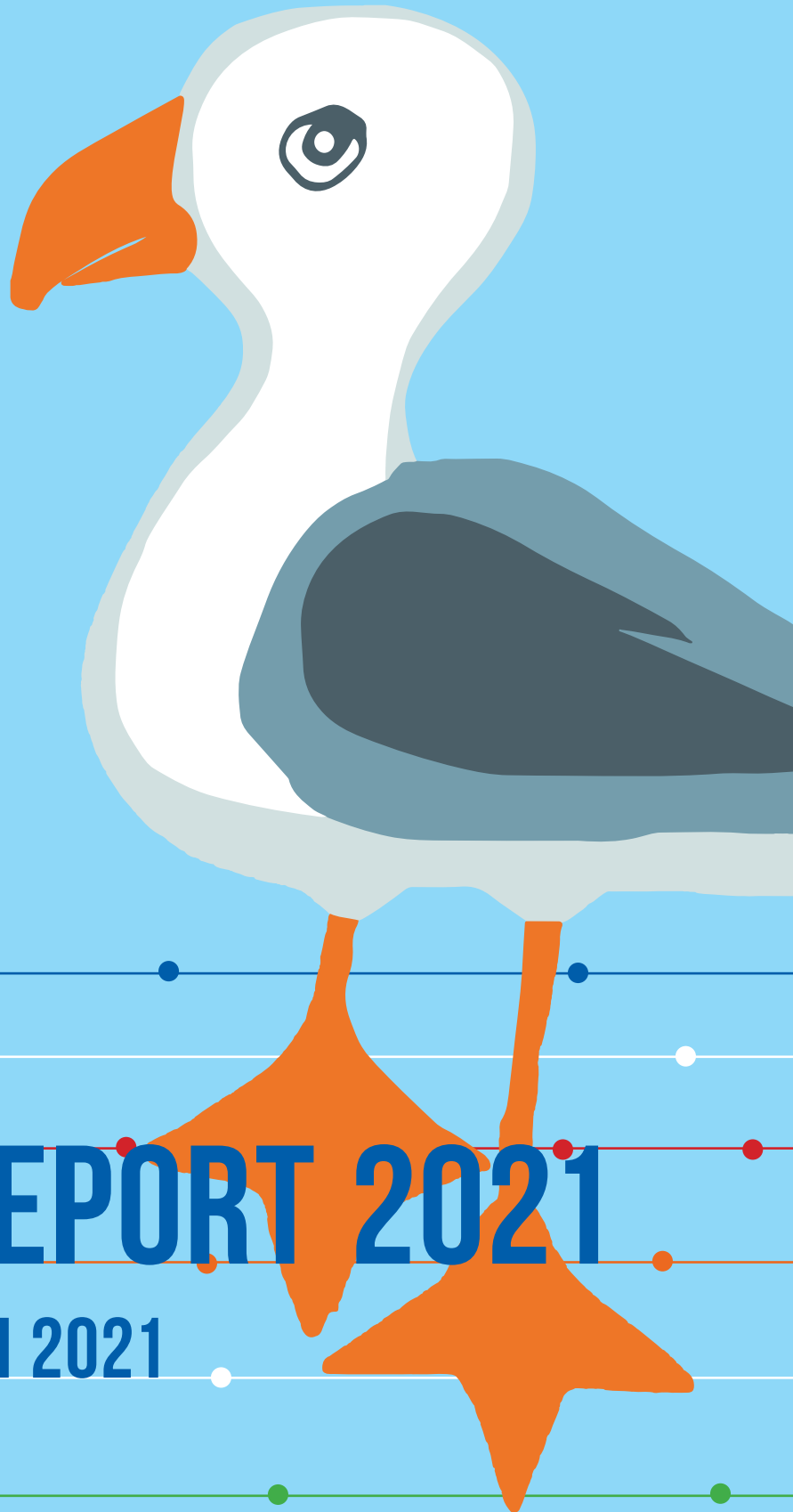


LEGAL INFO ⓘ
NOVA SCOTIA

2021
2021
2021



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

APRIL 2020-MARCH 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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OUR VISION

- The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia is access to justice in action.
- LISNS provides legal information, resources and referral options in traditional and innovative ways to enable Nova Scotians to understand their legal rights and responsibilities.

OUR MISSION

LISNS empowers Nova Scotians to identify, prevent and solve legal issues.

The pandemic has resulted in many new legal issues arising and worsened many of the legal problems that Nova Scotians face on a daily basis. LISNS staff have done an outstanding job of rising to the challenge to provide coordinated seamless and high quality service to the public despite the challenges presented professionally and personally. They deserve our highest praise and thanks!



Heather de Berdt Romilly
Executive Director
Legal Information Society
of Nova Scotia

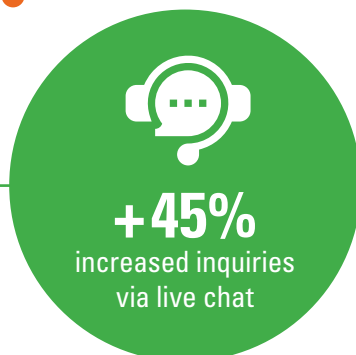
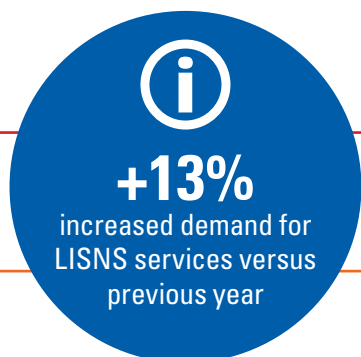


THANK YOU TO LISNS STAFF

LISNS Staff are the reason LISNS delivers on the objectives that meet our mission. Each staff person is very competent and is committed to making a positive difference through their work. Notably, each person has a strong central core while having an ability to work as part of a team that is seamlessly innovating while working remotely. LISNS staff know our objectives and how to achieve those objectives in a coordinated integrated manner. At LISNS we know we have to continue to innovate to be relevant. It is with pride that LISNS celebrates the staff each one of whom is an innovator, contributor and dedicated worker.

Key highlights:

- Demand for LISNS core services increased 13% compared to the previous year. Not only did we respond to more inquiries but those inquiries tended to be more complex and, on average, demanded more staff time.
- Strong core funding made it possible to secure \$811,779 of project funding to develop and deliver legal information in multi-media formats in key areas of need:
 - COVID Response Project – wills and estate information and Personal Directive planning, legal information handbooks for visually impaired persons;
 - ElderAbuse prevention;
 - Family Law updating to support changes to the Divorce Act;
 - Investor Rights and Protection;
 - Seniors' Navigator Program with community volunteers helping people by phone with making a personal directive using LISNS Personal Directive App;
 - Supporting Trans, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse Communities- a Guide for Employers and Service Providers;
 - Sexual Harassment in the Workplace; and
 - Updating Domestic Violence Publications and a Guide for Girls
- Our timing with the launch of the Personal Directive App in 2019 provided an important public service and pandemic planning tool as people could not have someone accompany them if going to hospital. Healthcare providers have told us how helpful this planning is for their work particularly during the pandemic.
- Developed online Navigator Training to support community volunteers with helping people to make a Personal Directive using LISNS Personal Directive App – the training has received positive feedback from the diverse stakeholders with whom we conducted pilots.



WEBSITE / ONLINE APPS / SOCIAL MEDIA

Page views:

233,866

Sessions:

132,523

Top 5 pages:

1. Personal Directives App
2. Wills and Estates Law
3. Free and Low Cost Legal Help
4. Family Law
5. Common Law Relationships

App Usage:

Personal Directives: 10,740 views

Wills: 2,354 views

Small Claims: 2,183 views

Personal Directive App Completions: 626

Social Media Followers:

Twitter: 1,267

Facebook: 864

Instagram: 80

LEGAL INFORMATION LINE, LAWYER & MEDIATOR REFERRAL SERVICE

Legal Info Line: 3,537

Emails: 1,386

Live chat: 1,218

Total Responses: 6,141

Referrals to:

Lawyers: 1,016

Mediators: 12

of self reps: 1,584

Top 5 areas of law:

1. Family
2. Criminal
3. Employment
4. Wills, Intestate Estates
5. Landlord/tenant (residential)

PODCASTS & VIDEOS

Legal Information Podcasts

- Completed production on **16 podcasts** with a total of **257 downloads** by fiscal year end.
- **4 episode** series related to investor rights, and protection and a **4 episode** series of investor stories, as part of our Investor Rights and Protection Guide.
- **5 episode** series related to residential tenancies solutions and skills.
- **2-part episode** of a planned series of podcasts on family law issues.

Legal Information Videos

- **4664 views** on **134 video** files on both the LISNS website and our custom training portal.
- Uploaded **69 new video** files to the LISNS website and our custom training portal.
- The most viewed video file on the LISNS website was our **Personal Directives (Audio) file** with **368 views**.
- The most viewed video file on our custom training portal was the **Sexual Harassment Workplace Training file** with **1076 views**.

PROJECTS, OUTREACH & INFORMATION SESSIONS

Virtual Legal Information Presentations: 625 attendees

- Caregivers NS Wellness Retreat
- Partners for Legal Education, info series for newcomers to Canada: **11 sessions** – topics included on Private Refugee Sponsorship (2), Family Sponsorship, Becoming a Canadian Citizen, Becoming a Permanent Resident, Employment law & COVID-19, Intimate Partner Violence, Family law & COVID-19, Online safety, Residential Tenancies, Criminal law
- Webinars: **3 sessions** – Personal Directives (for IWK staff); Employment Law Basics (for NS Interpreting Services interpreters); Family Law, Intimate Partner Violence Overview (for frontline service providers – this session was in very high demand, with **80 registered participants**)
- Seniors' Navigator Presentations – available to both program volunteers and community groups working with seniors.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Project

- Free legal advice for victims of workplace sexual harassment and free training materials to promote harassment-free workplaces
- **23 lawyers** trained through our custom training portal
- **20 referrals** for free legal advice

NSHA VG-Estate Planning Legal Health Program

- Free estate planning documents (Will, PoA, PD) for eligible patients who have a life-limiting illness
- 20 patient-clients served

IWK Family Legal Health Program

- Free legal help for eligible IWK patients – families (where Legal Aid not available)
- 30 patients-families served.
- 7 cases featured issues related to COVID-19 such as Employment Insurance, Immigration/travel restrictions, Housing, Income supports - CERB/Income assistance

Personal Directives App Outreach

- PD App Completions - 626
- Media Outreach – interviews related to the PD App led to a 20% increase in one week's traffic to our website and a 375% increase in one week's traffic to the PD App itself.
- Social Media promotional campaign - People reached- 13,239, Likes- 177, Comments- 9, Shares- 85, Post clicks- 209

Organizing for Future Outreach

- Many of our initiatives involve outreach to stakeholders and members of the public. To organize outreach efforts we have created over 90 contact lists with 1437 different contacts.
- We also have a standing webinar base list of 124 people – these are people who have attended past webinars and are interested in attending future webinars that we offer.

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

Student and Paralegal Volunteers: 42

- CNIB Pro Bono Dal Students: 8
- Small Claims Court Navigator Pro Bono Dal: 4
- Wills Navigator Pro Bono Dal: 3
- Presentations Pro Bono Dal: 3
- Legal Information Content: 2
- PD Navigator Pro Bono Dal: 2
- SHWP Reporting App Pro Bono Dal: 2
- Family Law Podcast Pro Bono Dal: 2
- Investor Protection Pro Bono Dal: 1
- VG Legal Health Program Pro Bono Dal: 1
- Paralegal students: 4
- Social Media SMU student volunteer: 1
- Dal Practicum Political Science and the Law: 2
- NSSC Public Relations practicum: 2
- IT Students: 1
- High School Students: 1

Seniors' Navigator Program

- 53 people have participated in our customized online training program. 43 completed the training. 21 are registered and ready to act as navigators on our online matching platform.
- 14 people were matched with volunteer navigators -- 6 through our online matching service and 8 via telephone referrals..

Investor Protection Program Content Review

- Volunteers: 50

TRENDS IN RESPONSE DATA – ANNUAL COMPARISON

Demand for LISNS services increased 13% compared to the previous year.

TOTAL RESPONSES

	2020-2021	2019-2020	% change
Apr 1 to Mar 31	6141	5421	13.28%

The increase was most significant over live chat where we increased the number of inquiries responded to by 45%.

RESPONSES BY METHOD OF REQUEST

	2020-2021	2019-2020	% change
Legal Info Line	3537	3363	5.17%
Email	1386	1220	13.61%
Live Chat	1218	838	45.35%

We continued to provide a high number of referrals to lawyers through our Lawyer Referral Service (1,016 in 2020-21), however 83% of our responses do not involve a lawyer referral, and instead involve the provision of legal information and referrals other resources.

% OF RESPONSES BY REFERRAL TYPE

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Legal Info Line	3537	3363
Email	1386	1220
Live Chat	1218	838

In terms of subject matter, we saw increases across many subject areas – most noticeably, and concerningly, in the area of family violence where inquiries increased by over 200%.

RESPONSES BY SUBJECT

	2020-2021	2019-2020	% change
Family Violence	143	45	217.78%
Government	150	71	111.27%
Charter/Human Rights	74	42	76.19%
Child Protection	114	69	65.22%
Sexual Violence	30	19	57.89%
Consumer	226	155	45.81%

TRENDS IN RESPONSE DATA – IMPACT OF COVID

This fiscal year coincided with the arrival of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia. The first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Nova Scotia on March 15, 2020. The Provincial Government declared a state of emergency on March 22, 2020. The first substantial reopening measures were introduced in June when businesses that were previously ordered closed were allowed to reopen under new restrictions starting on June 5, 2020. Licensed childcare facilities reopened on June 15, 2020.

With those dates in mind, the analysis in this section refers to two distinct periods: **Provincial Reopening** refers to June 1, 2020 to Mar 31, 2021. **COVID Closure** refers to Apr 1 to May 31, 2020.

Looking at our average number of monthly responses, there seemed to be a slight COVID closure slow down followed by a noticeable “reopening rebound”.

AVG MONTHLY RESPONSES

Provincial Reopening	COVID Closure	% change
533	434	22.81%

There was a 67% increase in demand for our Lawyer Referral Service during the Provincial Reopening period:

AVG MONTHLY LAWYER REFERRALS

Provincial Reopening	COVID Closure	% change
90	55	63.64%

There was also a 42% increase in inquiries from self-represented people during the Provincial Reopening:

AVG MONTHLY NUMBER OF SELF REP INQUIRIES

Provincial Reopening	COVID Closure	% change
141	92	53.26%

Not only did we respond to more inquiries during the Provincial Reopening period, the inquiries that we received tended to be more complex and, on average, demanded more staff time:

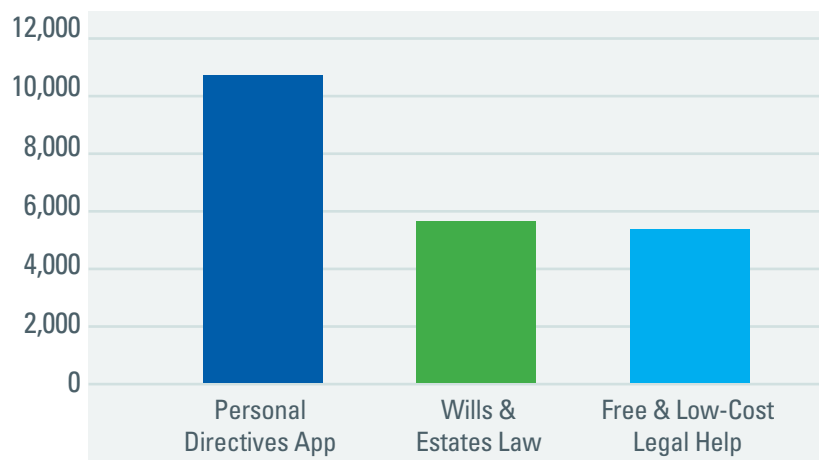
AVG MONTHLY % OF RESPONSES > 20 MINS

Provincial Reopening	COVID Closure	% change
22.72%	17.70%	28.36%

TRENDS IN WEBSITE DATA *(continued)*

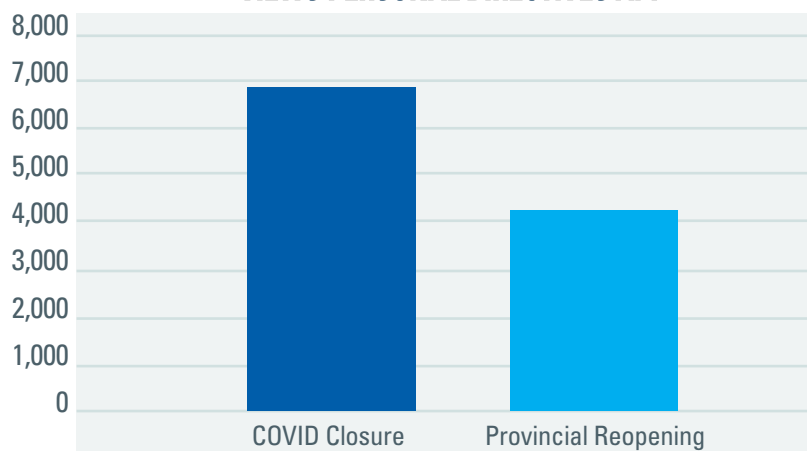
The success of our Personal Directives App was the most striking trend during this fiscal year – there was almost as much traffic to our Personal Directives App as there was to the next two top pages on our website combined.

MOST VIEWED PAGES 2020–2021



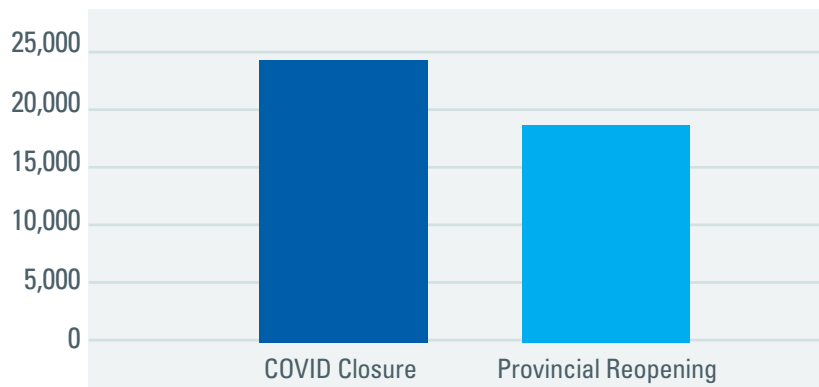
63% of the traffic to the Personal Directives App came during the COVID Closure Period (April-May 2020)

VIEWS PERSONAL DIRECTIVES APP



There was an overall surge in traffic to our website during the COVID Closure Period, which is partly explained by the success of our Personal Directives App:

AVERAGE MONTHLY PAGE VIEWS – LISNS WEBSITE



TRENDS IN RESPONSE DATA *(continued)*

The Personal Directives App was only one of the pages that saw a significant surge in traffic. For example, we also saw increases on the Common Law Relationships page and our Jury Duty page:

AVG MONTHLY PAGE VIEWS

Page Title	COVID Closure	Provincial Reopening
Personal Directives App	3415	323
Common Law Relationships	1006	297
COVID-19	973	168
Jury Duty	756	201

Subsequently, during the Provincial Reopening we noticed increases in traffic to pages related to the courts and legal services.

AVG MONTHLY PAGE VIEWS

Page Title	COVID Closure	Provincial Reopening
Notary or Commissioner of Oaths	286	394
I Need a Lawyer	189	364
Representing yourself in court – various	222	299
Small Claims App	130	192

“You have no idea how much it means to be able to reach out and obtain answers. All the while be treated with the utmost respect when dealing with this delicate personal manner.”

– June 9, 2020

CONTINUING TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

Despite all of the challenges posed by COVID-19, we continue to receive positive feedback regarding our Legal Info Line, Email, and Live Chat services.

Our Live Chat had an approval rating of 4.77/5 based on 177 reviews (14% of users provided feedback).

Our email service had a satisfaction rating of 89% based on 108 reviews (8% of users provided feedback).

Feedback regarding the Legal Info Line continues to be positive as demonstrated by the following user comments:

.....
"This is an amazing thing to offer people. The person I spoke with was so helpful. I am so grateful!" – March 19, 2021
.....

.....
"A huge help as a self rep. Used many times over the past 3 years and has been pivotal in my basic understanding of Family Law." – Jan 28, 2021
.....

.....
"Without this service, as a self rep, I could not have achieved what I have through the Family Court system over the past 2 years dealing with a divorce that includes 2 children. Whether or not any outcome of any motion in court is favourable or not, I am satisfied that the guidance I was provided (through other outreach programs as well – summary advice, reachability, etc) gave me the best chance of success and I am content with that. Many thanks." – Nov 9, 2020
.....

.....
"Thank you very much. I've never received such a clear answer in such a short period of time". – Oct 1, 2020
.....

.....
"I am so very grateful for your information. I feel quite a bit better now that you have cleared things up for me, and know what I need to seek the assistance of a lawyer to deal with. You have really made a difference, thank you so much for your time and help." – Aug 27, 2020
.....

.....
"Thank you so very much for the information! I love this service – I have asked many questions lately and have always received prompt, informative replies." – June 30, 2020
.....

.....
"I did not know where to start and this has been such a huge help. It is great to have easy access by chat as I can do it anywhere." – June 1, 2020
.....



Launch of Personal Directive App – supporting Pandemic Planning

LISNS continues to demonstrate its ability to anticipate and deliver services that are critical to Nova Scotian's well-being. A personal directive is a critical need in a time of pandemic when people are alone in hospital and have no one to speak for them. Traffic to this part of the website has been high and we know that people are downloading the hard copy form in addition to using the app which creates a finished document.

legalinfo.org/forms/personal-directive

Launch of the Seniors' Navigator Project – helping through community volunteers

The partnerships we had put in place pre-pandemic with the Seniors' Safety Coordinators and the Retired Teachers' Organization NS, in addition to the development of a new partnership during the pandemic with newcomers to NS, permitted us to launch pilots of our (jointly funded NS Department of Seniors, New Horizons for Seniors, and Justice Canada) [Seniors' Navigator Project](#) where we are connecting community volunteers to help a person over the phone with using the Personal Directive app. All of these groups piloted our online navigator training to high praise and they are assisting us in the promotion of the dual pronged initiative – encouraging people to make personal directives and to participate as volunteer navigators (lms.legalinfo.org). Having the strong support of these partners is impactful. Each time we have undertaken specific public promotion via LISNS' social media and media interviews we have tended to experience a 349.5% increase in views and a 23% increase in completions of the PD App. We are proud to have reached over 12,000 contacts promoting the PD planning including the Federation of Labour, CUPE to all of its members and universities and community colleges to students age 19 and older.

LISNS is on Trend – Stakeholder Survey feedback tells LISNS

Recent feedback from a LISNS stakeholder survey conducted in November 2020 indicates that the number one support being requested is more navigator programs. We are pleased to be able to build on the success of our navigator programs for small claims court and now personal directive planning and already have plans underway in the new fiscal to respond to gap areas such as family law and estate planning. Survey respondents provided high praise for the quality of LISNS services and programming.

ElderAbuse Project (Justice Canada)

New content has been developed for LISNS most frequently requested publication, It's In Your Hands Guide for Seniors and their Families, and updated copies are being distributed through key stakeholders across the Province to provide the public with critical information aimed at keeping seniors safe.

Family Law Updating (Justice Canada)

LISNS has updated family law content to ensure the public has access to the information that reflects the changes to the Divorce Act which come into force this year. LISNS has shared the updated content with the NS Family Law website. LISNS also developed a series of family law podcasts for the website to address gap areas identified through users of LISNS core services.

Investor Rights and Protection Project (Law Foundation of Ontario)

Our [Investor Rights and Protection Guide](#) has been launched to very positive feedback. The goal of the project is to help educate, protect and build the investing confidence of Nova Scotians, with a particular emphasis on five identified vulnerable groups. Multimedia content was developed to provide access to the information in multiple ways and help people get the information in the format they prefer. Podcasts interviews with the target audiences have proved very successful and are being downloaded on a regular basis and the videos and social media promotions have garnered significant positive responses from the investing community and vulnerable groups.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Project (Justice Canada)

In the second year of our 5 year project we developed [Bystander Training](#) to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace which is receiving very positive initial feedback. Thank you to our amazing Project Team who continues to produce such high quality resources. The Bystander Training is being tested with a focus group of employers and will be launched to all employers in the new fiscal. An Employer Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Best Practices Toolkit will also be launched to support the training. We developed a prototype of a Sexual Harassment Reporting App with the unique feature offering peer support by phone and have partnered with SimplyCast to integrate leading edge digital encryption technology into the app. We wish to thank our Dalhousie Pro Bono student team which was so helpful to the development of content for the app. The Reporting App will be launched in the new fiscal. We also want to thank the lawyers on the SHWP Free Legal Advice Service who served 20 clients this year. We also developed new content on the website to help people who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace with information and options for support. We also developed [videos that provide sensitivity training](#) for anyone working with trans and non-binary clients and a two-part video training session focused on restorative approaches to conflict resolution.

Status of Women NS - Standing Together – Helping Diverse Populations

Work has just begun on initiatives to provide critical legal information to gap areas including:

- LGBTQ+ legal information for employers to promote awareness and provide sensitivity training
- Updating domestic violence publications to reflect the needs of Nova Scotians
- Updating the Guide for Girls to reflect the modern needs of self-identified girls that reflect the diversity of Nova Scotia

COVID Response Project (Justice Canada)

With funding support from the Federal Government we were able to develop content for our website in key areas particularly wills and estate planning. We also worked in partnership with the Canadian Institute for the Blind to develop legal information handbooks for visually impaired people in Nova Scotia on a range of topics that help day to day living. We were supported in this work by a dynamite team of Dalhousie Pro Bono law students and we thank them for their excellent efforts. The handbooks will be available on LISNS website in the Fall 2021. LISNS has also increased the accessibility of the website for visually impaired persons through the integration of software that is easy to find and use.

Impact of Covid during the Provincial Reopening period





Free Wills Clinics (with funding support from the NS Department of Lands and Forests)

- Thank you to our volunteer lawyers who continued to support the free wills clinics for seniors and disadvantaged families in the Preston Communities despite the many challenges posed by the pandemic. We are so appreciative!

Medical Legal Health Partnerships

- The IWK Family Legal Health Program continued to provide free legal help to eligible IWK Health Centre patients and family members when a legal issue is impacting the patient's health. The program served 30 patients-families and made 7 referrals to supporting partner, McInnes Cooper. Since 2015 the IWK Family Legal Health Program has assisted 152 families.
- The Estate Planning Legal Health Program, a pilot medical legal partnership between the Nova Scotia Health Authority and LISNS, served 20 patients-clients providing free estate planning documents including wills, powers of attorney and personal directives. The Program is available 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 8 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 36 clients served.

Virtual Legal Information Presentations

- We reached over 625 attendees through virtual legal information presentations that included audiences for Caregivers NS Wellness Retreat, Partners for Legal Education, info series for newcomers (11 sessions), Webinars – 3 sessions - Personal Directives (for IWK staff); Employment Law Basics (for NS Interpreting Services interpreters); Family Law, Intimate Partner Violence Overview (for frontline service providers – this session was in very high demand, with 80 registered participants); and Seniors' Navigator Presentations – (4) available to both program volunteers and community groups working with seniors.

Students supporting LISNS

- We are so appreciative of the wonderful support provided by the 42 students from a diverse array of programs listed in our table. We feel so privileged to work with such great talent!!



FINANCIAL UPDATE

LISNS achieved a balanced budget for 2020/21. Particular thanks to our anonymous donor who pledged \$4,000 to support our work. Many thanks to all LISNS donors for helping advance our work

For 2021-22, funding support has been confirmed for the following:

- Department of Justice Canada – Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Project (2019-2024)
- Department of Justice Canada – COVID Response Project
- The Law Foundation of Ontario, Access to Justice Fund, Youth Legal Information Project
- Status of Women NS – Standing Together - Supporting Trans, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse Communities- a Guide for Employers and Service Providers
- Status of Women NS – Standing Together – Domestic Violence Publications Updating and Guide for Girls Updating
- 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.



I think what you folks are doing is incredible! It's so difficult for normal folks to cut through the legal language and red tape to find simple answers to common problems surrounding our rights.

– Nov 19, 2020

FINANCIAL SUMMARY – REVENUES & EXPENSES

Fiscal year April 1 2020 to March 2021

REVENUE

GRANTS

<i>Law Foundation of Nova Scotia</i>	\$	172,000
<i>Department of Justice Canada</i>		163,300
<i>Department of Justice Nova Scotia</i>		50,000

DONATIONS 22,564

SUB-TOTAL 407,864

PROJECTS 811,779

TOTAL \$ 1,219,643

EXPENSES

PROGRAMS

<i>Publications - Content Review</i>	\$	50,478
<i>Publications - Printing</i>		7,492

COST OF RAISING FUNDS 509

PROJECTS 811,779

ADMINISTRATION 348,798

TOTAL \$ 1,219,056

INCOME (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR \$ 587

A copy of our financial statements is available upon request



FINANCIAL SUMMARY – ASSETS & LIABILITIES

Fiscal year April 1 2020 to March 2021

ASSETS

CURRENT

Cash	\$ 241,872
Accounts Receivable	110,311
Prepaid Expense	3,202
HST Receivable	25,592
	380,977

CAPITAL ASSETS

Furniture and Office Equipment	<u>1,117</u>
--------------------------------	--------------

TOTAL	<u>\$ 382,094</u>
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LIABILITIES

CURRENT

Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 284,612
Deferred Revenue	<u>87,099</u>

TOTAL	<u>\$ 371,711</u>
--------------	--------------------------

NET ASSETS

Investment in Capital Assets	1,117
Unrestricted	(734)

Contingency	<u>\$ 10,000</u>
-------------	------------------

Net Asset Deficiency	<u>\$ 10,383</u>
----------------------	------------------

TOTAL	<u>\$ 382,094</u>
--------------	--------------------------

A copy of our Financial Statements is available upon request



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 Small Claims Court Navigator Pilot Project.
- DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA – Thank you to the Department for recognizing and supporting our work in providing Nova Scotians with quality legal information.



*Employment and Social Development Canada,
New Horizons for Seniors
Department of Justice Canada*



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





THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Nova Scotia
Human Rights
Commission

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NS Supreme Court
Family Division



Robert Mroz,
McInnes Cooper



Tammy Wohler,
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