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Through our pro bono work, we make meaningful contributions to the lives of others – preserving and advancing the welfare of communities and their disadvantaged members. At the same time, our lawyers gain practical and professional experience, and pursue areas of passion and interest.

Our formal pro bono policy encourages our lawyers to engage in pro bono work and to incorporate it into their professional development – and we recognize the work as billable work. Overseen by our National Pro Bono Committee, our pro bono activities are identified, coordinated and monitored by Regional Pro Bono Committees, ensuring the highest level of quality control and professional excellence.

## Leaders in Pro Bono Work

In 2023, BLG was named a [5-Star Pro Bono Firm](#) by Canadian Lawyer for the value, calibre and institutional support of our pro bono efforts, including our work with national and provincial pro bono organizations.

In 2022, BLG and our project partner, Landings LLP, were awarded Pro Bono Initiative of the Year at the Canadian Law Awards for our work to rapidly [prepare applications for vulnerable Afghans](#), seeking evacuation under the government's special immigration measures.

Karine Chênevert was awarded the 2022 Women in Law Leadership (WILL) [Stronger Together Award](#) for Québec for her leadership and dedication to pro bono work and service to community organizations, including her involvement with Fierté Montréal, ESPACE GO and Share the Warmth.

In 2022, BLG was the Diamond and EDI sponsor for the [National Pro Bono conference](#). The conference celebrated important wins in the pro bono sector and our initiative to support evacuations from Afghanistan was featured in the fireside chat. Our EDI sponsorship provided conference registration bursaries for individuals from underrepresented communities.

In 2021, Michelle Henry was awarded the Ontario Bar Association's David Scott, QC Award for Pro Bono Law and the 2021 Women in Law Leadership (WILL) Stronger Together Award for Ontario for her outstanding contributions to the legal profession and broader community.

In 2019, BLG honoured the late David Scott, one of Canada's most distinguished trial and appellate lawyers, with the presentation of a \$50,000 donation to Pro Bono Canada in his memory. Pro Bono Canada supports pro bono programs across the country that deliver free legal services to more than 36,000 low-income Canadians annually, including Pro Bono Ontario which David co-founded and chaired for several years.

In 2018, Guy Pratte was awarded the Medal of The Bar of Montréal for his remarkable contribution to the cause of justice, notably by founding various pro bono committees and programs such as Justice Pro Bono (formerly Pro Bono Québec) and BLG's national pro bono program.

## BLG Pro Bono in Action

### Initiative to support evacuations from Afghanistan

As news of the Taliban's advance across Afghanistan filled the international news, many Canadians were alarmed by the stories of fear and desperation. Firm members asked how they could help. [Read more](#).

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### Veteran's Review Appeal Board Representation

For the past 5 years, we have provided pro bono legal services to veterans who have been denied benefits under the *Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-Establishment and Compensation Act*.

In 2017, BLG represented a veteran in the Federal Court on a successful judicial review application in a case which allowed a veteran ill with cancer to have their benefits reinstated (*Northrup v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2017 FC 521). This case contributed to systemic change in how the Veterans Review and Appeals Board of Canada treat claims related to Agent Orange exposure.

In May 2019, we argued a successful Judicial Review at the Federal Court. We obtained benefits and costs for a 75-year-old Canadian Armed Forces veteran with hearing loss and tinnitus who had been wrongfully denied disability benefits.

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## The Canadian Civil Liberties Association

BLG represented the CCLA as intervener at the Supreme Court of Canada in the appeal *Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness v. Chinna*, (File No. 37770) which was heard in November 2018; decision released May 2019. The appeal involved access to review of immigration detention by way of habeas corpus.

We represented the CCLA in the appeal of *Denis v. Cote*, (File No. 38114), heard in May 2019. The appeal involves the first case in Canada applying the new Journalistic Sources Protection to an application for compelled disclosure of journalistic source information from a journalist.

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## Refugee Sponsorship and Support Program

Since 2015, sponsorship experts, pro-bono lawyers, law students, and community organizations have collaborated to offer direct support to Canadians seeking to sponsor refugees. BLG assists Canadian sponsor groups with applications to sponsor one or more refugees to come to Canada. Assistance involves guidance to sponsors on how to fill out sponsorship forms and conducting research on the group and/or the refugee's eligibility for sponsorship.

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## ID Project

We work alongside students from the Allard School of Law at the University of British Columbia, Pro Bono Students Canada, and the Lookout Society to help impoverished individuals obtain government identification such as driver's licenses, status cards, and birth certificates.

Starting in 2017, lawyers at BLG collaborated with Pro Bono Students Canada and the Ottawa Mission (a homeless shelter in Ottawa) to administer the ID Project. This project helps Ottawa's most vulnerable populations replace lost or stolen identification.

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## Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives (CLGA)

BLG assisted CLGA with updating the names of their directors and officers on the public record; filing supplementary letters patent to amend their legal name to "The ArQuives"; and registering "The ArQuives" as a trade name in the interim.

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## Centre de Pédiatrie Sociale Centre-Sud

In 2018, we handled the union accreditation for the members of the "Centre de Pédiatrie Sociale Centre-Sud", a paediatrics centre that seeks to identify and reduce factors that influence the development and well-being of children from difficult upbringings.

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## Children's Legal & Educational Resource Centre (CLERC)

CLERC is the only organization in Western Canada that provides free legal support to vulnerable children and youth. Through our pro bono work with CLERC, BLG aims to increase knowledge about legal issues and rights facing young people through a range of programs. CLERC strives to reduce family conflict and future developmental harm in circumstances where children require legal intervention.

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## Civil Claims Duty Counsel (CCDC) Pro Bono Project

The CCDC Project provides individuals with Provincial Court assistance in small claims related matters, including landlord-tenant disputes, insurance or personal injury claims, and employment matters. We provide legal advice, information on court procedure, and assistance with motions or other appearances.

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## Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal

We are providing pro bono assistance to a choir whose members may be forced to transfer to another school after the "Commission scolaire de Montréal" decided to terminate an agreement signed more than half a century ago, which ensured that the choir members would study at the College Notre-Dame.

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## Parents of victim of fatal shooting

We are assisting the parents of Noam Cohen, a man fatally shot by the Montreal police after a car pursuit in 2017. We are providing pro bono legal advice and guidance to Mr. Cohen's family in their pursuit for justice.

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## Pro Bono Ontario

Over 30 BLG lawyers volunteer annually at the PBO Legal Advice Hotline and in person at Superior Court, Small Claims Court and providing individuals with assistance in civil claims, landlord-tenant disputes, employment matters, estates and other disputes. We provide legal information on court procedure, legal drafting, and trials and motions in Small Claims Court.

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#### Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Society, North Shore Zen Society, BC Lupus Society

We oversaw the transition of several organizations to comply with the new BC Societies Act and Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation. Our lawyers provided guidance on a variety of topics, including the acquisition of a gaming license, employment-related advice for executives, revenue generation, and landlord-tenant negotiations.

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#### BLG Business Venture Clinic

The BLG Business Venture Clinic is a student-run, pro bono legal clinic at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Law that provides free legal information to Calgary's entrepreneurs and start-ups. Students are supervised by BLG lawyers to provide legal services to local entrepreneurs.


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