



YASC IN THE COMMUNITY: PRO BONO



Pro bono opportunities through TAS

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In 2019, the Young Advocates' Standing Committee created a working group dedicated to encouraging members' participation in pro bono initiatives. Below are accounts from five TAS members about their experiences with various pro bono programs available through TAS. More information on these and other programs are available on the TAS pro bono page: https://www.advocates.ca/TAS/Advocacy/Pro_Bono/TAS/Advocacy/Pages/Pro_Bono.aspx

TAS-PBO Consumer Protection Initiative

The YASC Pro Bono working group recently facilitated the launch of a partnership between The Advocates' Society and Pro Bono Ontario called the TAS-PBO Consumer Protection Initiative. This Initiative matches pro bono lawyers with consumers who have been victimized by predatory door-to-door sales contracts. Glynis Hawe (Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP, 2017) has represented consumers, often immigrants, in extremely difficult circumstances after being sued by predatory lenders. Hawe describes these files as a "particularly great experience for junior lawyers" and "an opportunity to run a case from beginning to end and" up to and including a trial. Glynis says her clients are "incredibly grateful for the assistance and I've been incredibly lucky to get to know them."

Duty counsel for LSO discipline hearings

Duty counsel provide advice and representation to unrepresented lawyers and paralegals in summary prosecutions before the Law Society of Ontario's Tribunal. Files range from summary advice to multi-day hearings. Daniel Naymark (Naymark Law, 2009) notes "there is more demand for the service than capacity, so you will be doing a public good and getting great hearing experience." In one case, the Tribunal specifically acknowledged the important role he played as duty counsel: "The outcome of the matter before me was directly attributable to the diligent, exhaustive and comprehensive efforts of Duty Counsel."

Ontario Securities Commission Litigation Assistance Program (LAP)

Pro bono lawyers provide litigation services to unrepresented respondents in enforcement proceedings before the Ontario Securities Commission. Maureen Doherty (Borden Ladner Gervais

LLP, 2013) has represented several individuals and corporations through the LAP: "I have attended at preliminary appearances and provided general advice on the Commission procedure." She describes the LAP as "an invaluable opportunity to get to know the procedures of the Commission" while also supporting unrepresented individuals in need of legal help, and getting to know fellow securities litigators around her year of call.

Amicus/Duty Counsel Program at the Court of Appeal

Through the Amicus/Duty Counsel Program, lawyers assist litigants with matters before the Court of Appeal. The program "helped me to understand how difficult it was for an individual to navigate the legal system without legal expertise or resources," said Emily Fan (Lerners LLP, 2011) who has been involved in the program for seven years. For Fan, the most rewarding part is helping clients find clarity around legal issues: "Sometimes it was not the answer they were looking for and I was unable to solve every issue. However, I always saw the moment where they gained a better understanding of the way forward or what to expect."

Law Help Ontario

Through Law Help Ontario, lawyers volunteer to provide summary advice to clients. In some cases, volunteers provide more substantial assistance, including conducting Small Claims Court trials. "Helping people navigate our legal system is incredibly rewarding. The clients at Law Help Ontario are usually quite stressed and upset when they come into the office due to being involved in a lawsuit," notes Sarah Naiman (Intact Insurance Company, 2014) who has volunteered with the program since 2015. She notes that "I also learn a lot myself every time I attend and it has made me a far better litigator as a result." ■