSC continues to provide financial forecasting in its yearly Operational Business Plans to assess potential risks to its services and staffing. While the HRLSC has been effective in sharing prompt updates about its financial standing and in looking at creative solutions to budgetary constraints and sustainability challenges, it relies heavily upon the attention and action of MAG and the Treasury Board Secretariat. The HRLSC will continue to seek out creative alternative sources

of funding and support. HRLSC is nevertheless also mindful of the critical role of stable government funding for effective human rights institutions, as one of seven core “Paris Principles” used internationally by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights institutions (GANHRI) as a minimum standard for a NHRI to be considered credible and to operate effectively, is: “Adequate resources, so that NHRIs have the funding, staffing, infrastructure and institutional capacity to perform their functions and discharge their responsibilities”.<sup>7</sup>

## HRTO Operations

In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, the operation of the HRTO has significant impact on the HRLSC’s service delivery. To monitor and manage risks regarding potential fluctuations in the HRTO’s operations, the HRLSC maintains strong relationships with key administrators both at Tribunals Ontario and at the HRTO.

The ongoing work to restaff the HRTO has continued to place limits on the number of hearings and mediations scheduled, resulting in delays and backlog and a corresponding reduction of related services provided by the HRLSC’s staff. At the same time, the HRTO has continued to rework several of its key pre-hearing processes, which has led to an increase in legal services required by the HRLSC staff for our clients.

The HRTO has recently accelerated scheduling and it is anticipated that there will be corresponding increase to HRLSC’s attendance at mediations and hearings in the coming reporting period, as it began to experience this period—particularly in relation to mediations.

## Cybersecurity Incident

Following the cybersecurity incident that took place on October 3, 2023, the HRLSC took immediate steps to mitigate risks to its IT infrastructure. Key pieces informing this work included recommendations from the IPC, the introduction of an IT cybersecurity consultant and considerations around the financial impact of additional security measures. HRLSC’s funder (MAG), provided funding to support these measures and experts.

Currently, the HRLSC continues to work with the IT cybersecurity consultant on an IT strategy that will support its Strategic Plan and help build a robust cybersecurity threat monitoring and response

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://ganhri.org/paris-principles/>. These core Paris Principles - originally set out in Paris in 1991 and adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, as informed the creation of GANHRI (previously known as the International Coordinating Committee of institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights) to evaluate National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) - can also be extended to the evaluation of provincial human rights institutions in federal states like Canada (see for example OHRC’s consideration of the Paris Principles at the time of Bill 107 in its “[Discussion paper: Reviewing Ontario’s human rights system](#)”). GANHRI’s Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) further expounds on the meaning of this Paris Principle in its “General Observations, 2018” guidance, which further states: “To function effectively, an NHRI must be provided with an appropriate level of funding in order to guarantee its independence and its ability to freely determine its priorities and activities. It must also have the power to allocate funding according to its priorities.” The SCA further states that adequate funding must at a minimum include “salaries and benefits awarded to its staff comparable to those of civil servants performing similar tasks in other independent institutions of the State” and “allocation of a sufficient amount of resources for mandated activities”. It also advises: “Funding from external sources...should not compose the core funding of the NHRI, as this is the responsibility of the State”; and “such funds should not be tied to donor-defined priorities but rather to the pre-determined priorities of the NHRI”.

system. The HRLSC also began discussions to acquire several key tools to further assess IT risks, including dark web monitoring, penetration testing, compromise assessments and put in place cybersecurity training for all existing staff and new hires.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal period, the HRLSC also investigated conducting a comprehensive targeted risk assessment for its cybersecurity preparedness, which would include all aspects of HRLSC's service delivery and review of new digital tools and recent upgrades. In addition, the HRLSC is working with its funder (MAG), and Justice Technology Services to onboard HRLSC on to the OPS network. This cost-efficient measure will also enhance the HRLSC's security levels.

## 8. HRLSC Board of Directors

**Table 3: Total Board Remunerations (by Board Member)**

<i>Board Member</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Term of Appointment</i>	<i>Total Remuneration for Fiscal Year</i>
Ena Chadha	Chair of the Board	2021 – 2024	\$39,617.93 <sup>9</sup>
Mary Joe Freire	Vice Chair and Director	2021 – 2024	\$7,932.14
Martial Moreau	Treasurer and Director	2022 – 2025	\$8,887.03
Sandi Bell	Director	2023 – 2025	\$6,809.50 <sup>10</sup>
Evelyn Ball	Director	2022 – 2025	\$3,690.58
Tamar Witelson	Director	2022 – 2025	\$3,210.00
Michelle Tan	Director	2022 – 2025	\$3,046.16
Gary Pieters	Director	2023 – 2026	\$1,875.00

<sup>9</sup> This remuneration includes costs incurred responding to such exceptional circumstances as the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident and during Executive Director recruitment and transition periods. It also reflects time allocated to significant labour relations developments and negotiations this past year requiring Board review and approval (including with unionizing HRLSC Counsel, and unionized staff), and concerted efforts to secure new funding for the Centre in dialogue with existing and prospective funders, in lieu of growing sustainability concerns.

<sup>10</sup> This remuneration includes costs incurred through participation as a member of the Board's recruitment committee.

## 9. Financial Analysis

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### 9.1 Cost Allocation:

**Table 4: Cost Allocations from 2020-2021 to 2023-2024 fiscal periods**

<i>Expense</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Salaries and Benefits	85%	84%	85%	77%
Operating	14%	15%	14%	21%
Board	1%	1%	1%	1%

Salaries and benefits continued to be the highest allocation of the HRLSC's costs during the 2023-2024 fiscal period.

Expenditures were monitored and assessed to ensure appropriate and balanced allocations in each budget area in order to support and maximize services in a cost-effective manner. HRLSC's operational expenditures were significantly higher in 2023-2024 compared to other years, due to the cybersecurity incident.

### 9.2 Cost Summary

**Table 5: Cost Summary for 2020-2021 to 2023-2024 fiscal periods**

<i>Expense</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>
Salaries and Benefits	\$4,319,934	\$4,501,831	\$4,512,115	\$4,497,249
Operating	\$722,768	\$ 811,747	\$750,875	\$1,218,376
Board	\$46,896	\$53,037	\$69,419	\$78,981
Total	\$5,089,598	\$5,366,615	\$5,332,409	\$5,794,606

### 9.3 Analysis:

The HRLSC is pleased to report that despite continued financial challenges and with significant fiscal uncertainty, the Centre was able to manage its operational commitments.

The HRLSC is required to have an annual and independent external audit in accordance with the *Agencies and Appointments Directive*. The auditors for this year's report confirmed that the HRLSC is in good standing and that the Centre derives its primary operating revenue from MAG. The HRLSC has realigned funds in the 2023-2024 fiscal period to support board-approved critical one-

time projects to enable the Centre to fulfill its mandate. The audited financial statement approved by the Board of Directors is attached to the end of this annual report.

Costs for the 2023-2024 fiscal period were effectively managed through monitoring, analysis and timely decision-making supported by the HRLSC's agile service delivery model.

The HRLSC continues to make efforts to find cost efficiencies, such as utilizing digital platforms and outsourcing administrative work. Where needed, the HRLSC redeployed resources to priority areas by optimizing our organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery and back-office support.

The HRLSC's operating expenses during the 2023-2024 fiscal period were significantly higher compared to other years. This is driven by the expenses incurred after the October 3, 2023, cybersecurity incident. The Centre continues to make budget realignments to address its immediate operational needs. However, the HRLSC is concerned with the impact of the rate of inflation upon its operations and will continue to discuss this matter with MAG.

The HRLSC and the OPSEU's current collective agreement for non-legal unionized staff expired as of December 31, 2021. Following the 2023-2024 fiscal period, the parties reached a tentative agreement for the period covering January 2022 to December 2024.

The HRLSC's Board members continue to participate in governance-related initiatives in response to government reviews, requests, and recruitment of an interim Executive Director. Therefore, increased board participation resulted in higher board-related costs in 2023-2024. The Board serves as a bridge to other organizations within the justice system and interacts extensively with MAG and the other two pillars of the human rights system, the HRTO and OHRC. In this work with fellow community and government partners, the Board promotes additional potential opportunities for efficiencies.

The most significant financial challenge for the HRLSC in 2023-2024 remains a serious issue of staff retention, primarily due to inadequate funding and consequent non-competitive salaries and sustainability challenges. The HRLSC maintains regular communications and correspondence with MAG to address these financial inequities, including discussions about a more sustainable funding model. Without an increase to the HRLSC's permanent base budget, reductions in staff and services will be required even as Ontarians' demand for legal advice and support on human rights issues increases.

## 10. Audited Financial Statements

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*Provided separately in this Board package*

**Human Rights Legal Support Centre**  
**Financial Statements**  
For the year ended March 31, 2024

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## Independent Auditor's Report

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To the Board of Directors of Human Rights Legal Support Centre

### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Human Rights Legal Support Centre (the "Centre"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024, and the statements of operations and changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Centre as at March 31, 2024, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Centre in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Centre's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Centre or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Centre's financial reporting process.

### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

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## Independent Auditor's Report (continued)

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### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements (Continued)

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Centre's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Centre's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Centre to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

Oakville, Ontario  
REPORT DATE

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Statement of Financial Position

March 31	2024				2023			
	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total
<b>Assets</b>								
<b>Current assets</b>								
Cash	\$ 939,106	\$ 88,836	\$ -	\$ 1,027,942	\$ 585,737	\$ 49,445	\$ -	\$ 635,182
HST recoverable	171,157	10,841	-	181,998	67,726	6,892	-	74,618
Prepaid expenses	64,090	-	-	64,090	116,757	6,264	-	123,021
Interfund balance	(256,360)	(4,230)	260,590	-	(122,296)	(42,294)	164,590	-
	<b>917,993</b>	<b>95,447</b>	<b>260,590</b>	<b>1,274,030</b>	<b>647,924</b>	<b>20,307</b>	<b>164,590</b>	<b>832,821</b>
<b>Capital assets (Note 2)</b>	<b>76,428</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76,428</b>	<b>25,474</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,474</b>
	<b>\$ 994,421</b>	<b>\$ 95,447</b>	<b>\$ 260,590</b>	<b>\$ 1,350,458</b>	<b>\$ 673,398</b>	<b>\$ 20,307</b>	<b>\$ 164,590</b>	<b>\$ 858,295</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>								
<b>Current</b>								
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 650,810	\$ 95,447	\$ -	\$ 746,257	\$ 441,995	\$ 37,776	\$ -	\$ 479,771
Deferred revenue (Note 3)	112,200	-	-	112,200	-	-	-	-
	<b>763,010</b>	<b>95,447</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>858,457</b>	<b>441,995</b>	<b>37,776</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>479,771</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>								
Operating fund (Note 7)	231,411	-	-	231,411	231,403	-	-	231,403
Department of Justice Canada	-	-	-	-	-	(17,469)	-	(17,469)
Internally restricted fund	-	-	260,590	260,590	-	-	164,590	164,590
	<b>231,411</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>260,590</b>	<b>492,001</b>	<b>231,403</b>	<b>(17,469)</b>	<b>164,590</b>	<b>378,524</b>
	<b>\$ 994,421</b>	<b>\$ 95,447</b>	<b>\$ 260,590</b>	<b>\$ 1,350,458</b>	<b>\$ 673,398</b>	<b>\$ 20,307</b>	<b>\$ 164,590</b>	<b>\$ 858,295</b>

On behalf of the Board of Directors:

\_\_\_\_\_ Director

\_\_\_\_\_ Director

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Statement of Operations

For the year ended March 31

2024

2023

	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total
<b>Revenue</b>								
Ministry of the Attorney General	\$ 5,823,363	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,823,363	\$ 5,383,150	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,383,150
Department of Justice Canada	-	576,755	-	576,755	-	511,744	-	511,744
Other income	67,251	-	-	67,251	23,294	-	-	23,294
	<b>5,890,614</b>	<b>576,755</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,467,369</b>	<b>5,406,444</b>	<b>511,744</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,918,188</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>								
Salaries and wages	3,701,648	418,186	-	4,119,834	3,714,993	343,579	-	4,058,572
Employee benefits (Note 4)	795,601	71,175	-	866,776	797,122	62,816	-	859,938
Services	1,002,855	51,006	-	1,053,861	525,605	68,298	-	593,903
Communication	96,938	13,096	-	110,034	92,347	11,812	-	104,159
Province wide service delivery	8,862	-	-	8,862	12,622	-	-	12,622
Travel	6,741	-	-	6,741	7,294	-	-	7,294
Supplies and equipment	71,908	5,823	-	77,731	62,610	5,608	-	68,218
Board expense	78,981	-	-	78,981	69,419	-	-	69,419
Amortization	31,072	-	-	31,072	50,397	2,194	-	52,591
Consulting	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,380	8,380
	<b>5,794,606</b>	<b>559,286</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,353,892</b>	<b>5,332,409</b>	<b>494,307</b>	<b>8,380</b>	<b>5,835,096</b>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures for the year</b>	<b>96,008</b>	<b>17,469</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>113,477</b>	<b>74,035</b>	<b>17,437</b>	<b>(8,380)</b>	<b>83,092</b>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Statement of Changes in Net Assets

For the year ended March 31

2024

2023

	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total
<b>Net assets</b> , beginning of year	231,403	(17,469)	164,590	378,524	275,364	(34,906)	54,974	295,432
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures for the year	96,008	17,469	-	113,477	74,035	17,437	(8,380)	83,092
Interfund transfer (Note 1)	(96,000)	-	96,000	-	(117,996)	-	117,996	-
<b>Net assets</b> , end of year	\$ 231,411	\$ -	\$ 260,590	\$ 492,001	\$ 231,403	\$ (17,469)	\$ 164,590	\$ 378,524

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended March 31

2024

2023

	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total	General Operations MAG	Department of Justice Canada	Internally Restricted Fund	Total
<b>Cash provided by (used in)</b>								
<b>Operating activities</b>								
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures for the year	\$ 96,008	\$ 17,469	\$ -	\$ 113,477	\$ 74,035	\$ 17,437	\$ (8,380)	\$ 83,092
Amortization	31,072	-	-	31,072	50,397	2,194	-	52,591
Changes in non-cash working capital balances								
Accounts receivable	-	-	-	-	2,043	-	-	2,043
HST recoverable	(103,431)	(3,949)	-	(107,380)	14,366	(1,305)	-	13,061
Prepaid expenses	52,666	6,264	-	58,930	(56,686)	(2,509)	-	(59,195)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	208,816	57,671	-	266,487	(120,893)	(10,826)	-	(131,719)
Deferred revenue	112,200	-	-	112,200	-	-	-	-
	<b>397,331</b>	<b>77,455</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>474,786</b>	<b>(36,738)</b>	<b>4,991</b>	<b>(8,380)</b>	<b>(40,127)</b>
<b>Investing activities</b>								
Interfund transfers	38,064	(38,064)	-	-	2,452	(10,832)	8,380	-
Purchase of capital assets	(82,026)	-	-	(82,026)	-	-	-	-
	<b>(43,962)</b>	<b>(38,064)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(82,026)</b>	<b>2,452</b>	<b>(10,832)</b>	<b>8,380</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Increase (decrease) in cash during the year</b>	<b>353,369</b>	<b>39,391</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>392,760</b>	<b>(34,286)</b>	<b>(5,841)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(40,127)</b>
<b>Cash, beginning of year</b>	<b>585,737</b>	<b>49,445</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>635,182</b>	<b>620,023</b>	<b>55,286</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>675,309</b>
<b>Cash, end of year</b>	<b>\$ 939,106</b>	<b>\$ 88,836</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 1,027,942</b>	<b>\$ 585,737</b>	<b>\$ 49,445</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 635,182</b>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

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# Human Rights Legal Support Centre

## Notes to Financial Statements

**March 31, 2024**

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### 1. Significant Accounting Policies

#### Nature of Operations

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre (the "Centre") was established December 20, 2006 as a corporation without share capital as a result of Royal Assent being granted to Section 45.11 of the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006*. The legislation took effect on June 30, 2008 and the Centre opened on that day.

The Centre is not a Crown agency, but is designated as an operational service agency and reports to the Ministry of the Attorney General ("MAG"). The Centre is independent from, but accountable to the Government of Ontario. Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between the Centre and the Attorney General for the Province of Ontario, the objectives of the Centre are:

- (a) To establish and administer a cost-effective and efficient system for providing support services, including legal services, respecting applications to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal under Part IV of the Code; and
- (b) To establish policies and priorities for the provision of support services based on financial resources.

The Centre is a not-for-profit organization, as described in Section 149(1)(l) of the *Income Tax Act*, and therefore is not subject to either federal or provincial income taxes.

#### Basis of Accounting

The financial statements are prepared by management in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit-organizations. The financial statements have been prepared within the framework of significant accounting policies summarized below:

The Centre maintains an Operating Fund, Department of Justice Canada Fund and an internally restricted fund.

The day to day activities of the Centre are recorded in the Operating Fund which is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General ("MAG").

The Department of Justice Canada Fund ("DOJ") is an externally restricted fund to provide funding for a specialized team to provide free legal advice and public legal education information to individuals across Ontario who have experienced sexual harassment at work. The Centre entered into an agreement with the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada to fund this project for the period from July 3, 2019 to March 31, 2024.

The internally restricted fund was established, by the Board of Directors to fund projects. This fund is financed by appropriations from the operating fund. During the year, the Board of Directors approved a transfer of \$96,000 (2023 - \$117,996) from the operating fund.

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# Human Rights Legal Support Centre

## Notes to Financial Statements

March 31, 2024

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### 1. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

#### Revenue Recognition

The Centre follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions, which includes government grants.

The Centre receives revenue from the MAG. The amounts are recorded as revenue when received or receivable. All of the funds received are restricted as to use for purposes set out in the MOU.

The Centre receives revenue from the Department of Justice Canada. The amounts are recorded as revenue when received or receivable. All of the funds received are restricted as to use for purposes as set out in the funding agreement.

#### Deferred revenue

Deferred revenue consist of funding received relating to restricted revenue from the MAG. These funds will be recognized as revenue in the ensuing fiscal year corresponding with the period in which the related expenses are incurred.

#### Capital Assets

The costs of capital assets are capitalized upon meeting the criteria for recognition as a capital asset; otherwise, costs are expensed as incurred. The cost comprises its purchase price and any directly attributable cost of preparing the asset for its intended use.

Capital assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortization and accumulated impairment losses.

Amortization is provided for on a straight-line basis at rates designed to amortize the cost of the capital assets over their estimated useful lives. The annual amortization rates are as follows:

Computer equipment	-	3 years
Furniture and fixtures	-	5 years

Capital assets are tested for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that its carrying amount may not be recoverable. If any potential impairment is identified, the amount of impairment is quantified by comparing the carrying value of the capital asset to its fair value. Any impairment of the capital asset is recognized in income in the year in which the impairment occurs.

#### Financial Instruments

All financial instruments are initially recognized at fair value and subsequently at amortized cost. Financial assets are tested for impairment when changes in circumstances indicate that the asset could be impaired. Transaction costs are expensed for those items remeasured at fair value at each statement of financial position date and charged to the financial instrument for those measured at amortized cost.



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# Human Rights Legal Support Centre

## Notes to Financial Statements

**March 31, 2024**

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### 1. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

#### **Impairment**

At the end of each year, the Centre assesses whether there are any indications that a financial asset measured at amortized cost may be impaired. Objective evidence of impairment includes observable data that comes to the attention of the Centre, including but not limited to the following events: significant financial difficulty of the issuer; a breach of contract, such as a default or delinquency in interest or principal payments; and bankruptcy or other financial reorganization proceedings.

When there is an indication of impairment, the Centre determines whether a significant adverse change has occurred during the year in the expected timing or amount of future cash flows from the financial asset.

When the Centre identifies a significant adverse change in the expected timing or amount of future cash flows from a financial asset, it reduces the carrying amount of the financial asset to the greater of the following:

- The present value of the cash flows expected to be generated by holding the financial asset discounted using a current market rate of interest appropriate to the financial asset; and
- The amount that could be realized by selling the financial asset at the statement of financial position date.

Any impairment of the financial asset is recognized in income in the year in which the impairment occurs.

When the extent of impairment of a previously written-down financial asset decreases and the decrease can be related to an event occurring after the impairment was recognized, the previously recognized impairment loss is reversed to the extent of the improvement, but not in excess of the impairment loss. The amount of the reversal is recognized in income in the year the reversal occurs.

#### **Use of Estimates**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make judgments, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of accounting policies and the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and the disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenditures during the current period. Actual results may differ from these estimates, the impact of which would be recorded in future periods.

Estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognized in the year in which the estimates are revised and in any future years affected.

#### **Pension Plan**

The Centre, through the sponsorship of MAG, is a participating employer to a multi-employer defined benefit pension plan administered by the Ontario Pension Board ("OPB") for employees of the Province of Ontario. In accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, as sufficient information is not available to the Centre to use defined benefit plan accounting, the Centre accounts for the pension plan as a defined contribution pension plan. The Centre expenses pension contributions when made.

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Notes to Financial Statements

**March 31, 2024**

### 2. Capital Assets

	2024		2023	
	Cost	Accumulated Amortization	Cost	Accumulated Amortization
Computer equipment	\$ 635,921	\$ 559,493	\$ 553,895	\$ 528,421
Furniture and fixtures	4,150	4,150	4,150	4,150
	<b>\$ 640,071</b>	<b>563,643</b>	<b>\$ 558,045</b>	<b>\$ 532,571</b>
Net book value		<b>\$ 76,428</b>		<b>\$ 25,474</b>

### 3. Deferred Revenue

	2024	2023
Balance, beginning of the year	\$ -	\$ -
Less: amounts recognized as revenue in the year	<b>552,263</b>	-
Add: restricted amounts received related to the following year	<b>(440,063)</b>	-
Balance, end of year	<b>\$ 112,200</b>	\$ -

### 4. Pension Plan

The Centre, through the sponsorship of the MAG, is a participating employer to a defined benefit plan administered by the Ontario Pension Board ("OPB") for employees of the province of Ontario. Based on contribution rates as set by the OPB, the Centre matches employee contributions to the plan at the rate of 7.4% (2023 - 7.4%) of earnings up to the CPP yearly pension maximum entitlement ("YPME") and 10.5% (2023 - 10.5%) for earnings above the YPME. The Centre contributed \$313,150 (2023 - \$316,818) to the plan which is recorded in employee benefits in the statement of operations.

### 5. Contingent Liabilities

The Centre is party to legal proceedings with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario which arise from normal operations. Actual liabilities with respect to these actions and proceedings cannot be determined. Management believes that they will be successful and any potential liability will not materially affect the financial position of the Centre. Any ultimate liability in respect of these legal proceedings will be accounted for as an expense in the year incurred.

## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Notes to Financial Statements

**March 31, 2024**

### 6. Economic Dependence

The Centre derives its primary operating revenue from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

### 7. Operating Fund

The Centre has expended grants received as follows:

	2024	2023
Revenue - Ministry of Attorney General	<b>\$ 5,823,363</b>	\$ 5,383,150
Other income	<b>67,251</b>	23,294
Operating expenses (excluding project expenses)	<b>(5,794,606)</b>	(5,332,409)
Amortization included in operating expenses	<b>31,072</b>	50,397
Purchase of capital assets	<b>(82,026)</b>	-
	<b>\$ 45,054</b>	\$ 124,432

Reconciliation of net assets:

	Capital	Operating	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 25,474	\$ 205,929	\$ 231,403
Surplus of revenue over expenditures for the year	-	96,008	96,008
Funds transferred to capital fund	50,954	(50,954)	-
Funds transferred to internally funds restricted	-	(96,000)	(96,000)
Net assets, end of year	<b>\$ 76,428</b>	<b>\$ 154,983</b>	<b>\$ 231,411</b>

### 8. Financial Instruments

#### Credit Risk

Credit risk is the risk that one party to a financial instrument will cause a financial loss for the other party by failing to discharge an obligation. The Centre is also exposed to credit risk arising from all of its bank accounts being held at one financial institution. The Centre has exposure to credit risk in cash to a maximum of \$1,027,942 (2023 - \$635,182).

#### Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Centre encounters difficulty in meeting its obligations associated with financial liabilities. Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of operational liquidity requirements, the Centre will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction on the due date; will be forced to sell financial assets at a value, which is less than what they are worth; or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset. Liquidity risk arises from accounts payable and accrued liabilities. The Centre meets its liquidity requirements by preparing and monitoring detailed forecasts of cash flows from operations, anticipating investing and financing activities and holding assets that can readily be converted into cash.

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## Human Rights Legal Support Centre Notes to Financial Statements

**March 31, 2024**

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### **8. Financial Instruments (continued)**

#### **Market Risk**

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in the market prices. Market risk is comprised of currency risk, interest rate risk and other price risk. The Centre is not exposed to significant market risk.

These risks have not changed from the prior year.

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