

# 40 Years of Gender Justice

LEAF's 2024-2025 Annual Report



**LEAF**  
**FAEJ**

WOMEN'S LEGAL  
EDUCATION & ACTION FUND  
FONDS D'ACTION ET D'ÉDUCATION  
JURIDIQUE POUR LES FEMMES

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# Our Story

## Did you know?

2025 marks 40 years since LEAF's founding in 1985.



On April 17, 1985, section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the provision guaranteeing equality rights, came into force. This provision was enshrined thanks to the tireless work of many of LEAF's Founding Mothers.

It's no coincidence that LEAF was founded on the very same day, by launching no less than three *Charter* challenges that year.



For four decades, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) has proudly advanced gender equality in Canada through litigation, law reform, and public legal education.

LEAF's Founding Mothers recognized that ensuring the inclusion of the equality provision was just a first step on the path to gender equality. The implementation, interpretation, and defence of equality rights would require ongoing advocacy. LEAF was born to do just that, with deeply committed feminists both initiating and driving the work forward.

40 years later, we have so much to celebrate: our collective wins, the ways in which we've shaped and advanced the *Charter's* guarantee of women's equality and gender equality, and—most importantly—the community and movement that grew to fuel this critical advocacy.

Since then, LEAF's involvement in cases has contributed to landmark victories on discrimination, consent law, reproductive rights, parental benefits, spousal support, pension and retirement benefits, pay equity, sexual violence, survivors' equality, 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, and workplace rights.

Whether in the workplace, at home, in the hospital, at school, or in the courtroom, the LEAF movement has defended and advanced women's rights and gender justice.



Our 40th anniversary also serves as a call to action—a **reminder that much work remains left to be done.**

Amid an affordability crisis, attacks on gender and reproductive rights, rising anti-migrant sentiments, and global economic turbulence, we must redouble our efforts to ensure the rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people are protected.

**To LEAF supporters, members, staff, advocates, volunteers, partners, and allies—thank you for being part of the ongoing fight for gender justice. Together, we'll make gender equality a reality in Canada.**

#### LEAF'S FOUNDERS

Jennie Abell  
Denise Arsenault  
Beth Atcheson  
Flora Buchan  
Patricia Cooper  
Daphne Dumont  
Mary Eberts  
Halyna Freeland  
Dale Gibson  
Nancy Ruth  
Helene LeBel  
Gayle MacDonald  
Shauna MacKenzie  
Marilou McPhedran  
Sylvia Neschokat  
Brigid O'Reilly  
Yvonne Peters  
Eve Roberts  
Loretta Scott  
Magda Seydtegart  
Lynn Smith  
Eloise Spitzer  
Donna Stephania  
Beth Symes  
Susan Tanner

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Shelagh Day  
Christie Jefferson  
Joanne St Lewis  
Jane Craig  
Pat Paradis  
Jane Rounthwaite  
Nancy Radclyffe  
Ellen Mary Mills  
Renata Harvey  
Audrey Johnson  
Sheryl Hoshizaki  
Marilyn Roycroft  
Diane O'Reggio  
Hailee Morrison  
Shaun O'Brien  
Elizabeth Shilton  
Meghan Stephens  
Pam Hrick

#### 40 YEARS OF IMPACT AT A GLANCE:



**150+**  
legal cases and  
public inquiries



**77**  
interventions at the  
Supreme Court of  
Canada (SCC)



**23**  
litigants sponsored  
or supported



involvement in  
**nearly  
every**  
precedent-setting  
sexual assault case  
at the SCC



# Message from our Leadership

HADIYA RODERIQUE, CHAIR OF LEAF'S BOARD



Hadiya Roderique

This has been a momentous year for LEAF, with 2025 marking **40 years** of our collective dedication and ongoing commitment to fighting for equal rights and protections in Canada.

In the last 40 years, LEAF has intervened in over **140 landmark cases** – including nearly every equality rights case at the Supreme Court – working to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the workplace, ensure access to reproductive healthcare, improve maternity and parental benefits, and address stereotypes in sexual assault cases.

The depth, breadth, and impact of LEAF's work over the last four decades has been truly remarkable. Yet, the need for LEAF continues to be just as great today as it's ever been. In the last year, the world has been plunged into an era of instability marked by increasingly hostile attacks on the rights of women, trans people, and migrants.

Here in Canada, rising tides of misogyny and transphobia have become more mainstream and extremist. We've seen politicians acquiesce to growing anti-migrant sentiment, erroneously placing blame for the economic crisis on newcomers and immigrants. Canada also continues to experience an ongoing gender-based violence epidemic, despite having access to a wealth of resources on how to address it.

Against this social and political backdrop, it can often feel like we're fighting the same battles that our predecessors in the feminist movement have fought. At the same time, we have honed our skills. We've refined our litigation strategies, our relationships with allies in the feminist movement are stronger than ever, and we're able to draw on community power and solidarity across movements to stand up for the most marginalized among us.

For several years now, LEAF has been involved in legal challenges to the use of the notwithstanding clause to shield blatantly discriminatory laws from scrutiny – laws depriving trans youth of their dignity and safety in Saskatchewan, and depriving Muslim women of their fundamental rights in Quebec. Last fall, LEAF advocated for the rights of trans youth at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in ***Saskatchewan (Minister of Education) v. UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity*** and soon will be at the Supreme Court when it hears the challenge to Quebec's **Bill 21**.

We fought to ensure that hard-won gains achieved by feminists can benefit everyone in ***Attorney General of Québec v. Kanyinda***, a case where a refugee woman challenged the exclusion of refugee claimants from accessing subsidized daycare in Quebec. We made it clear that legislation aimed at remedying inequality must not leave behind the most marginalized.

We pushed for better access to justice for survivors of family violence in ***Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia***, in which a survivor asked the courts to provide compensation for the harms she experienced, leading to a landmark case on whether to create a tort of family violence. LEAF went to the Supreme Court to advocate for this tort, highlighting ways that it would **benefit survivors of family violence**.

Our work to tackle gender-based violence is multi-pronged. Beyond the courtroom, we have continued to advocate for more options for **restorative and transformative justice** for sexual assault survivors. We also launched a call for a Gender-Based Violence Commissioner to more effectively address the epidemic of gender-based violence, and are working alongside experts and advocates to make this a reality.

This year has been a significant one for LEAF. It's also ending on a bittersweet note, as we said goodbye to our incredible Executive Director & General Counsel, Pam Hrick, who left LEAF at the end of June. Thank you, Pam, for your outstanding leadership over the last four years. Thanks to Pam, LEAF is very well-positioned to continue our work to advance gender equality.

And finally, thank you to our community – those of you who've been here since the very start, and those who are newer friends and allies. We look forward to standing shoulder to shoulder with you as we continue to fight for bold, feminist change in the courtroom and beyond.

In solidarity and gratitude,

**Hadiya Roderique**  
Board Chair



Pam Hrick, LEAF's outgoing Executive Director & General Counsel, speaking with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about reproductive justice on International Women's Day 2025.

# Our Year in Numbers



**14**

active legal interventions



**10**

letters, briefs & committee appearances



**1008**

donors supporting gender equality



**81**

community partners



**54**

workshops delivered



**1012**

workshop participants



**14**

local LEAF branches



**412**

LEAF members



**307**

new donors



**25**

public talks & press conference appearances



**26**

cases monitored / considered



**7**

new cases approved for intervention

## FEATURED PROJECT

# The Accountability Project

**HOLDING GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR TAKING  
CONCRETE STEPS TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Canada has an epidemic of gender-based violence.

We know who it disproportionately affects: women and girls. We know who experiences higher rates of violence: women and trans people who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, low-income, criminalized, disabled, and/or gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

We also know a lot about what we need to do to end gender-based violence. We have decades of reports, recommendations, and studies to draw on, and a new National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

LEAF's Accountability Project engaged experts in gender-based violence, law, and accountability mechanisms from across Canada and internationally to answer the question: how do we hold governments accountable to making these recommendations and plans a reality?

## **Our answer: the federal government needs to create a Gender-Based Violence Commissioner.**

In October 2024, we launched a report outlining our vision of what the Commissioner's office should look like to be effective. Since then, we have been busy delivering our recommendations to policymakers and advocating for the creation of the Gender-Based Violence Commissioner.

The Accountability Project is supported by The Canadian Bar Association's Law for the Future Fund and the R. Howard Webster Foundation.

Norton Rose Fulbright provided important support for the report launch.

**18**

**anti-GBV advocates  
and service providers  
on the advisory  
committee**

**46**

**experts consulted  
across Canada and  
internationally**

**40**

**stakeholders  
attended Ottawa  
report launch**





# IMK s.e.n.c.r.l/LLP

A team from IMK represented LEAF *pro bono* in our intervention regarding access to subsidized child care for refugee claimant women in Quebec (see page 13 to learn more).

“

It was a privilege to represent LEAF in its intervention before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Attorney General of Quebec v. Kanyinda*. This important case raises pressing equality issues at the intersection of gender, caregiving responsibilities, race, immigration status, and citizenship.

At its core, the case presents the Court with a significant opportunity to reaffirm the *Charter's* commitment to substantive equality – particularly in the context of legislation affording social benefit, such as subsidized childcare services – and to interpret section 15 through a meaningfully intersectional lens.

IMK is immensely proud to have supported LEAF in its vital and ongoing advocacy work to advance inclusive and feminist equality jurisprudence in Canada.



Olga Redko, Partner



Vanessa Ntaganda, Associate

# Litigation

LEAF intervenes in cases that significantly affect the equality rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people in Canada. In 2024-2025, our supporters fuelled the following interventions:

Saskatchewan passed a law requiring parental consent for teachers to be able to use the proper names and pronouns of trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse students under the age of 16. Although the Province invoked the notwithstanding clause to protect it from being struck down as unconstitutional, a judge decided the court can still declare the law violates *Charter* rights.

When Saskatchewan appealed that decision, LEAF intervened to highlight the importance of considering who is impacted by a law, and how it will affect these groups to have courts stay silent about the *Charter* rights violations occurring because of the law. The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal heard the case in September 2024 and reserved their decision.

LEAF is represented by Morgan Camley and Kay Scorer (Dentons Canada LLP).

Canada has a housing crisis. Across the country, people have created encampment communities because they cannot access shelter. From 2021 to 2023, the City of Hamilton enforced a by-law and evicted encampment residents.

When a group of these residents brought a constitutional challenge to the by-law and to the evictions, LEAF looked to intervene to highlight the unique pathways women and gender-diverse people have to homelessness, and the unique harms they face when displaced. Unfortunately, the Court did not let LEAF intervene – but we will continue our advocacy as this case heads to the Court of Appeal for Ontario this year.

LEAF was represented by Alexa Biscaro and Erika Anschuetz (Norton Rose Fulbright).

## Pushed back against the notwithstanding clause

*UR Pride v. Saskatchewan (SKCA)*

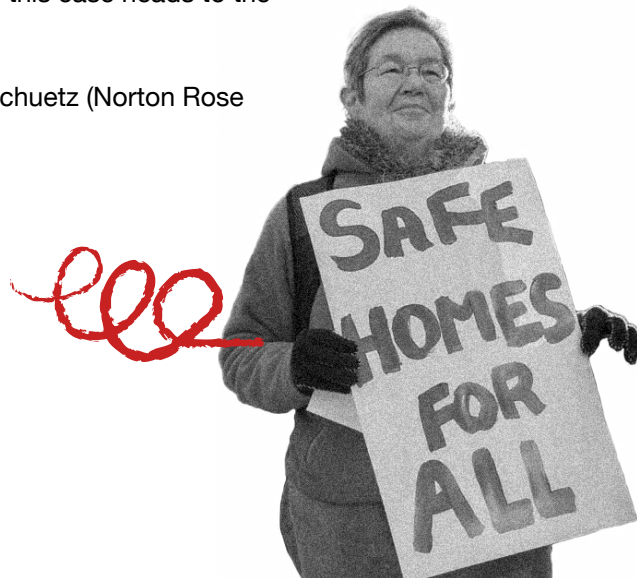
Identity-Based Oppression

Access to Justice

## Shining a light on the gendered hardships of homelessness

*Heegsma v. Hamilton*

Socio-economic Rights



## Affirmed the dignity and equality rights of sex workers

*R v. Kloubakov*

Identity-Based Oppression

Socio-economic Rights

Workplace Rights

In 2014, Parliament passed the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (PCEPA). PCEPA established Canada's current sex work laws after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the previous sex work laws in *Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford* for violating sex workers' *Charter* rights. The implementation of PCEPA not only criminalized clients, but also criminalized the exchange of sex work for consideration (such as money) for the first time in Canada.

The applicants in *Kloubakov* are non-sex worker third parties who challenged the constitutionality of certain provisions of PCEPA related to procuring and materially benefitting from sexual services. They alleged that these provisions violated the section 7 (life, liberty, and security) rights of sex workers.

We argued that the analysis of the s.7 rights of sex workers must be informed by the principles of substantive equality, as guaranteed under section 15 of the *Charter*. LEAF also emphasized the importance of taking an intersectional approach in assessing the impact of these provisions on the liberty and security of sex workers.

The Supreme Court of Canada heard arguments in November 2024 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Andrea Gonsalves, Olivia Eng, and Alexandra Heine (Stockwoods LLP).

## Challenged sexism in Canada's electoral system

*Fair Voting BC v. Canada*

Access to Justice

Canada has a persistent and pervasive problem when it comes to the representation of women in elected office. Provisions in the *Canada Elections Act* lay the foundation for Canada's "first past the post" electoral system. Fair Voting BC and Springtide Collective for Democracy Society have challenged these provisions, arguing that they violate section 3 (voting rights) and s.15 of the *Charter*.

We argued that when someone alleges a law – such as the law creating Canada's first past the post system – violates their *Charter*-protected equality rights, they should not be required to prove that this law is the *only* or the *dominant* cause of underrepresentation. Instead, equality law requires evidence that the law is merely a cause.

The Court of Appeal for Ontario heard arguments in November 2024 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Tina Lie and Mariam Moktar (Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP).



In 2023, changes made to New Brunswick's Policy 713 required parental consent for school personnel to use the proper name and pronouns of students under 16. LEAF looked to intervene in the constitutional challenge brought by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), emphasizing the best interests of the child and the prospect of family violence.

In late 2024, the CCLA discontinued the case after New Brunswick officially replaced Policy 713 with a new policy that restored trans and non-binary youth rights to a significant degree. We will continue to advocate for trans and non-binary youth across Canada and push back against harmful laws.

LEAF was represented by Mélanie Power, Morgan Camley, Kay Scorer, Kathryn Gullason, and Nicole Tzannidakis (Dentons Canada LLP).

In 2022, an Ontario Superior Court judge created a new tort of family violence, allowing survivors of intimate partner violence to go to court and ask for compensation specifically for the pattern of violence they experienced. The Court of Appeal for Ontario overturned this decision. It held that there was no need for a new tort and that survivors could use the different torts that already existed, such as assault, battery, and the intentional infliction of emotional distress.

We went to the Supreme Court to emphasize that this is an access to justice issue. We stressed that a tort of family violence would provide an avenue for survivors to access compensation for the harms they suffered, better encourage them to seek compensation in the first place, and to receive validation from the legal system that those harms matter.

The Court heard arguments in February 2025 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Pam Hrick (LEAF), Maneesha Mehra (Carson Chousky Lein LLP), and Surinder Multani (Niman Mamo LLP).

**Did you know?**  
**LEAF has long  
advocated for family  
violence survivors'  
access to justice.**

## Protecting the rights of trans youth

*CCLA v. New Brunswick*

Identity-Based Oppression

## Promoted access to justice for survivors of family violence

*Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia*

Access to Justice

Family Law

Gender-Based Violence

In 2009, LEAF intervened in *Rick v. Brandsema*, a Supreme Court case about a separation agreement that left Mr. Brandsema with substantially more assets than Ms. Rick, a survivor of family violence with mental health challenges, after 27 years of marriage.

We argued that courts needed to set aside agreements based on the exploitation of power imbalances between spouses. The Court unanimously found that the agreement was unfair and invalid, establishing a firm right to equality in separation negotiations.



## Advocated for access to subsidized childcare for refugee claimant women in Quebec

*Quebec v. Kanyinda*

Identity-Based Oppression

Socio-economic Rights

Migrants without permanent immigration status, such as refugee claimants, are often excluded from various federal and provincial services based on their immigration status. Ms. Kanyinda, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, entered Quebec with her three young children in October 2018. She made a refugee claim once arriving and obtained a work permit while her claim was being processed. She sought subsidized daycare but was denied because Quebec's regulation on subsidized daycare excludes refugee claimants from accessing it.

Ms. Kanyinda challenged this exclusion as indirect discrimination based on sex—since women are responsible for the lion's share of childcare—and as direct discrimination based on immigration status and citizenship.

We argued that a robust intersectional analysis is necessary at both stages of the test for s.15 of the *Charter* in order to realize the full potential of substantive equality. LEAF also emphasized that when governments enact legislation to remedy inequality, they still have a constitutional obligation to ensure that such legislation does not leave behind the most marginalized among its targeted population.

The Supreme Court heard arguments in May 2025 and reserved its decision.

LEAF was represented by Olga Redko and Vanessa Ntaganda (IMK s.e.n.c.r.l./ LLP).



# Law Reform

LEAF makes submissions on laws and policy issues that impact the substantive equality rights of women, girls, trans, and non-binary people. In 2024-25, LEAF engaged in the following law reform activities:

As gender equality advocates, we believe that it is crucial to facilitate safer online experiences for young Canadians, particularly young girls, trans, and non-binary people. Critically, however, any measures taken toward this goal must be proportionate, clearly defined, uphold human rights, and create a realistic expectation that they will be effective in achieving this goal.

Recently, age assurance technologies have been on the radar as one of these safety-promoting measures. Bill S-210 proposed to implement age-verification systems broadly, including on everyday sites and search engines like Reddit and Google. Alarmed by the Bill's potential disproportionate harms on marginalized communities, LEAF urged legislators to not pass it. These harms include preventing young victims of tech-facilitated violence from taking safety measures, limiting marginalized communities' access to lawful online content, and silencing 2SLGBTQIA+ voices through over-moderation. LEAF also raised these concerns in the Privacy Commissioner of Canada's study on age assurance technologies.

The draft regulations for the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) were published in summer 2024, revealing a sorely inadequate disability benefit that will not be accessible to those most in need. The CDB was introduced with the aim of reducing poverty among low-income disabled people.

After four years of extensive consultation with the disability community, the proposed benefit comes up short on multiple fronts, including a maximum amount that is barely a tenth of the benefit amount recommended by disability experts and eligibility based on family income, which could exacerbate unsafe power imbalances for disabled women.

LEAF and DAWN Canada partnered up to provide recommendations on the draft CDB regulations. Twenty feminist organizations joined us in sending a letter to elected officials to express profound disappointment with the proposed CDB and call for similar improvements in solidarity with the disability community.

## Ensuring youth online safety measures respect human rights and gender equality

Identity-Based Oppression

Gender-Based Violence

Hate Speech & Online Hate

## Calling for measures to meaningfully address disability poverty

Identity-Based Oppression

Socio-economic Rights

## **Opposing discrimination against new mothers in Employment Insurance**

Socio-economic Rights

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The *Employment Insurance Act* limits the number of weeks of benefits people can receive when they combine regular unemployment benefits and special benefits like maternity and parental leave. This leaves many women—who use a greater portion of parental benefits—without an income if they lose their job shortly after returning from parental leave.

In March, in response to the US-Canada trade war, economic uncertainty, and expected mass layoffs, LEAF collaborated with Mouvement Action Chômage and the National Association of Women and the Law to urge the federal government to finally end this discriminatory exclusion (learn more on page 21). LEAF will continue to push for legislative reform as a group of impacted women is currently challenging these limits before the Federal Court of Appeal.

## **Working to stem the tide of provinces overriding equality rights**

Access to Justice

Identity-Based Oppression

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Human rights advocates have been sounding the alarm over the increased use of the *Charter's* section 33—known as the notwithstanding clause—by provincial governments to override fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, religion, and equality. For years, LEAF has been in front of courts and legislatures fighting back against the invocation of s. 33 to pass discriminatory laws.

Harnessing our advocacy and constitutional law expertise, we developed an educational infosheet on s. 33 and its history. We also joined over 50 organizations, advocates, and legal scholars to urge all federal political party leaders to commit to holding a public consultation on the use of the notwithstanding clause within six months of forming a new federal government. The consultation should, critically, include representatives of the equity-seeking groups that have been targeted by governments' use of the clause.

## **Advocating for increased access to restorative justice options for survivors in Ontario and beyond**

Sexual Assault & Consent Law

Gender-Based Violence

Access to Justice

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Expanding on our work from the Avenues to Justice project (which explored barriers to accessing restorative justice for survivors of sexual violence), we have partnered with researchers Drs. Mandi Gray and Jessica Evans and Community Justice Initiatives to launch the Bridging Justices project. This project examines attitudes towards and desire for restorative and transformative justice (RJ/TJ) practices within Ontario's gender-based violence sector.

In May, Bridging Justices hosted a community gathering in Toronto to share preliminary findings of the research. We heard directly from survivors who have gone through RJ/TJ processes, as well as from GBV sector workers on the feasibility of using RJ/TJ practices for sexual offences, which will inform our policy recommendations in a report that will be released in the fall. This report will form an important part of our advocacy that calls on the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba to allow survivors of sexual violence meaningful access RJ/TJ processes so they can pursue justice that is right for them.



**UPCOMING:** With the support of the Gender Equality Fund, LEAF engaged community-based researchers Mary Vaccaro and Jammy Lo to identify barriers to the participation of trans feminine people in feminist workplaces. Up next is sharing resources and lessons learned with feminist organizations, and continuing to strengthen the coalition of feminist organizations committed to trans inclusion.

**UPCOMING:** Care work, both paid and unpaid, is significantly undervalued in Canada, disproportionately impacting the economic prosperity of women, particularly racialized, migrant, and/or undocumented women.

To address this undervaluation, LEAF is engaging scholars, workers, and advocates with care economy expertise to identify legal and policy barriers limiting the economic security and prosperity of women, non-binary, and trans people in the care economy. We will then create public legal education materials and law reform advocacy proposals to break down these barriers.

Researchers Laxana Paskaran and Jessica Chandrashekar are leading the development of the environmental scan (including stakeholder interviews) and the literature review.

## Including trans feminine people in feminist workplaces

Identity-Based Oppression

Workplace Rights

## Championing the economic security and prosperity of care workers and caregivers

Socio-economic Rights

Identity-Based Oppression

Workplace Rights

**Did you know?**  
LEAF's solidarity with care workers started in 1986.



*Chittenden, Villanueva, and the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights v. Ontario* was a LEAF-sponsored constitutional challenge of Ontario's *Employment Standards Act*.

The Act excluded domestic workers—overwhelmingly racialized migrant women on temporary work visas—from standard employment protections such as overtime pay, a maximum numbers of working hours, and pay premiums on holidays.

Following the launch of this challenge, Ontario extended minimum wage and overtime pay to domestic workers.



# Legal Education

## Public Legal Education (PLE) Program Update

Workplace Rights

Access to Justice

Sexual Assault & Consent Law

Gender-Based Violence

Hate Speech & Online Hate

LEAF's PLE program created new workshops and forged relationships with community partners from Windsor to Halifax, providing gender equity PLE content to youth and newcomers.

We continued to build on the last year's successes with branches delivering our equality-centred education workshops:

- LEAF Windsor delivered workshops to newcomer women in partnership with WEST of Windsor and the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario (Y Works program).
- LEAF Toronto offered workshops in high schools in the GTA and to newcomer women in partnership with YWCA (JUMP) Scarborough.
- LEAF Ottawa continued delivering workshops to high schools and elementary schools in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

We also developed new workshops for branches and community partners. For our Kitchener-Waterloo branch's Equality Day event, we created a workshop that introduced LEAF's work and section 15 of the *Charter*. We also provided a workshop on criminal record suspensions and expungements for Thunder Women Healing Lodge Society.

## Indigenous Feminisms and Introducing Indigenous Legal Orders

Indigenous Rights & Law

**NEW PLE WORKSHOP:** Indigenous women and trans people have long recognized that mainstream feminism does not reflect their realities. Indigenous feminisms focus on the intersection of gender-based oppression and decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and racism.

In consultation with Indigenous students and lawyers (including the University of Alberta Indigenous Law Students Association), LEAF designed an Indigenous Feminisms and Introducing Indigenous Legal Orders workshop geared towards high school students. The workshop gives youth an introduction to Indigenous feminisms and Indigenous legal orders and complements the Ontario Ministry of Education English curriculum regarding Indigenous rights, learning, and reconciliation.



The participation of gender-based violence advocates in feminist strategic litigation (FSL) is critical to ensuring courts make decisions that take into account the lived experiences and expertise of survivors.

As part of LEAF's Strengthening Community Capacity Project, we developed an introductory workshop to FSL tailored to gender-based violence organizations across Canada. Over the last year, we delivered the workshop from coast to coast to coast, reaching over 200 participants from 73 organizations. Of the participants surveyed, 98% rated the workshop delivery positively, with 96% reporting an increased interest in using the courts to address gender-based violence.

LEAF will continue to build on this momentum with a second workshop focused on legal interventions and online resources planned for the next phase of the project.

## Helping gender-based violence organizations increase their capacity to push for systemic change using the courts

Gender-Based Violence

Six years ago, Law 21 revoked the right to wear religious symbols at work for teachers, police officers, prosecutors, and other public servants in Quebec. Women who wear headscarves commonly referred to as “hijabs” have been the most significantly impacted, particularly in their career prospects. The effects of the law have also reverberated outward, shaping Canadian public debates on Islamophobia, rights, and national identity.

As the legal challenge to Law 21 headed to the Supreme Court of Canada, LEAF co-organized a panel with the Student Affairs Liaison for Muslim Students, McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, and McGill Muslim Law Students' Association to critically explore Quebec's religious symbols ban. Professor Nadia Hasan, Professor Pearl Eliadis, and Idil Issa spoke to a packed room about the material impacts of Law 21 and the making of a new normal (as pictured below).

## Understanding the impacts of Law 21 on Muslim women and on Quebec society at large

Identity-Based Oppression

Attendees and panelists joined together to discuss feminism, secularism, gendered Islamophobia, the spectre of the notwithstanding clause, and the power of Muslim women's activism.



# Branches Update

## Did you know?

**In the past year, LEAF welcomed four\* new regional branches to the movement!**



## LEAF Branches

**Calgary**  
**Edmonton**  
**Halifax (on hiatus)**  
**Hamilton**  
**Kitchener-Waterloo\***  
**London\***  
**Newfoundland & Labrador\***  
**Ottawa**  
**Quebec (on hiatus)**  
**Saskatchewan\***  
**Sudbury**  
**Toronto**  
**Windsor**  
**Winnipeg**

LEAF is proud to be made up of over a dozen volunteer-led branches across the country, from the Prairies to the Maritimes. The focus of each branch varies but often includes hosting events, fundraising, facilitating community education, supporting regional advocacy, and leading other critical local outreach.

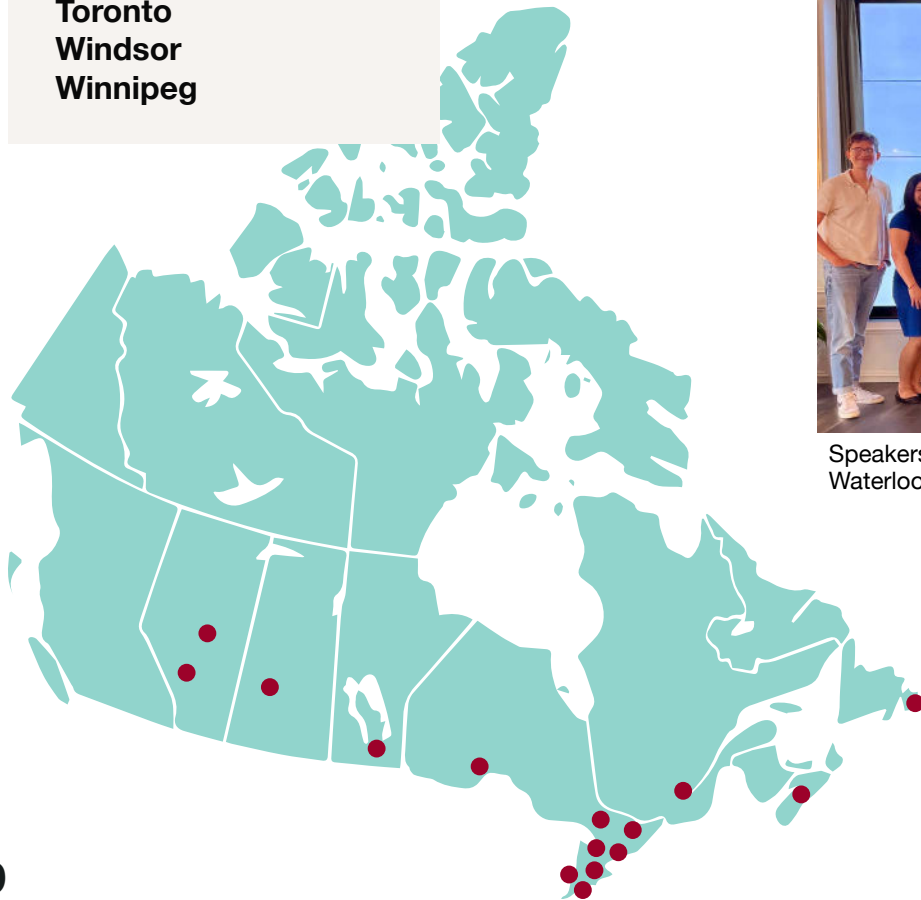
Several branches are playing an increasingly important role in advancing our Public Legal Education program, in which branches coordinate and train volunteers to deliver workshops (see page 17 for more details).

Others have focused on hosting local events that facilitate networking, community-building, awareness-raising, fundraising, and thought-provoking dialogue. These events feature guest speakers highlighting pressing and emerging gender equality issues, from the proliferation of non-disclosure agreements to how burnout and addiction impact working women.

**As a national organization, branches are essential to ensuring the LEAF movement remains firmly rooted in and attuned to community-level issues. We have immense gratitude for the hard work being done by volunteers in every branch.**



Speakers and organizers at the LEAF Kitchener-Waterloo launch event.





# LEAF Winnipeg

LEAF Winnipeg started as a branch in September 2022, with the aim of establishing a strong foundation of feminist legal advocacy in Manitoba. Our branch focuses on events and work that build feminist community and raise awareness of gender justice issues in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba.

Since our establishment, our branch has run equality-centred advocacy campaigns, including advocating to the former provincial Conservative government over an election promise to enhance “parental rights” in schools, and publishing an op-ed on case delays at the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. We also held successful events on reproductive rights for Indigenous people in Manitoba and sex worker rights.

LEAF Winnipeg’s major accomplishment this year was our Equality Day event. Concerned about anti-trans legislation, policies, and movements emerging across the country and globally, including those being faced by our neighbours in the other prairie provinces, we wanted to focus on trans rights in Manitoba.

Over 50 attendees joined us for an insightful discussion on challenges and opportunities for trans rights in the province, featuring an incredible panel of speakers from the trans community. J. Fiedler, Romeo Gauthier, Seth Lozinski, and Dr. Anastasia Gibson joined in conversation with moderator Allison Kilgour to share their knowledge and experiences with the attendees. Through the event, we raised just shy of \$4,000 to support the advancement of gender equality!

— **Dayna Steinfeld and Paula Ethans**  
**LEAF Winnipeg Co-Chairs**



LEAF Winnipeg Executives: L-R Anna Evans Boudreau, Dayna Steinfeld, Allison Kilgour, Paula Ethans, Alanna Johnson, and Lidet Getachew.

**LEAF Winnipeg is proud to have 84 members and counting! To learn more about the branch and how to join, scan this code.**



LEAF Winnipeg Equality Day 2025 – Panel Discussion featuring L-R, J. Fiedler, Romeo Gauthier, Seth Lozinski, Dr. Anastasia Gibson, Allison Kilgour.



# Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal

“

Mouvement Action-Chômage (MAC) de Montréal is a community organization that defends the rights of unemployed workers. More specifically, we help people gain access to unemployment insurance benefits, while advocating for a better Employment Insurance (EI) system. We engage in both political and legal advocacy.

An important part of our mission is public education. For people to be able to defend their rights, they first need to know about them. We offer information sessions on unemployment insurance, and run workshops and café-rencontres (“coffee meetings”) to break down prejudices against unemployed people.

In addition to individually representing the unemployed before the Employment Insurance Commission, we lead broader struggles, notably to end discrimination against mothers in unemployment insurance. Since 2018, we have been fighting for mothers who lose their jobs during or shortly after maternity leave to be entitled to regular EI benefits.

We are working with LEAF as part of our constitutional challenge on this issue. LEAF initially wanted to intervene in the appeal to the Federal Court of Appeal, but the Court refused. LEAF quickly reached out so that we could collaborate on joint advocacy on the issue, clarify our demands, and facilitate meetings with various elected officials.

The political situation over the last few months has not been easy to navigate, but we have been able to adapt by modifying our action plan with the support of LEAF. Throughout our collaboration, we have felt LEAF’s full support, and our comments and suggestions have always been taken into consideration to properly reflect the issues at stake.

The fight for gender equality is a road full of obstacles. We have to contend with politicians who are moving ever further to the right, and equality issues unfortunately find themselves at the bottom of the list of priorities. Now, more than ever, it’s essential for organizations to unite and support different—but interconnected—struggles. Whether it’s unemployment insurance or anywhere else, we must put an end to discrimination!

— **Jérémie Dhavernas, Head of Legal Services**  
**Vicky Tremblay, Head of Communications & Community Life**



Vicky Tremblay



Jérémie Dhavernas

# Yola Grant

I have been a long-time monthly contributor to LEAF as this format allows LEAF to plan with some certainty regarding its base funding.

Thirty-five years ago, as a newly minted lawyer, I had the privilege to serve on many of LEAF's case committees dealing with violence against women and children, reproductive health and the feminization of poverty because of the undervaluation of care work such as childcare. I also served on the National Legal Committee where my skills were further honed in the (sometimes heated!) debates over advancing equality arguments that would serve all women, not only those who were proximate to patriarchal or class privilege.

Over the past three decades I have witnessed LEAF's advocacy broaden to address socioeconomic rights and technology-facilitated violence against women and children. It is clear to me that LEAF's evolving work remains necessary to also challenge governments that threaten to invoke the "notwithstanding" clause of the Charter to effectively diminish women's rights and freedoms. I encourage everyone to support LEAF's efforts.

”

— Yola Grant

Director at Carpe Diem Workplace Dispute Resolution  
Longtime LEAF donor and volunteer



LEAF's 2024 Evening for Equality was a night to remember, in more ways than one!

On April 17, 2024, over 330 LEAF supporters came together for an evening celebrating 39 years of gender equality. Hosted by Allana Harkin, an Emmy award winning executive producer, director, writer and performer, we highlighted feminist victories of the LEAF movement and reflected on the work ahead of us (with a touch of feminist comedy, thanks to Allana!).

The progress we celebrated included the launch of the Abortion Access Tracker, the revitalization of our Public Legal Education Program, our advocacy for the rights of trans youth, and steps taken to defend the autonomy, dignity, and rights of survivors of sexual violence.

Thank you to all those who showed up for gender equality, be it through sponsorships, attending (in person or in spirit), and spreading the word. With your commitment and partnership, we were able to raise over \$300,000. The proceeds from this night support year-round efforts to advance gender justice.

# \$305,000

**raised from the 2024  
Equality Day Event**

## EQUALITY DAY

# An Evening for Equality 2024

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# Statement of Financial Position

AS OF MARCH 31, 2025

## Assets

	2025	2024
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash	\$806,249	\$551,025
HST recoverable	\$11,201	\$17,558
Accounts receivable	\$10,000	\$77,301
Prepaid expenses	\$75,295	\$45,575
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$902,745</b>	<b>\$691,459</b>
<b>Investments</b>	<b>\$1,408,852</b>	<b>\$1,365,611</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,311,597</b>	<b>\$2,057,070</b>

## Liabilities

<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$195,114	\$99,176
Deferred revenue	\$335,000	\$198,000
Deferred contributions	\$253,511	\$28,320
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$783,625</b>	<b>\$326,036</b>

## Operating Net Assets

Operational Reserve Fund	\$567,000	\$567,000
Unrestricted	\$960,972	\$1,164,034
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,527,972</b>	<b>\$1,731,034</b>



# Statement of Operations

AS OF MARCH 31, 2025

## Revenues

	2025	2024
Donations and Fundraising	\$853,530	\$685,970
Grants	\$942,824	\$1,156,185
In-kind pro bono legal services	\$367,294	\$473,612
Investment Income	\$69,547	\$88,103
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,233,195</b>	<b>\$2,403,780</b>

## Expenses

Administrative	\$640,208	\$618,387
Fundraising	\$318,424	\$254,538
In-kind pro bono legal services	\$367,294	\$473,612
Legal cases and projects	\$881,177	\$883,917
Professional fees	\$229,154	\$250,026
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,436,257</b>	<b>\$2,480,480</b>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses for year</b>	<b>(\$203,062)</b>	<b>(\$76,700)</b>

# Statement of Changes in Net Assets

AS OF MARCH 31, 2025

	2025	2024
Operating net assets, beginning of the year	\$1,731,034	\$1,807,734
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses for year	(\$203,062)	(\$76,700)
Operating net assets, end of year	\$1,527,972	\$1,731,034

# Board Members, 2024-2025



**Hadiya Roderique**  
Chair



**Koren Lightning**  
Co-Vice Chair



**Alana Robert**  
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**Rebecca Meharchand**  
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THANK YOU

# Funding Partners



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LEAF acknowledges the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.



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## ReferToHer

ReferToHer™ is proud to partner with LEAF as the exclusive matching donor of the annual #GivingTuesday fundraiser for three years. Like LEAF, ReferToHer is dedicated to advancing gender equity, specifically in the legal industry. ReferToHer is a website that hosts a series of lists, organized by practice group, of experienced female lawyers to whom you can confidently refer work. As referrals are key to achieving business success, this program helps ensure that women lawyers are positioned as equal, available resources for those seeking legal help. Visit [refer-to-her.com](https://refer-to-her.com) to learn more.

# Case Committee Members & Volunteers

## *Ahluwalia* Case Committee

Natasha Bakht  
Coline Bellefleur  
Frances Chapman  
Sheila Gibb  
Erika Chamberlain

## *CCLA* Case Committee

Florence Ashley  
Gillian Calder  
Jennifer Koshan  
Sam Singer  
Adriel Weaver  
Xue Xu

## *Canadian Council for Refugees* Case Committee

Colline Bellefleur  
Margot Young

## *English Montreal School Board* Case Committee

Sara Arsenault  
Beverly Baines  
Natasha Bakht  
Nadia Hasan  
Nathalie Léger  
Colleen Sheppard

## *Fair Voting BC* Case Committee

Gillian Bourke  
Margot Young

## *Heegsma* Case Committee

Sonia Lawrence  
Estair Van Wagner  
Margot Young

## *Kanyinda* Case Committee

Grace Ajele  
Jennifer Koshan  
Colleen Sheppard  
Jonnette Watson Hamilton  
Margot Young

## *Kloubakov* Case Committee

Gillian Calder  
Julie Kaye  
Ummni Khan  
Kate Shannon

## *UR Pride (Court of Appeal)* Case Committee

Florence Ashley  
Jamie Cameron  
Jennifer Koshan  
Robert Leckey  
Sam Singer  
Xue Xu

## *UR Pride (Court of King's Bench)* Case Committee

Florence Ashley  
Gillian Calder  
Jennifer Koshan  
Joshua Sealy-Harrington  
Sam Singer  
Adriel Weaver

## Volunteers

Nicole Golletz, University of Manitoba  
Extern  
Ingrid Walter, Evening for Equality 2024  
Chelsea Jeffery, Evening for Equality 2024  
Ronica Li, Evening for Equality 2024  
Mariya Aksyonova, Evening for Equality  
Lucia Ussia, Evening for Equality 2024

All of LEAF's work is shaped by consultative processes. **Case committees**, composed of academics and practitioners with relevant expertise, inform and support our arguments in litigation. Our **Law Program Committee** advises and makes recommendations concerning our litigation and law reform efforts.



THANK YOU

# Advisory Committee Members

## Law Program Committee

Grace Ajele  
Florence Ashley  
Natasha Bakht  
Coline Bellefleur  
Gillian Bourke  
Gillian Calder  
Frances Chapman  
Maria Dugas  
Molly Krishtalka  
Amanda Mihoub-Wright  
Reakash Walters  
Adriel Weaver  
Maggie Wente

## Tech-Facilitated Violence Advisory Committee

Azeezah Kanji  
Claire Feltrin  
Darlene Tonelli  
Hadiya Roderique  
Hawa Y. Mire  
Jane Bailey  
Moiria Aikenhead  
Molly Reynolds  
Nasreen Rajani  
Raine Lilifeldt  
Suzie Dunn  
Kristen Thomasen



THANK YOU

# Community Partners

## **Abortion Access Tracker**

## **Bridging Justices**

## **Canada Disability Benefit Advocacy**

## **Employment Insurance Law Reform Advocacy**

## **Gender Affirming Care Advocacy**

## **Law 21 Panel**

## **Public Legal Education**

## **Transfeminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces**

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

Mandi Gray & Jessica Evans

Community Justice Initiatives

Disabled Women's Network of Canada

National Association of Women and the Law

Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal

Gender Affirming Care PEI

Enchanté Network

Student Affairs Liaison for Muslim Students (Office of the Dean of Students), McGill University

McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism

McGill Muslim Law Students' Association

Law in Action Within Schools

YMCA of Southwestern Ontario (Y Works)

WEST of Windsor

YWCA Halifax (Step Ahead)

Immigrant Services Association Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Community College (Women Unlimited)

Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society

HelloFresh Canada (Women Empowered employee resource group)

Middlefield Collegiate Institute

Central Technical School

Canvas Programs

YWCA (JUMP) Scarborough

Waterloo Community Legal Services

West Coast LEAF

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Wisdom2Action

### Accountability Project Advisory Committee

Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de deuxième étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale  
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre  
Barbra Schlifer Clinic  
Battered Women's Support Services  
The Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity (CCGSD)  
Canadian Council for Muslim Women  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
Ending Violence Association of Canada  
IRIS-Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society  
Kristina Fifield  
Pam Cross  
There Management Ltd.  
Trent University  
West Coast LEAF  
Women's Shelters Canada  
Yukon Status of Women Council  
YWCA Canada

### Valuing the Care Economy Project

Madhu Verma Migrant Justice Centre  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence  
Childcare Resource and Research Unit  
Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers  
Vancouver Committee for Domestic Worker and Caregiver Rights  
AdvantAge Ontario  
Workers Action Centre  
L'Appui pour les proches aidants  
Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux-CSN  
Care Economy Initiative Team  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Child Care Now  
PINAY Quebec  
Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec - FIQ  
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  
New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity  
Kathy Mallett  
Tatyannah Côté

### Strengthening Community Capacity Project

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes  
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters  
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre  
Battered Women's Support Services  
Canadian Council for Muslim Women  
Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre  
Ending Violence Association of Canada  
Fédération des femmes du Québec  
Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes  
Femmes Autochtones du Québec  
Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society  
Halte-Femmes Montréal-Nord  
Les Essentielles  
Luke's Place  
METRAC  
Native Women's Association of the NWT  
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  
Pearl Smith Memorial Women's Emergency Shelter  
Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan  
Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick  
RISE Program  
Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre  
Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton and Area)  
Sexual Violence New Brunswick  
Shield of Athena/Bouclier d'Athéna  
The Journey Project  
Transition House Association of Nova Scotia  
Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT)  
Women's Shelter's Canada





## Thank you for powering the movement for gender justice.

Together, we will continue to advance substantive equality under the law for all women, girls, trans, and non-binary people in Canada, no matter the forces that try to stop us.

To make a donation or learn more, visit [leaf.ca/donate](https://leaf.ca/donate).

### Get in Touch

info@leaf.ca  
T: 416.595.7170



@leafnational



### National Office

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