



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016

Helping Nova Scotians get the legal information they need for over 34 years!

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I feel helpless when I have computer problems. I don't know how to fix the glitches or have the technical vocabulary to even describe them. In the grand scheme of things, computer problems are minor. Think how much worse it must be for those who face a personal legal issue (very likely a tremendously worrying and stressful issue) but don't know where to begin or turn. Will my children be looked after when I die? Will I lose my pension to the credit card debt collector?

The volunteer board of directors of the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia was proud to support our staff and funders in 2015-16 in the delivery of legal information, free of charge, to those who need it most. Our collective wellbeing and our system of justice are so much the better when Nova Scotians are equipped with the legal information necessary to begin to understand and resolve their personal legal concerns. This is access to justice in action!

The annual report describes a marvel of innovative and community based initiatives delivered on a shoe string without compromise to quality. Our board thanks the staff of the Society for their hard work and dedication to cause.

Jim Rossiter, President

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

- Received national recognition for innovation in promoting access to justice for Nova Scotians through ongoing development of the public navigator initiative – training non-legal community volunteers to assist members in their community dealing with legal conflict who are unable to afford a lawyer. Created community partnerships in Nova Scotia to support a launch of the pilot program in 2016-2017.
- Free wills were prepared for 24 seniors in the Preston communities through 6 free wills clinics held throughout the year and only made possible through the wonderful support of three pro bono lawyers.
- Supported sick children and their families through the IWK Family Legal Health it is the only organization in Nova Scotia with the sole mandate to provide Nova Scotians with the legal information they require to make informed decisions. Program by coordinating access to free legal resources.
- LISNS Legal Information Line continues to receive heavy demand from callers across the Province. Our statistics validate national and international statistics that the majority of callers questions can be addressed through legal information with about 25% of callers requiring legal advice through a referral to a private lawyer on our Lawyer Referral Service, or to other avenues for getting advice and representation, such as Nova Scotia Legal Aid.. Many thanks to the volunteer lawyers who support our Lawyer Referral Service, an essential part of access to justice service delivery.

- Introduced a Mediator Referral Service in partnership with ADR Atlantic to improve conflict resolution options for callers to the Legal Information Line.
- Traffic to LISNS website remains strong and feedback indicates visitors find the site helpful.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

LISNS is providing excellent value for the small budget within which it delivers services. Despite a 10% funding cut in 2015-16 due to depressed interest rates, LISNS was able to develop the innovative public navigator project developing resources which can be used for pilot purposes along with maintaining core service delivery. The small deficit experienced in this fiscal is fully addressed in the 2016-17 budget which brings us back into balance but also provides us with tangible products which we can use to strategically address a gap in legal information support identified in the regions of Nova Scotia. LISNS continues to pursue project funding opportunities.

We continue to identify needs and opportunities for innovation in legal information service delivery and we thank our supporters including students, volunteers, lawyers and partner organizations who make it all possible.



Heather de Berdt Romilly, LISNS, Executive Director

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2015 - MARCH 31, 2016

ASSETS

CURRENT	
Cash	\$ 10,352
Accounts Receivable	3,713
Prepaid Expenses	<u>6,525</u>
	20,590
CAPITAL	
Furniture and Office Equipment (Net)	<u>2,620</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 23,210</u>

LIABILITIES

CURRENT	
Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 11,139
Deferred Revenue	<u>14,373</u>
TOTAL	<u>25,512</u>

NET ASSETS

Investment In Capital Assets	2,620
Unrestricted	(14,922)
Contingency	<u>10,000</u>
Net Asset Deficiency	<u>(2,302)</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 23,210</u>

A copy of our Financial Statements is available upon request

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
REVENUES AND EXPENSES
FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2015 - MARCH 31, 2016

REVENUE

GRANTS

<i>Law Foundation of N.S.</i>	\$ 121,496
<i>Department of Justice Canada</i>	70,000
<i>Department of Justice Nova Scotia</i>	50,000

FUNDRAISING 20,986

OTHER 388

SUB-TOTAL 262,870

PROJECTS 36,087

TOTAL \$ 298,957

EXPENSES

PROGRAMS

<i>Legal Info Line & Lawyer Referral Service</i>	\$ 74,805
<i>Dial -a - Law</i>	2,866
<i>Publications</i>	7,745
<i>Community Programs</i>	38,793
<i>Website</i>	49,327

COST OF RAISING FUNDS 8,099

PROJECTS 32,299

ADMINISTRATION 105,329

TOTAL \$ 319,263

INCOME (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR \$ (20,306)

A copy of our Financial Statements is available upon request

Funders, Sponsors & Volunteers

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
- Government of Canada (Elder Abuse Awareness Project)
- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

LISNS LEGAL INFORMATION LINE

- EASTLINK
- **LISNS WEBSITE (legalinfo.org)**
 - Nova Scotia Legal Aid
 - BOYNECLARKE LLP
 - Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation
 - Wagners

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER LAWYERS WHO SUPPORT:

- THE LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE
- THE FREE WILLS CLINICS IN THE PRESTON COMMUNITIES
- LEGAL INFORMATION PRESENTATIONS
- LEGAL CONTENT REVIEW

822 referrals were made to lawyers on the Legal Information Society's Lawyer Referral Service. The lawyers who volunteer their time for this important service are playing 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.

AND ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS WHO SUPPORT US THROUGH:

- ◇ INVOLVEMENT ON THE LEGAL INFORMATION LINE,
- ◇ RESEARCHING AND PREPARING LEGAL INFORMATION MATERIALS, AND
- ◇ REVIEWING AND PREPARING CONTENT FOR THE WEBSITE



A big thank you to 2015-2016 Legal Info Line law student volunteers, Chris Casher & Elliott Bursey

We appreciate the contributions made by law student volunteers (22) and student placements including paralegals (6) who completed their internships with us through a partnership with Eastern College.

Volunteer Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive:

Jim Rossiter (Department of Justice, Canada), President
Shelley Hounsell-Gray (Nova Scotia Legal Aid), Vice President
Lisa White CA (Accountant), Treasurer
Donald McDougall, QC,, (Retired Lawyer), Secretary

Members:

- Elizabeth Butt, Exxon Mobil
- Michelle Chai, Stewart McKelvey
- Basia Dziezranowska, McInnes Cooper
- Caron Ferguson Eagan, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society
- Mark Gosine, DHX Media
- Nila Ipson, Retired Educator
- Adrian Lake, Dalhousie University
- John Hope, Counsel, Dalhousie University
- Justice Beryl MacDonald, Nova Scotia Supreme Court
- Lora MacEachern, Department of Labour and Advanced Education
- Anil Mohan, Jazz Aviation

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2016 – 2018

- ◇ Heidi Schedler, Nova Scotia Securities Commission
- ◇ Christine Hanson, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

LEGAL INFORMATION OUTREACH

- ❖ Together with the **Partners for Legal Education**, we delivered 13 legal information sessions, with 20 people on average attending each session.
- ❖ Presented at the 2015 **"Innovation and Access to Justice Conference"** in Montreal about "LISNS Public Navigator Project".
- ❖ Presented at the 2015 **FOLRAC Symposium (Federation of Law Reform Agencies of Canada)** about Law Reform and Public Legal Education and Engagement.
- ❖ Together with Nova Scotia Legal Aid, presented at the **2015 Nova Scotia ALM Conference (Archives, Libraries, Museums)** about "Helping folks find legal help in NS".
- ❖ Presented on **Wills planning** at a public information session held in the Preston communities in 2015.
- ❖ As a new member of the **Nova Scotia Coalition on Community Interpreting** (www.nsccli.ca), LISNS started a research project to support the Coalition's work on the issues of the legal right to language interpretation, and the possibility for certification of community interpreters in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie's Schulich School of Law Public Law Placement student Adam Weryha worked with LISNS from January to March 2016, and completed a preliminary research report which is now available on the Coalition's website at www.nsccli.ca. Thank you for your excellent work Adam!

We are Making a Difference!

LISNS Statistics

April 2015 to March 2016

Website	Legal Information Line & Lawyer & Mediator Referrals	Dial-a-Law	Publications
Different Visitors: Total: 419,522 Total Visits: 471,782 Pages viewed: April-June: 147,239 July-Sept: 149,015 Oct-Dec: 144,159 Jan-Mar: 163,968 Total: 604,381 Top 5 pages: 1. Sentencing 2. Tickets (SOTs) 3. Common law relationships 4. Grandparents rights 5. You and the police	Total # of Legal Information Line calls: April-June: 1,452 July-Sept: 1,512 Oct-Dec: 1,310 Jan-Mar: 1,055 Total: 5,329 Top 3 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Criminal 3. Wills & estates # of referrals to the Lawyer Referral Service: 822 # of referrals to the Mediator Referral Service (new, Sept): 16 # of callers representing themselves: 961	Online audio (48 titles): April-June: 3,041 July-Sept: 3,569 Oct-Dec: 8,022 Jan-Mar: 3,079 Total: 17,711 Top 3 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Wills & estates 3. Credit, debt, consumer Phone system (81 titles): April-June: 301 July-Sept: 586 Oct-Dec: 271 Jan-Mar: 144 Total: 1302 Top 3 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Credit, Debt 3. Wills & estates	LISNS Publications distributed: April-June: 774 July-Sept: 569 Oct-Dec: 396 Jan-March: 887 Total: 2,626 Top 3 topics: • It's In Your Hands: Legal Information for Seniors & Their Families • General Legal Information Brochure • Elder Abuse

LISNS MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF NOVA SCOTIANS THROUGH OUR PROJECTS IN 2015-16:

LISNS FREE LEGAL CLINICS FOR SENIORS IN THE PRESTON COMMUNITIES

We gratefully acknowledge the services of the volunteer lawyers (Kevin MacDonald, Crowe Dillon Robinson, Kathleen Lumsden, Stewart McKelvey and Paula Condran, Mellnick Doll Condran) who made it possible to hold over 6 free wills clinics during the summer and fall of 2015 and served 24 seniors in the Preston communities. [Hear the podcast of the CBC interview with LISNS in March 2016 on the free legal clinics at podcast.cbc.ca](#)

Positive feedback about the impact of this initiative on the community was provided from Minister Colwell (MLA for Preston-Dartmouth) and his assistant Carole Perkins who assisted with clinic scheduling. ***LISNS recently launched a coffee campaign to support ongoing free wills clinics*** - more information is available at www.legalinfo.org



IWK FAMILY LEGAL HEALTH PROGRAM

LISNS as a Program partner facilitates the provision of free legal services to qualifying sick children and their families. LISNS supports qualifying children/families access to free legal services where the partner law firm, McInnes Cooper, is unable to provide services in certain areas of law or in conflict situations. We do this in part through pro bono lawyers who support LISNS free legal clinics and the LISNS referral service for legal and non-legal services.

We fielded a number of referrals from the IWK for Family Legal Health Program. Issues included coverage for out-of-province treatment; a family wishing to bring grandparents to Canada on a long-term basis to help care for their sick child; parents with questions about personal directives, child and adult guardianship and powers of attorney; and a family dealing with a civil lawsuit in the midst of caring for their sick child.

PUBLIC NAVIGATOR PROGRAM – **Nationally Recognized & Locally Supported!**

The Public Navigator Project is an innovative approach to addressing a significant problem affecting many Nova Scotians (and Canadians)— dealing with legal conflict and not knowing where to turn and not being able to or know whether to hire a lawyer. 1 in 3 Nova Scotians will experience a legal conflict in a 3 year period. Unresolved conflicts take a huge toll not just on individuals, but on families, friends and communities. The model is focused on training community volunteers to deliver legal information to assist people in conflict who are not represented by a lawyer. This initiative is designed to provide support to the regional areas of the Province where the supports that one finds in Halifax are largely lacking.

The focus is on assisting people with their decision-making regarding options to pursue. There is a significant body of national and international research that supports our experience that the

majority of conflicts can be addressed or narrowed in scope through early provision of legal information. With early access to legal information, a much smaller percentage of folks require legal advice, and those who do need advice are able to use what may be limited time with a lawyer more effectively. LISNS Public Navigator Project has the support of the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia and the Supreme Court judges of Nova Scotia General Division in addition to the NS Department of Justice. The regional courthouses are partners in the pilot project,

In June 2015, LISNS was delighted to be invited to participate in the CBC TV “The National Program” taping as part of a three part series on innovations across Canada in supporting self-represented individuals - LISNS work was profiled through a one day taping of public navigator volunteers.

In October 2015, LISNS was invited to make a presentation at the Innovation in Access to Justice Conference held in Montreal. The presentation attracted significant interest and an article followed in the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (November 2015) recognizing LISNS for innovation in access to justice for having looked to inspiration outside of Canada and successfully integrating it into Nova Scotia: www.nsbs.org.



In November 2015, LISNS work received a nod from the National Self-Represented Litigants Project, University of Windsor and the project leader Dr. Macfarlane noted, “Congratulations..! I think that NS is one of the most progressive parts of the country at the moment with its many innovations, and this is a deserved recognition for you.” www.representingyourselfcanada.com.

The **New Law Journal, (UK)**, Roger Smith, legal columnist and digital expert, commented favourably upon legal assistance provided through the models of LISNS and Nova Scotia Legal Aid [www.newLawjournal.co.uk](http://www.newlawjournal.co.uk) (Fall2015) and continues to track LISNS progress with the project.

The Lawyers Weekly profiled the initiative in the new year (January 22, 2016) and local media coverage followed with articles in **allNova** Scotia, February 29, 2016), “LEGAL CHARITY PILOT FOR THE SELF-REPRESENTED” and the South Shore community newspapers including **LighthouseNOW**, **South Shore Breaker** and the **Bridgewater Progress Bulletin** (February 2016).

The prototype materials which we have developed (without the benefit of a budget) to support self-represented individuals and the public navigators are now available on the LISNS website: www.legalinfo.org. These materials have been reviewed by over 100 individuals (40 non-legal and 60 legal).

Many thanks to the wonderful efforts of Mario Garcia (Schulich School of Law graduate 2016) who assisted with preparation of the draft materials for NS Supreme Court and to Nicholas LeBlanc (lawyer, social worker) who assisted with preparation of the draft materials for Small Claims Court, Ron Pizzo (Pink Larkin lawyer & mediator) who supported the mediation presentation for the CBC

taping, and Chuck Ford (Carter Ford lawyer) who has provided advisory support and assisted with the presentation to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court judges.

Through the excellent support of the Lunenburg Queens Volunteer Partnership we have identified over 20 volunteers who will be trained in April 2016 and a pilot launched for May-June 2016 at the Bridgewater Justice Centre. LISNS is also undertaking outreach to lawyers on the south shore to engage them in the initiative and promote participation on the LISNS Lawyer Referral Service in direct support of the program.

ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS – Vital Signs Workshop and Online Tool



Last year, we completed work on the 2-year project to **Raise Awareness of Elder Abuse for Healthcare Professionals** and developed a resource with input from seniors, *Vital Signs: Elder Abuse Awareness for healthcare Professionals*. To support delivery of the Vital Signs workshop, we developed and piloted a Workshop Facilitator's Guide, to support facilitators conducting workshops throughout the Province. A roster of trained facilitators along with the on-line tool can be viewed at www.legalinfo.org. The project was funded by the Government of Canada *New Horizons for Seniors Program*

PROJECT PARTNER WITH NOVA SCOTIA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN –

- ◇ **MAKING CHANGES** – A book for women experiencing intimate partner abuse; LISNS provided legal review, writing and editorial support for the 9th edition of this publication.



Allison Smith at Government House, for the launch of the 9th edition of Making Changes. Thank you Allison for all your excellent work with LISNS, including on Making Changes. We will miss you!

- ◇ **PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY** - interface writer for the Project to support the work of the Provincial Committee of Training which work is ongoing in 2016-17.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia

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

Fax (902) 455 – 3105

Legal Information Line, Lawyer & Mediator Referral Service: 1 800 665-9779 or 902-455-3135

Web: www.legalinfo.org

LISNS Mandate: *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*