

## ZENITH AWARDS

Award Category:

### Political Pro Bono

Project:

Rights of Grandchildren in the Care of Grandparents

Level:

Platinum

Winner (Firm):

Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP

Winners (Individuals):

Douglas Stewart, Barbara Grossman, Saba Zia, Denise Williams, Angela Casey

(photo order top to bottom)



This project pairs Fraser Milner Casgrain with CANGRANDS, a national grass-roots grandparent-support organization. CANGRANDS advocates for the thousands of Ontario children who are under the care of their grandparents. Pro Bono Law Ontario (PBLO) enlisted FMC to help safeguard the right of these children to financial support. Many grandparent-led families rely on a provincial benefit called Temporary Care Assistance (TCA), which supplements seniors' fixed incomes that are not designed to cover children's needs. Recent changes to TCA eligibility rules have led to the arbitrary loss of benefits for dozens of families. Moreover, the rules are interpreted and applied inconsistently by municipalities across Ontario. Finally, children risk becoming wards of the state if their grandparents do not receive adequate support to care for them. To address this systemic issue, FMC represented an Oshawa grandmother at the Social Benefits Tribunal. FMC's arguments led to the first favourable decision in years, and the family's benefits were reinstated. The Tribunal found that a flawed interpretation of the rules undermined the intent of the program, unlawfully cutting off the people for whom it was created. This decision is now the cornerstone of PBLO's efforts on behalf of grandparent-led families.

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