



LEGAL SEAGULL

# Annual Report 2008-2009



Law Day  
Lunch 09



LISNS appreciation BBQ



Play in a Day 09



# Looking back helps move us forward.....

## LISNS Volunteers

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### **Thank you Boyne Clarke's Summer Student Program!**

Amy Gibson was a member of the LISNS staff for the summer of 2008, while she researched meeting the legal information needs of Mi'Kmaq and newcomers to Canada.

LISNS answers questions every single day of the year. Last year, over 37,000 different people found information on a wide variety of legal topics on the website [www.legalinfo.org](http://www.legalinfo.org). Many came back to the site for even more information.

Legalinfo.org has real information on topics that real people are looking for. The info is easy to understand and it's accessible 24/7, 365 days a year.

From April 2008 – March 2009 almost 125,000 LISNS web pages were viewed. Not surprisingly, the most viewed page was the LISNS home page with it's ever changing and topical legal information, current legal news and spotlights on LISNS services and volunteers.

Looking up legal information on the LISNS website means you have time to read and absorb the general information at your own pace. On average, most people read 2 ½ pages. In this day and age of flipping TV channels and barely scanning web pages, the average person stays on the LISNS site for two minutes and thirty two seconds.

"A Great Aunt of mine has been awfully sick for a very long time. She is worried that if she goes into hospital she'll be hooked up to machines to keep her alive. Friends of mine were talking about 'Living Wills' and how that would be a help. I had no idea what that really means.

The Q & A page on Advance Health Care Directives on the Legal Information Society web site cleared up all of my questions.

"I have a separation agreement that I did with the mother of my son, 3 years ago. I didn't have a lawyer as I was laid off at the time, so I just agreed to the access arrangement she proposed. It just isn't working. I hardly ever see my son, even



though the agreement says I should have him every second weekend, and it is

very difficult to talk to my ex about this. I love my kid, and I really didn't know where to turn. Dial-a-Law gave me a great start."

**Dial-a-Law** offers a 24/7 service of pre-taped questions & answers on 108 general legal information topics. Last year, the tapes were listened to 3,678 times.

The most popular (30%) category is Family Law which has 20 tapes (some are in French). Other categories, each with many topics, are:

- Credit, Debt, Personal Injury, Slander & Commercial Law
- Criminal Law
- Employment
- Landlord & Tenant
- Wills & Estates
- Real Estate
- Human Rights
- Small Claims Court
- Income Assistance
- Lawyers, Legal Aid & NS Court of Appeal
- Health Law
- Municipal Law

Dial-a-Law  
Call (902) 420 - 1888

## **Dial – a – Law Sponsors**



**Jones on Queen Law Firm**

Call (902) 420 – 1888 for 24/7 pre-taped Q & A's



**Nova Scotia Legal Aid**

### Special Projects 2008/09

Each year LISNS takes on several projects that are designed to assist focused groups of people, with easy to understand information on specific legal topics.

#### • The Annotated T3010a Project (Charities Return)

A multi-year project designed to ensure that charitable organizations are able to fulfill their legal obligation to file the Return in a timely fashion and deliver complete and accurate reports. Funded by the Charities Directorate of the CRA.

#### • Family Violence Publications – Development

New pamphlets were created to explain current legislation; and distributed to local agencies and organizations. Funded by Justice Canada

#### • Positive Aging – Seniors and Pensions

This project will develop & distribute materials that inform seniors and those responsible for overseeing the financial affairs of seniors about the legal rights and issues associated with pensions. Included are: Federal entitlements (OAS; CPP; and GIS); provincial; and, in a general way, private pensions, RRSPs when the time comes to use them and issues relating to trusteeships associated with pensions. Funded by NS Department of Seniors, Positive Aging Fund

#### • Family Law Information Project for Abused Women (FLIPAW)

In partnership with the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, the Women's Innovative Justice Initiative and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, LISNS completed and distributed a resource for women with children who are leaving an abusive relationship. FLIPAW was funded by the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, the IWK Health Foundation, Justice Canada, Status of Women Canada & NS Department of Justice.

#### • Family Violence Minorities Assessment

Through consultations with members of the new immigrants & First Nations communities and those who provide services to them, LISNS will develop an understanding of the barriers that need to be overcome; the needs of these communities; and recommendations for future initiatives that will provide the information to these communities in NS. Funded by Justice Canada

#### • Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA)

LISNS assisted the Law Courts Education Society of BC organize the Nova Scotia stop of a three-week, cross-country tour with the Executive Director of EWLA, and the Prosecutor/Lead Trainer from the Domestic Violence Unit of the South African National Prosecuting Authority.



"I've been calling all over the place trying to find out if I have a claim for

wrongful dismissal. I was laid off last week due to what my boss said was 'elimination of my job', but I found out yesterday from a friend that they just hired someone else to do my exact same job. Can they do that? Can you give me some direction?" *Legal Information Line caller*

#### Legal Information Line:

(HRM) 455-3135 or 1-800-665-9779

#### Legal Information Line (LIL)

In 2008-09 over 7,100 calls were answered on the Legal Information Line. Two counsellors, with volunteer help from the pro bono students, helped people sort through the maze of myths and truths of legal information on number of topics.

Of all the calls, 1/3 were questions regarding family law issues and 14% were about criminal & provincial offences. 9% of people calling had questions on procedures. Given the current economic times, it's not surprising that 5% of questions were about debtor/creditor issues.

The LIL is a valuable resource for regular people needing specific information about the law for their particular situation.

#### Executive Director's Message:

We help real people with real problems every day. LISNS believes that everyone should have access to basic legal information regardless of age, gender, income, location, or education. Often the people we help may only need information, other times legal information is the first step towards them seeking legal advice from a lawyer. Sadly, due to limited financial resources, many people must deal with legal problems without the aid of a lawyer. We may be their only available choice to help them figure out their options.

Tough, uncertain economic times bring their own focus for legal issues including marital breakdown, job loss, bankruptcies, and unpaid bills. We help people with these problems everyday.

LISNS has just completed the last year of a 5-year strategic plan. We evaluated the progress we made and are pleased that we accomplished most of our goals. We are now looking forward as we develop a new plan. While priorities may change, our focus will continue to be ensuring that those who need it have access to information so that they can deal with their everyday legal problems.

There are many new opportunities to meet the legal information needs of Nova Scotians whether through new technologies, new partners, or new audiences and we are ready to explore these opportunities. With your help we can continue to address the needs of Nova Scotians.

*Maria Franks, Executive Director, LISNS*

#### Lawyer Referral Service (LRS)

This service continues to be used by people all over Nova Scotia. It matches people needing a lawyer, with a lawyer in their geographical part of Nova Scotia, who practices in that area of law. Lawyers register to be on the service, agreeing to provide the first ½ hour of consultation for a fee of \$20 +tax.

We made close to 1,500 referrals to lawyers on the service last year. LRS is accessed by calling the Legal Information Line.

.....with easy to understand information.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2008 - MARCH 31, 2009

### REVENUE

<b>GRANTS</b>	
Law Foundation of N.S.	\$100,000
Department of Justice Canada	70,000
N.S. Department of Justice	50,000
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	
Publication Sales	384
Lawyer Referral Service	8,700
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	88,342
<b>OTHER</b>	1,280
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	316,706
<b>PROJECTS</b>	247,299
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$564,005
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	148,411
<b>COST OF RAISING FUNDS</b>	46,817
<b>PROJECTS</b>	247,299
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>	125,384
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$567,911
<b>INCOME ( LOSS ) FOR THE YEAR</b>	( \$3,906 )

A copy of the audited statements is available upon request

## Play in a Day Event Sponsors



For your support,



NOVA SCOTIA  
BARRISTERS' SOCIETY

Thank you!

As often as possible, the Legal Information Society staff and volunteers go out into the community to provide **displays & presentations**.

Last year LISNS set up 7 displays including several conferences, the Canadian Bar Association Law Fair and the 50+ Expo.

There were 9 presentations including DND Employee Assistance Program, east Preston Seniors Group & NS Teachers' Conference.

To book a display or presentation please call administration at (902) 454 - 2198

There are many people who find **pamphlets & publications** the most comfortable way to receive the legal information they need.

LISNS distributed more than 6,000 publications last year, half of which were our general LISNS brochures. These explain our services and how to access them.

1,100 Youth Justice pamphlets were requested by police departments around the province to replenish stocks.

964 information packages about wills, estates & power of attorney were distributed.

To order publications see the order form at [legalinfo.org](http://legalinfo.org) or call administration (902) 454 - 2198

## Law Day Lunch Event Sponsors

**The Printer**  
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LEGAL **Information**  
SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA *Start Here. Learn More™*

Mailing address:  
5523B Young St.  
Halifax, NS B3K 1Z7

Website (with lots of easy to understand information):  
[legalinfo.org](http://legalinfo.org)

Please note:  
LISNS is a charitable organization. You may make donations online or by mailing the above address.

If and when the time is right for you, please remember the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia in your will. Contact the Manager, Fund Development for the correct legal wording.  
(902) 454 - 2198