

LEGAL INFOⁱ
NOVA SCOTIA



ANNUAL REPORT
April 2018 - March 2019

Legal Info Nova Scotia delivers access to justice for Nova Scotians through our services and programs. Our goal is to provide people with peace of mind through tools to manage legal conflict.

Award Winning Service Delivery

Through our 3 full-time staff and over 200 volunteers, LISNS continues to anticipate and respond to Nova Scotians' legal needs through quality legal information. Within our tiny budget, we advanced service delivery through leading digital innovation with proven results.

LISNS received recognition for innovation in the delivery of legal information services to address areas of need particularly for people who are in conflict and without legal representation.

- LISNS received the **Canadian Bar Association NS Inaugural 2018 Access to Justice Award in June 2018** - <https://www.legalinfo.org/> for digital innovation through development of its wills app and small claims court app and community volunteer support through public navigators.
- LISNS is a co-recipient of the **2018 IWK Foundation Board Award of Community Excellence in June 2018** - <https://www.legalinfo.org/what-is-lisns/media> for leadership in supporting sick children and their families through the medical legal health partnership with the IWK and legal service provider.
- LISNS digital innovation is profiled in the prestigious **Autonomy through Cyberjustice Technologies Project** (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) Partnership Grants program) with the **Cyberjustice Laboratory at the University of Montreal**. The ACT aims to increase access to justice through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Their work focuses on the design and simulation of technological tools for conflict prevention and resolution.

WE REMEMBER

We wish to remember the significant contribution of LISNS' long-serving accountant, Barrie Warren, who passed away in March 2019. Barrie was a faithful supporter of LISNS' work and an excellent brand ambassador. We are saddened by his loss and gratefully acknowledge his many years of service and friendship. We will miss him.

GOLD STANDARD PROGRAMMING

- ◇ **Legal Information Line, Lawyer & Mediator Referral Service:** LISNS provides a free telephone hot-line service which continues to be recognized as a high quality response to people requiring legal information. Callers speak to a legally trained legal information counsellor to get expert legal information, and may be triaged to other helping resources, or to a lawyer in private practice through the volunteer Lawyer Referral Service through which member lawyers provide an initial 30 minute consultation for a \$20 fee. Demand for the Line continues to exceed current staff resources.
 - Now offering **E-Mail and Live-Chat** through LISNS website
 - Saviez-vous que nous offrons de l'information juridique en français? Vous pouvez obtenir le service en français tous les jours par courriel questions@legalinfo.org ou tous les jours sauf les vendredis sur la ligne d'information juridique - 1 800-665-9779 ou 902-455-3135

Thanks to **The Law Foundation of Ontario PLENS Project Funding (2017-19) for Modernization of LISNS website and digital service delivery**. LISNS successfully completed this project which included the launch of a redesigned mobile friendly website which has received very positive feedback. This is a significant step forward in serving Nova Scotians, community service providers and members of the legal community as the majority of visitors now visit using a mobile device. **With the launch of the redesigned site we also introduced online chat and e-mail service.** Demand for both online chat and email is steadily increasing, and both offer alternative ways to get legal information and referrals, and expand coverage of the “legal info line” service on a daily basis. LISNS website receives high annual traffic, offers legal information on a broad range of legal topics, and helps Nova Scotians find legal resources to meet their needs.

- **Representing Yourself Videos** – produced video shorts to help people represent themselves particularly at small claims court with funding support gratefully received from the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.
- **Updated It’s In Your Hands Guide for Seniors and their Families** – LISNS’ most frequently requested publication – an invaluable resource for seniors and their families – thanks to the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors for providing project funding for this update.
- **Updated family law publications** relating to domestic violence with funding support gratefully received from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and Nova Scotia Department of Justice. LISNS has a wide range of domestic violence publications some of which are available in eight languages.
- Assisted the NS Department of Justice with the communication of legal information regarding the **Adult Capacity and Decision Making legislation** and the **Intimate Images and Cyber-protection legislation**.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- ◇ **Wills Clinics for Seniors in the Preston Communities** – with funding support from the Department of Lands and Forests, the free wills clinics for seniors were expanded to include disadvantaged families in the Preston Communities. **LISNS has served 20 clients through 3 lawyers and 2 students!** We express our appreciation for the generous time and expertise provided by our volunteer lawyers and students and for the support provided by East Preston Day Care Centre and staff at MLA Keith Colwell’s office.

Medical Legal Health Partnerships

- The **IWK Family Legal Health Program** is a medical legal partnership that offers free legal help to eligible IWK Health Centre patients and family members when a legal issue is impacting the patient’s health. The program is a partnership amongst the IWK Health Centre, McInnes Cooper and LISNS. LISNS provides on-site legal information at the IWK Health Centre twice a month at drop-in clinics, and telephone and email support at other times. In 2018-2019, with Schulich School of Law students, LISNS also provided legal information sessions to IWK staff on cannabis and the law, and the *Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act*. **Since 2015 the IWK Family Legal Health Program has assisted 87 families.**

- Through an MOU with the Nova Scotia Health Authority, launched the **Estate Planning Legal Health Program**, a pilot medical legal partnership offering pro bono estate planning documents to lower income patients who have a life-limiting illness, and who are receiving care through the Victoria General Hospital, QEII. Our sincere thanks to the lawyers who are supporting this important work; and to the NSHA staff, social workers and healthcare providers who continue to support and highlight the need for this service. ***Since the pilot commenced in November 2018, there have been a total of 8 clients served.***

- ◇ **Youth Outreach – Law Day Events at Citadel High School “Putting Youth in the Driver’s Seat of Their Lives!”** We believe educating youth on their rights and giving them the tools for planning helps them make good decisions that reduce legal conflicts later in life. LISNS partnered with Citadel High School to host the first Law Day Event for grade 12 students at the Spatz Theatre in May 2018. The entire production was handled by the high school students and it received a lot of positive feedback from the 350 Grade 12 students who attended the event. LISNS produced a series of funny short skits which introduced topics that students will encounter as they get ready for the adult world - pay day loans, rent, used car purchases etc. The skits and a video of the day are available on LISNS website at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asV067kxH1U&t=413s>. The success of this event led to LISNS hosting a second Law Day event on March 31, 2019. Pro bono Schulich School of Law students assisted with the event which was profiled by the CBC Mainstreet and positively received by the over 300 Grade 12 students in attendance. LISNS is developing a youth app to provide to schools as a resource tool to include in math classes for orienting students to budgeting, law courses and as part of a healthy living course.

- ◇ **Family Law Navigator Initiative** – Training has been developed for front line community service workers to address the growing need for legal information and support in their work with families. A pilot of the training held in the South Shore of Nova Scotia proved very successful and information and videos are available on LISNS website <https://www.legalinfo.org/navigator/public-navigator-training>.

- ◇ **Public Navigator Initiative** – continued to develop the public navigator support for people representing themselves or requiring assistance with a free LISNS’ legal information app and held a successful session with public navigators in Bridgewater and Court staff at the Bridgewater Justice Centre to review the initiative and supporting tools. Student teams at the Schulich School of Law worked on developing navigator programs for small claims court and wills in HRM during the Fall and Spring terms using the Bridgewater model. A pilot with HRM Small Claims Court is planned for summer 2019.

- ◇ **Partners for Legal Education Legal Info Series** - In partnership with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia and a number of generous volunteer speakers from the community, LISNS helps coordinate and present a Spring and Fall series of legal information sessions for newcomers to Canada on a range of topics, including criminal law, family violence, child protection, residential tenancies, employment, wills & estates, human rights, immigration and refugee law. LISNS has a number of publications for newcomers on various topics that are available in multiple languages on the LISNS website.

- ◇ **Student Placements** – this year LISNS hosted 34 students from various programs including 1 Schulich School of Law Student through the Public Law Placement, 26 Pro Bono Dalhousie Schulich School of Law students (5 on the Legal Info Line/email; 4 IWK Family Legal Health Program; 4 Estate Planning Legal Health Program; 4 Youth Law Day Event; 4 Small Claims Court Navigators; 5 Wills Navigators); 4 IT Students; 3 paralegals.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

- LISNS achieved a balanced budget for 2018/19. Many thanks to an anonymous donor who pledged \$4,000 in funding pending matching donations from donors who had not donated in more than 2 years prior, being secured. This goal was successfully met by the LISNS Board. These funds have been directed towards extending our Legal Information Line coverage. We also extend our most sincere thanks to all LISNS donors. We make every dollar count for quality service delivery to Nova Scotians and are proud to have low overhead and administrative costs.
- For 2019-20, funding support has been confirmed for the following:
 - In NS Association of Family Resource Centres with funding support from NS Department of Community Services to deliver family law navigator information sessions to front line community service workers across the Province building on the success of the Bridgewater pilot in Fall 2018.
 - Department of Lands and Forests – continuing to deliver free wills clinics to disadvantaged seniors and families in the Preston Communities; supporting land title claimants in Guysborough County through pro bono wills.
 - MOU with Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law, to develop a personal directive app modelled on LISNS Wills App to support end of life decision-making.
 - Anonymous donor matching of \$4,000 for donations made by donors who have not donated for 3 years or more.

THANK YOU TO OUR CORE FUNDERS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT

- **LAW FOUNDATION OF NOVA SCOTIA** – Thank you for continuing to support our legal information work and providing consistent and strong endorsement of our quality service delivery and the important role of LISNS in providing Nova Scotians with access to justice.
- **NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE** – Thank you to the Department and the officials with whom we are partnering on the Public Navigator Project, particularly the Court Administrators across the Province, and the former Minister of Justice, Diana Whalen, who provided such wonderful support for our work including the recognition event held at the Provincial Legislature for the LISNS Public Navigator Project.
- **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA** – Thank you to the Department for recognizing and supporting our work in providing Nova Scotians with quality legal information.

THANK YOU TO THE LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE FUND

The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia was pleased to learn in early 2017 that the Law Foundation of Ontario Access to Justice Fund approved 2-year funding, in the amount of \$100,000, for our Public Legal Education in Nova Scotia (PLENS) Project (2017-19). We are very grateful to The Law Foundation of Ontario for its support.



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LISNS Executive:

- Elizabeth Butt, ExxonMobil, President
- Basia Dziezranowska, McInnes Cooper, Vice President
- Darryn Steeves, Scotiabank, Treasurer
- Michelle Chai, Stewart McKelvey, Secretary
- Ned Perry, Member at Large

LISNS Board Members:

- Mark Gosine, DHX Media Ltd.
- Christine Hanson, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission
- Morgan Manzer, Nova Scotia Legal Aid
- John Hope, Dalhousie University
- Dan Ingersoll, Cox Palmer
- Justice Pamela J. MacKeigan, NS Supreme Court Family Division
- Lora MacEachern, Nova Scotia Department of Justice

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER LAWYERS and MEDIATORS WHO SUPPORT:

- The Lawyer Referral Service
- The Mediator Referral Service
- Legal Information presentations
- Legal Content research, writing and review.

We made 1,372 referrals to lawyers on the Legal Information Society's Lawyer Referral Service. The lawyers who volunteer their time for this important service play a crucial role in providing access to justice for Nova Scotians. The 30 minute initial consultation for a nominal cost is greatly appreciated by those referred to the service. We applaud all of the lawyers who are part of the Lawyer Referral Service, and particularly those who often waive the \$20 fee that they would otherwise be allowed to charge for the initial consult, and those who offer a range of fee options for clients who might not otherwise be able to afford a lawyer.

We made 24 referrals to mediators on our Mediator Referral Service, who offer dispute resolution on a wide range of issues, and make it easy for Nova Scotians to get in touch with a mediator to explore whether mediation is right for them. We continue to look at new ways to encourage and support early resolution of legal problems, and alternative dispute resolution.

THANK YOU to our **Public Navigators** and resource team who make our navigator programs possible.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
REVENUES AND EXPENSES
FISCAL YEAR APRIL 1 2018 – MARCH 31 2019

REVENUES

GRANTS

Law Foundation of Nova Scotia	121,496
Department of Justice Canada	70,000
Department of Justice Nova Scotia	50,000

FUNDRAISING 16,673

OTHER 1,022

Sub-Total 259,191

Projects 116,000

TOTAL 375,191

EXPENSES

PROGRAMS

Legal Info Line & Lawyer Referral Service	84,807
Publications	10,823
Community Programs	19,822
Website	73,097

COST OF RAISING FUNDS 247

PROJECTS 116,000

ADMINISTRATION 68,325

TOTAL 373,121

INCOME (LOSS) FOR FISCAL 2,070

Copies of our Financial Statements are available upon request

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
FISCAL YEAR APRIL 1 2018 – MARCH 31 2019

ASSETS

CURRENT

Cash	127,271
Accounts Receivable	16,911
Prepaid Expenses	2,122
	2,122

CAPITAL

Furniture and Office Equipment (Net)	2,625
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TOTAL	148,929
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LIABILITIES

CURRENT

Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	101,702
Deferred Revenue	45,700
	45,700

TOTAL	147,402
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NET ASSETS

Investment in Capital Assets	2,625
Unrestricted	-11,098
Contingency	10,000
	10,000

Net Asset Deficiency	1,527
	1,527

TOTAL	148,929
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Copies of our Financial Statements are available upon request

Website Online apps Social Media	Legal Information Line, Lawyer & Mediator Referral Service	Some service user comments
Pages Viewed: 259,911 Sessions: 165,504	Legal Info Line: 3,460 Emails: 1,284 Live chat: 776 Total: 5,520	4.9/5 overall chat rating
Top 5 pages: 1. Common law relationships 2. Ask a legal question 3. Summary offence tickets 4. Powers of attorney 5. Peace bonds	Top 5 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Criminal 3. Wills & estates 4. Employment 5. Creditor/debtor	85% email user satisfaction rate 87% of users said the information helped them deal with their legal problem
Wills app: 2,016	Referrals to: Lawyer Referral Service: 1,372 Mediator Referral Service: 24	82% of website users found the site clear and easy to understand
Small Claims app: 3,637	# of self reps: 456	92% would recommend the website to others
Twitter: 1,117 followers Facebook: 694		

Some user comments:

"Very happy with the information. It was exactly what I was looking for. Thanks!"

"It's so nice to know we have this kind of help in our system. I don't feel so alone and afraid now. "

"I really appreciate this opportunity to get legal information."

"I am so satisfied and this one message has done more to help me than anyone else has bothered to try."

"Many thanks for this excellent legal information! I really wish that I had contacted you before...I'm very grateful for this free service! I will recommend the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia to all my friends and family, if they have a legal question...I'm sad that I needed your services, but I'm very glad that I was able to reach out to you."