



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2013 – MARCH 2014

Helping Nova Scotians, for over 30 years, get the legal information they need!

Table of Contents

President's Report	1
Strategic Highlights	2
Financial Summary	4
Funders and Sponsors	5
Volunteers	6
Program Information – How we made a difference!	9
LISNS Project Work	10
Contact Information	12

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Laws impact all facets of our lives. From birth to death, laws establish the rules and responsibilities by which we live. However, the law is complex. The first step in navigating the system is to understand the law and where to go when you have a problem. This is where the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (**LISNS**) comes in.

LISNS believes providing easy access to legal information is fundamental to a fair justice system. For over 30 years, LISNS has been providing clear easy to understand information about the law, and this past year has not been an exception! In addition to continuing to offer programs such as the Legal Information Line, the Lawyers Referral program, and a comprehensive website, LISNS has also been busy on many other fronts. This past year the Action Committee for Access to Justice in Civil and Family Law Matters released its report. Not surprisingly, the report identified education and front-end support as a more efficient and effective method to resolve legal disputes.

LISNS has been working with a number of community and government groups to ensure that Nova Scotia is able to act on this report. One such initiative that we are very excited about is Access Legal Help NS. LISNS, with the support of an Access to Justice Fund administered by the Law Foundation of Ontario, has developed a pro bono project hub. It is a conduit for lawyers who are interested in providing some form of pro-bono service to connect with people who are seeking help but are unable to afford a lawyer or access existing community legal programs. Our clinics have been up and running throughout Halifax and are now launching across the Province. This is just one example of the initiatives LISNS is working on to help improve access to justice.

Access to justice is not a new problem and it is not one that is likely to be fixed quickly. Like the law itself, it is complex and multi-faceted. As demographics shift and technology changes, we need to work together with our partners to identify the needs and existing supports to tackle the problem. LISNS is in a position to take on a leading role in this initiative. We have an outstanding and experienced staff that are dedicated to improving access to legal information and volunteers that are enthusiastic and share our vision for LISNS. I thank and congratulate our staff and volunteers for all of the work they do to help Nova Scotians understand the law. I would like to make a special thank you to Maria Franks, who stepped down as ED this past year. Maria has been a tireless advocate for access to justice for many years and LISNS was fortunate to have her guide our organization.

I would also like to thank the members of the board. As a small non-profit entity, we rely heavily on our board members to provide their time and expertise to guide and strengthen our organization. As always our board members stepped up to the plate and have exceeded expectations.

Finally, I would like to thank our funders. We could not meet our mandate without the support of grants from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, the Department of Justice Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, and the many Nova Scotians that make donations to our society and support access to justice initiatives.

The spotlight is on access to justice and LISNS is ready to work with our partners to take on this task.

Michelle Higgins, President

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

- As a member of the Partners for Legal Education, LISNS was pleased to be a co-recipient of the 2013 ISIS Organization/Community Group Award. For over 10 years the Partners for Legal Education have worked together to provide newcomers to Canada with information about the law, the legal system and sources of legal help, and to improve access to justice for immigrants. The other Partners for Legal Education co-recipients include Emma Halpern, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society; Fiona Traynor, Dalhousie Legal Aid; Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton, Absolute Interpretation; Margo Fulmer, Nova Scotia Legal Aid; Mira Musanovic and Alex Atiol, ISIS; and Halifax lawyer Mirsada Stasevic.
- The launch of Access Legal Help NS to lawyers (December 2013) and provision of legal advice clinics to the public.
- LISNS was honoured to posthumously recognize Burnley Allan "Rocky" Jones as the 2013 winner of the Lorne Clarke, QC Access to Justice Award.
- Several staff left LISNS last Fall, but we welcomed a new Executive Director and a coordinator of the Access Legal Help NS project.
- A Public Law Placement through the Schulich School of Law enabled LISNS to do the research for updating its Human Rights Casebook for use in High Schools.
- A summer student placement through Boyne Clarke LLP enabled LISNS to develop legal information for youth on a wide range of topics.
- More audio topics are now available on our website, and they are proving to be very popular (about 22,000 downloads)

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

As a non-profit organization, LISNS appreciates the need to be fiscally prudent. We continue to evaluate all of our programs to ensure they are assisting us to meet our mandate and providing the public with the maximum benefit. At the year-end LISNS is showing a surplus, primarily due to staff vacancies, which has been placed in a contingency fund in accordance with risk management practices.

LISNS STRATEGIC FOCUS – TRIAGE NAVIGATOR TO IMPROVE NOVA SCOTIANS ACCESS TO JUSTICE

This past year the CBA identified the need for a triage system that can point people seeking legal help in the right direction. Justice Cromwell of the Supreme Court of Canada has validated the important role of public education in improving access to justice. It is known that people often don't recognize the legal nature of their problems and they don't know where to go for help. They are looking for a safe haven and find reassurance being provided with a human presence to complement on-line support. This is where LISNS serves an important role providing direct support and navigating people to the resources that can assist with resolving their issues.

This past year, LISNS embarked upon a strategic review of our mission and organizational goals. Our board and staff, with the assistance of Darrel Pink, Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Barrister's Society, started the process by completing a review of the organizational strengths/weaknesses and the challenges and

opportunities we face. While our plan is still a work in progress, the organization was able to identify areas of focus for the upcoming years.

LISNS recognizes that 'access to justice' requires collaboration. No one entity can be responsible for assuming this critical role. It is critical that we work together to ensure all resources are being used in the most effective manner. We need to continue to develop relationships with our community partners and groups interested in promoting access to justice. LISNS Access Legal Help NS Project exemplifies this collaborative approach by using an on-line intake system that navigates prospective clients through the range of community/legal resources available to assist with identifying the most appropriate service provider for their particular issue.

We must also ensure that members of the public, the legal profession and community organizations are aware of the work that LISNS is doing and the services we offer. Over the last number of years, LISNS has focused on improvements to our web site. A 152% increase in traffic to our website last year is a good indicator that this work is paying off. However, there is more work to be done. We are continuing to meet with community organizations from across the province to ensure that they are aware of our services and to seek input on way we can improve.

LISNS is well positioned to build upon its existing model for delivering legal information on a broad range of legal issues which includes offering a hybrid of personal consultation and on-line resources. However, we have a very limited budget. We appreciate the on-going assistance of our core funders and the many businesses and individuals that support our organization. We must be more creative in our efforts to raise financial support for this important cause. We will continue to evaluate how we use our resources and look for opportunities to work with partners to develop materials and information that educate Nova Scotians about the law.

There are exciting opportunities ahead to significantly improve access to justice for Nova Scotians. LISNS looks forward to working with partners and stakeholders in the development of a triage system and in providing leadership as a triage system navigator. Working together, we can support Nova Scotians seeking access to high quality legal information to assist in their decision-making.

Heather de Berdt Romilly
LISNS, Executive Director

June 19, 2014



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2013 - MARCH 31, 2014

REVENUE

GRANTS

<i>Law Foundation of N.S.</i>	\$ 133,000
<i>Department of Justice Canada</i>	70,000
<i>Department of Justice Nova Scotia</i>	50,000

PROGRAMS

<i>Community Programs</i>	429
<i>Publication Sales</i>	161
<i>Lawyer Referral Service</i>	2,500

FUNDRAISING 66,335

OTHER 442

SUB-TOTAL 322,867

PROJECTS 156,902

TOTAL \$ 479,769

EXPENSES

PROGRAMS

<i>Legal Info Line & Lawyer Referral Service</i>	\$ 55,828
<i>Dial -a - Law</i>	7,367
<i>Publications</i>	12,736
<i>Community Programs</i>	39,450
<i>Website</i>	55,172

COST OF RAISING FUNDS 39,269

PROJECTS 156,902

ADMINISTRATION 101,404

TOTAL \$ 468,128

INCOME (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR \$ 11,641

A copy of the audited statements is available upon request

Funders and Sponsors

THANK YOU TO ANNUAL GRANTORS

- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia
- Department of Justice Canada
- Department of Justice Nova Scotia

THANK YOU TO MAJOR PROJECT FUNDERS

- Law Foundation of Ontario
- Department of Justice Nova Scotia
- Province of Nova Scotia (Domestic Violence Awareness; Raising Awareness of Consent Laws)
- Government of Canada (Elder Abuse Awareness Project)

THANK YOU TO WEBSITE (LEGALINFO.ORG) SPONSORS

- BOYNE CLARKE
- Wagners Law Firm
- Atlantic Home Warranty
- Nova Scotia Legal Aid

THANK YOU TO LISNS EVENT SPONSORS

Play in a Day 2014 –

- Allen Print
- WBLI
- Jane's Catering & Events
- IN-POINT MEDIA
- Jost Vineyards
- Quantum Communications
- Stephen Kennedy Bailiff Services



Volunteers

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive:

Michelle Higgins, President
Donald McDougall, Q.C., Vice President
Jonathan Gallant, CA, Treasurer
Jennifer Pink, Secretary

Members:

- Joseph Cameron
- Pauline Doucette
- Nathalie Ghosn
- Diane Hawco (resigned mid-term)
- Nila Ipson
- Adrian Lake (resigned mid-term)
- Quy Linh (resigned mid-term)
- Justice Beryl MacDonald
- Kevin MacDonald
- Sarah McGrath-White
- Wayne Moug
- Andrew Rankin
- James Rossiter
- John Underhill

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2014 - 2016

- Caron Ferguson Eagan
- Adrian Lake
- Annemarie van Vuren
- Lisa White

WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

FEEDBACK FROM ACCESS LEGAL HELP NS FAMILY LAW CLIENTS:

- ◇ I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the *Access Legal Help NS* Program. The volunteer legal staff were pleasant, helpful and professional from the very moment I made inquiries into the program. As a single mother dealing with ongoing sensitive family law issues, the support, advice and guidance I received during my first clinic was extremely comforting, reassuring and very useful.
- ◇ Thank you to the *Legal Information Society of NS* for offering such a valuable program!
- ◇ It is wonderful that you offer this program. It is great for someone who has never used a lawyer before, great to learn about the court process and to learn about the process of meeting with a lawyer. It gets the jitters out talking to someone. I used the advice at the clinic with the lawyer I eventually went to and paid for to carry on my case. I commend the program and I hope that my positive experience is helpful in keeping the program going.



LAUREN GRANT, LISNS ACCESS LEGAL HELP PROJECT COORDINATOR

Lauren reports that she has also had many clients express their gratitude for the program. “In fact, last week one asked if they could give me a hug for all of the help I gave them! It is very rewarding work.”

FEEDBACK FROM A NEWCOMER TO CANADA WHO ATTENDED THE “PARTNERS FOR LEGAL EDUCATION 2013” LEGAL INFORMATION SERIES FOR IMMIGRANTS:

- ◇ In my dealing in Canada the information obtained during this legal series will help. Having been equipped with my rights and legal dos and don'ts especially in the area of family law and civil law I now know how to live here with my family.

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT, COMMITTEE, RESEARCH, WRITING & LEGAL INFORMATION VOLUNTEERS

Raphina Ghosn	Colin Strapps
Sarah McGrath-White	David Shore
Julie Keenan	Dave Dhillon
Angela MacKenzie	Chris Maxwell
Christine Dimitrov	Kathryn Piché
Barbara Fickes	Samantha Ratnam
donalee Moulton	Kiel Mercer
Tanya Jones	Mark Tipperman
Fiona Wilson	Cheryl Schurman
Rejean Aucoin	Danielle MacLean
Gussie Postlewaite	Diana Hawco
Pam Kachafanas	Leili Tabatabaie
Damian Penny	Joseph Anthony Loot
	Illana Luther

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER LAWYERS WHO SUPPORT ACCESS LEGAL HELPS
AND THE LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE!!!!

THANK YOU TO ALL SPEAKERS BUREAU MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF OUR PROJECT
ADVISORY COMMITTEES:

Access Legal Help Pro Bono Students:

Scott Gorski
Maria Sanderson
Melanie Gillis
Veronika Killbrand
Mario Garcia
Sarah Walsh
Melissa Trowsdale

Access Legal Help Advisory Committee:

Maria Franks
Wendy Turner
Julia Crabbe
Emma Halpern
Sarah McGrath-White
Archie Kaiser
Heather de Berdt Romilly
Justice Walter Goodfellow
Ned Chase
Margo Fulmer
Shelley Wood
Nicole Slaunwhite
Jen Pink
Chuck Ford

Program Information – How we made a difference!

Website	Access Legal Help (Pro Bono Project)	Legal Information Line & Lawyer Referral Service	Dial-a-Law	Publications
<p>Different Visitors: 409,507 (152% increase from previous year)</p> <p>Total Visits: 469,639 (146% increase)</p> <p>Avg. Visitors per day: 1,287</p> <p>Pages viewed: 641,177 (106% increase)</p>	<p>Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinics delivered: 18</p> <p>Clients served: 40+</p> <p>Most requested topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 1. Civil Litigation & Small Claims 2. Labour and Employment 	<p>Total # of Legal Information Line calls: 4,842</p> <p>Top 3 areas of law: Family (29%) Criminal (14%) Wills & Estates (8%)</p> <p># of referrals to the Lawyer Referral Service: 579</p> <p># of referrals to Access Legal Help: 38</p>	<p>Phone system listens (81 titles): 1,538</p> <p>Top 3 areas of law:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Custody & access 2. Separation 3. Divorce <p>Online audio listens (46 titles): 21,925</p> <p>Top 3 areas of law:</p> <p>Going to Family Court</p> <p>Divorce</p> <p>Adoption</p>	<p>LISNS Publications distributed: 21,805</p> <p>Top 3 topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Awareness of Domestic Violence for Newcomers ● Justice Information for New Canadians ● It's In Your Hands: Legal Information for Seniors & Their Families

LISNS Project Work

OUR PROJECTS IN 2013-14:

FREE LEGAL ADVICE

- Work continued on a three-year pilot project to develop a **Pro Bono Legal Services Hub for Nova Scotia**. We have developed website pages where Nova Scotians can find out where and how to access free legal help: go to www.legalinfo.org and click on **Access Legal Help NS**.

We are currently offering clinics in Halifax and are rolling out the initiative across the province.

The project is funded through an Access to Justice Fund administered by the Law Foundation of Ontario.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS

- We concluded the **Project to Raise Awareness of Domestic Violence Laws and Resources for Newcomers**. Two brochures, one for community and one for women, were developed in eight languages as well as a poster and bookmark. At the end of the project we held evaluation workshops comprising newcomers and service providers to get input on the materials and to explore next steps and best approaches in addressing violence issues in newcomer and immigrant communities.

The brochures are available in print and on line at <http://www.legalinfo.org/i-have-a-legal-question/newcomers-to-canada/>.

The project was funded by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration.

ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS

- We continued work on the 2-year project to **Raise Awareness of Elder Abuse for Healthcare Professionals**. We developed a pilot workshop using a case-based model and based on what we learned from consultations with seniors and healthcare professionals.

We ran 5 pilot workshops. We also developed a Workshops Facilitator's Guide, hand-outs on key resources and legal documents, and an on-line education tool. The on-line tool can be viewed at www.legalinfo.org/elderabuse/index.html.

We are exploring ways to ensure that the workshops continue to be available to healthcare professionals once the project ends.

The project is funded by the Government of Canada *New Horizons for Seniors Program*.

CONSENT LAWS AND PRIVACY

- We began work on **Raising Awareness of Consent Laws and Privacy among Youth Project**. The project comprises:
 - A scan of existing programs that address consent issues, and
 - Consultations in five areas of the province to explore the problems, seek input on initiatives, challenges and barriers, leaders and possible solutions. Consultations are with adult stakeholders and youth.

At the end of the project we will provide the funder with a report on existing programs, learnings from the consultations and future steps to address the issue.

The project is funded through the province's *Acting Together on Sexual Violence / Bullying Initiative*.

Contact Information

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia

5523B Young St, Halifax, NS B3K 1Z7

Tel (902) 454 – 2198 (administration line only)

Fax (902) 455 - 3105

Legal Information Line & Lawyer Referral Service: 1 800 665-9779 or 455-3135

Web: www.legalinfo.org

The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (or LISNS) is a charitable, not-for-profit organization. We've been providing Nova Scotians with easy to understand information and resources about the law for over 30 years. You'll find lots of legal information online at legalinfo.org



Seacil the Legal Seagull