

LEGAL INFOⁱ
NOVA SCOTIA



ANNUAL REPORT
April 2016 - March 2017

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From the Executive Director: Why LISNS Matters

“Law is the foundation for everything.” That’s what a recent caller to the legal information help line shared with me. She was a newcomer to Canada and was so appreciative of LISNS’ free legal information service where she could speak with a real person to ask questions and receive information to respond to her specific needs.

LISNS helps people who are confused and don’t know where to turn when confronted with a problem or conflict. When people have problems, no matter what the area, be it housing, consumer issues, family, criminal, wills, immigration, the law tends to be the starting point to figure out a solution. Many times legal information is what is required to work towards a solution.

The nature of LISNS service which provides that free up front personal touch to any Nova Scotian, no matter their income level, with back-up to legal advice if needed, is an essential resource – a one of its kind in Nova Scotia. At LISNS we provide access to justice to Nova Scotians every day through the telephone service. The phones ring off the hook the demand is so great. And people persevere to get through because they know or have heard that quality support is only a phone call away.

LISNS embraces the digital innovations and is developing technology solutions to complement the real person service. The richness of the personal touch by an experienced legal information counsellor is further reinforced by medical research which indicates that artificial intelligence can currently do 2 billion transactions compared to the human brain which is capable of trillions of transactions due to humans’ ability to make connections. At LISNS, we leverage the power of the human brain and our legal expertise, to determine what connections are helpful for a caller to assist with finding an answer. We also use that information gathered through the line to inform our work on developing programs, which have been receiving national and local recognition, that are low cost and sustainable to respond to needs.

Strategic Highlights

LISNS made considerable strides in advancing access to justice for Nova Scotians through work that was recognized both nationally and locally. This was made more challenging due to budget reductions and fewer staff. However, we were successful due to tight financial management which saw us finish the year with a tiny surplus and because of the commitment of the wonderful staff and our terrific cadre of volunteers. The successes we enjoyed include:

- ◇ Receiving the **Canadian Bar Association NS 2016 Law Day Award** *in recognition of our innovative work in advancing access to justice for Nova Scotians through our Public Navigator Project.*

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Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)

1663 Brunswick Street

Halifax, NS B3J 3Z6

- ◇ Receiving the **Canadian Bar Association NS 2016 Law Day Award** *in recognition of our innovative work in advancing access to justice for Nova Scotians through our Public Navigator Project.*



- ◇ Receiving **recognition from the NS Minister of Justice** at an event held at the NS House of Assembly in November 2017 for the nationally and locally recognized Public Navigator Project and the contributions that the members of the Public Navigator Project are making to ensure Nova Scotians have the tools they need to navigate the justice system;
- ◇ Developing a, first of its kind in Canada, **free wills app for Nova Scotians** through collaboration with academic partners and private community members at no additional cost to taxpayers to respond to a significant gap in the public's life planning;
- ◇ Being the first public legal education entity in Canada to **co-locate with the French jurists' association (AJEFNE)** to achieve synergies in legal information service to the public;
- ◇ Successful recipient through a competitive application process for **project funding in the amount of \$100,000 from the Law Foundation of Ontario's Access to Justice Fund** to modernize LISNS' website, support and expand the capacity of our Legal Information Line, and enhance digital service delivery of our innovation programs; and
- ◇ Providing leadership to public legal education in Canada through the election of LISNS' Executive Director to **President of the Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC)**.

Heather de Berdt Romilly, LISNS, Executive Director

FINANCIAL SUMMARY**ASSETS & LIABILITIES****FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2016 - MARCH 31, 2017****ASSETS****CURRENT**

Cash	\$ 15,583
Accounts Receivable	4,634
Prepaid Expenses	<u>4,662</u>
	24,879

CAPITAL

Furniture and Office Equipment (Net)	<u>2,098</u>
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TOTAL	<u>\$ 26,977</u>
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LIABILITIES**CURRENT**

Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 20,936
Deferred Revenue	<u>7,735</u>

TOTAL	<u>28,671</u>
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NET ASSETS

Investment In Capital Assets	2,098
Unrestricted	(13,792)
Contingency	<u>10,000</u>
Net Asset Deficiency	<u>(1,694)</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 26,977</u>

*A copy of our Financial Statements is available upon request***PAGE 4****ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17****Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)****1663 Brunswick Street****Halifax, NS B3J 3Z6**

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
REVENUES AND EXPENSES
FISCAL YEAR APRIL 01, 2016 - MARCH 31, 2017

REVENUE**GRANTS**

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

FUNDRAISING	16,063
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OTHER	181
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SUB-TOTAL	257,740
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PROJECTS	39,635
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TOTAL	<u>\$ 297,375</u>
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EXPENSES**PROGRAMS**

Legal Info Line & Lawyer Referral Service	\$ 60,375
Dial -a - Law	3,912
Publications	4,301
Community Programs	38,730
Website	55,770

COST OF RAISING FUNDS	7,630
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PROJECTS	39,635
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ADMINISTRATION	86,414
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TOTAL	<u>\$ 296,767</u>
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INCOME (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR	<u><u>\$ 608</u></u>
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A copy of our Financial Statements is available upon request

Funders

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 particularly the Court Administrators across the Province with whom we are partnering on the Public Navigator Project and the 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. We are very grateful to the Law Foundation of Ontario for its support.



The PLENS project will focus on making the Legal Information Society's website more effective and responsive, and on expanding the capacity of the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia's long-standing Legal Information Line and Lawyer Referral services, and its new Mediator Referral Service, in providing high-quality, reliable legal information and effective referrals to all Nova Scotians. This will include the launch of a new mobile-friendly website that will be easier to navigate, and will offer live chat and email as alternative ways to get legal information, to complement the Legal Information telephone line. As part of the project LISNS is partnering with the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse to create a new section of the LISNS website which will pull together existing French-language legal information resources.

THANK YOU TO THE NOVA SCOTIA ADVISORY COUNCIL STATUS OF WOMEN

LISNS assisted with the development of an online training guide in support of the NS Government Sexual Violence Strategy. It is available at: nscs.learnridge.com. LISNS supported the work of the Provincial

Committee of Training Sexual Violence Strategy by contributing expertise in writing modules of the training. We are most appreciative of the recognition provided by the NSAC Status of Women for LISNS quality work and we are proud to have been involved in this important support for survivors of sexual violence.

Community Outreach to improve Access to Justice

PARTNERS FOR LEGAL EDUCATION

Together with the **Partners for Legal Education** (Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Dalhousie Legal Aid, and AJEFNE) we delivered 10 legal information sessions for newcomers to Canada, covering civil law, family violence, residential tenancies, child protection, law in everyday life, human rights, immigration and refugee law, with over 100 participants in the sessions.

COMMUNITY LEGAL INFO TALKS

We put 10 community groups in touch with local lawyers across the province who volunteered their time to give legal information sessions on topics ranging from wills and estates to children's rights, cyberbullying, privacy law, and sexual violence.

NOVA SCOTIA COALITION ON COMMUNITY INTERPRETING

We are a proud member of the **Nova Scotia Coalition on Community Interpreting** (www.nsccl.ca), and with the help of student volunteer Alanna Pink, continued work on a research project to support the Coalition's work on issues of the legal right to language interpretation.

IWK FAMILY LEGAL HEALTH PROGRAM

LISNS, in partnership with the IWK and the partner law firm, McInnes Cooper, 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 providing free legal information, and through the LISNS referral service for legal and non-legal services. We fielded a number of referrals from the IWK for the Family Legal Health Program. Issues included child and adult guardianship, immigration, matrimonial property, family violence, housing, and employment law.

INVITED SPEAKER AT NATIONAL CONFERENCES

- ◇ Presentation on Public Navigator Program to:
 - prestigious 2016 conference of the **International Journal of Clinical Legal Education (IJCLE)**, and the **Association for Canadian Clinical Legal Education (ACCLE)**, *The Risks and Rewards of Clinical Legal Education Programs*, University of Toronto, Faculty of Law, July 10 - 12, 2016 – 40 attendees at presentation;
 - Public Legal Education of Canada Conference, **Connect Create Communicate: Public Legal Education and the Access to Justice Movement**, Toronto October 20-21 (selected from over 100 submissions)
- ◇ Presentation on Wills Program to:
 - LISNS invited presenter to the Canada Pro Bono Conference in Ottawa -September 2016; Minister Colwell in his capacity as MLA for the Preston communities nominated LISNS Free Wills Clinics for Disadvantaged Seniors in the Preston communities for the 2016 Canada Pro Bono Award.

Innovative Resources Developed to support Community Legal Information Outreach

- ◇ Through the pro bono contribution of an experienced civil litigator (June 2016), LISNS has produced a video to assist self-represented individuals through the court process - legalinfo.org/public-navigator-information/smallclaims-videos.html. The video is on LISNS website and has received positive reviews both locally and outside Nova Scotia. The video is being used as part of the public navigator training and is a resource that callers to the legal information line are frequently referred to as the number of self-represented individuals calling the line continues to increase.
- ◇ Through LISNS partnership with Eastern College hosting placements for paralegal interns, LISNS has had access to leading edge digital practices and made use of animation (recognized as a successful communications approach) to develop a video to assist people with the Small Claims Court Process.
- ◇ Free Legal Information clinics in Bridgewater are now advertised on the NS Court website at courts.ns.ca/Self_Reps/self-rep_home.htm, started June 2016 and ongoing.

External Recognition for LISNS Work

LISNS has been receiving positive press coverage on a number of initiatives.

- ◇ [Weldon Times \(September 2016 issue\)](#).

In April 2016, LISNS won the **CBA-NS 2016 Law Day Award** for the **public navigator project** in recognition of innovation in promoting access to justice for Nova Scotians.

Article in Business Voice Magazine, May edition, thechronicleherald.ca/spotlights/hcc-business-voice covering LISNS digital innovation work including the Wills app.

CBC Radio interviews for LISNS Wills app (March 2017):

Information Morning www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/will-writing-legal-information-society-app

Information Morning Cape Breton www.cbc.ca/listen/shows/information-morning-cape-breton

LISNS has received media interest and coverage as we proceed with training public navigators for the pilot in Bridgewater:

- ◇ South Shore Breaker (August 2, 2016) "[South Shore Public Navigator Pilot Project Provides Information on Legal System](#)"
- ◇ CBC News Nova Scotia (April 21, 2016) "[Bridgewater volunteers learn to help people representing themselves in court](#)"
- ◇ LISNS is receiving positive feedback on the initiative and interest from other parts of the Province and country including the Justice Education Society of BC and the Innovation Branch of the Saskatchewan Dept Justice and academic partners.

Free Wills App for Nova Scotians

LISNS has developed a free wills app to assist Nova Scotians with gathering the information they need to have a lawyer (preferably) do their will (<http://wills.legalinfo.org>). The wills app is a first of its kind in Canada and has been developed without additional cost to taxpayers through a partnership with Saint Mary's University Co-Curricular Program with volunteer IT students who have developed the online platform which has just completed successful beta testing. The initiative was recognized by Minister Whalen at the Nova Scotia Legislature in the Fall 2016 as part of LISNS public navigator project launched in Bridgewater in 2016. Over 50% of Nova Scotians are without a will and there are striking consequences of this as most people do not understand the antiquated laws that apply if a person dies without a will particularly for those in common law relationships.

The wills app provides a simple 12 screen process to assist with preparing to make a will along with sample templates and access to lawyers who commit to providing value based pricing for will review or preparation services.

LISNS is in the process of expanding the wills app to include powers of attorney and personal health care directives to fill a gap identified through our telephone legal information hotline service (serving over 175,000 Nova Scotians so far), frequent e-mail requests and requests from a variety of stakeholders including health care providers, seniors organizations and front line service providers. The first phase of the wills app will be publicly launched in Spring 2017 through clinics with assistance provided by public navigators.

CBC radio interviews held in March 2017 regarding the wills app can be found at cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/will-writing-legal-information-society-app-1.4027620 and cbc.ca/listen/shows/information-morning-cape-breton/segment/12020849.

LISNS is being recognized for innovation in the delivery of legal services to meet areas of need. The wills app will be piloted in the health care setting in the Fall 2017.

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1663 Brunswick Street

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www.legalinfo.org

VOLUNTEERS

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive:

Jim Rossiter, Department of Justice, Canada, President
Elizabeth Butt, ExxonMobil, Vice President
Anil Mohan, Jazz Aviation LP, Treasurer
Donald McDougall, QC, Retired Lawyer, Secretary

Members:

- Alicia Arayna Stirling, Nova Scotia Department of Justice
- Michelle Chai, Stewart McKelvey
- Basia Dziezranowska, McInnes Cooper
- Mark Gosine, DHX Media Ltd.
- Christine Hanson, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission
- Shelley Hounsell-Gray, Nova Scotia Legal Aid
- John Hope, Dalhousie University
- Justice Beryl MacDonald, NS Supreme Court Family Division
- Lora MacEachern, Department of Labour and Advanced Education
- Ned Perry, National public relations
- Heidi Schedler, Nova Scotia Securities Commission

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2016 – 2018

- ◇ Corinne Boudreau, Two Certainities Law
- ◇ Justice Pamela J. Mackeigan, NS Supreme Court Family Division

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 1,013 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 also want to thank our Mediator Referral Service members, 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.

TO OUR PUBLIC NAVIGATORS AND RESOURCE TEAM WHO SUPPORT US THROUGH THE PUBLIC NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

We could not be doing this groundbreaking work without the support of these fabulous volunteers who care deeply about Nova Scotians gaining access to justice. Public Navigators are community volunteers who are trained to give support and legal information to the public to help them navigate the legal system.

PUBLIC NAVIGATOR SUPPORTERS

Chief Justice MacDonald and Justices of the NS Supreme Court

Law Foundation of Ontario provided seed funding for development of prototype materials.

Eastlink – supporting partner for the Pilot Project in Bridgewater

Lunenburg Queens Volunteer Partnership

Public Navigators (community volunteers):

Ellie Burt

Tina Connors

Kevin Clayton

Elizabeth Ferguson

Dave Ferguson

Krista Garber

Brooke Gray

Karen Hall

Keith Lanthier

Larry Power

Karen Reinhardt

Jerome Tanner

Bridgewater Justice Centre (supporting partner and host)

Paul Fay, Court Administrator

Volunteer Trainers:

Julien Matte – Founding Lawyer, North End Law

Robert Street – retired business law professor

Nicholas LeBlanc – social worker, lawyer, Executive Director of **AJEFNE**

Public Navigator Website content:

Mario Garcia – former Dalhousie Schulich School of Law Student –

Partnership with Eastern College – Paralegal Interns:

Josh Skaarup – Paralegal

Joe Giles – Paralegal

100 volunteer content reviewers

Public Navigator Advisory Committee:

Chuck Ford, Founding Lawyer with **Carter Ford**
Ron Pizzo, Mediator and Lawyer, **Pink Larkin** –
representative for **ADR Atlantic**

**Information Technology Team – Partnership
with Saint Mary's University Co-Curricular
Program**

Ollando Brown
Dominic Collie

Tapiwa Munyanyi
Gilroy Gordon

Public Navigator Test Group for CBC TV “The
National Program” Taping (2015)

Allan Walker – retired civil servant
David MacEachern – retired civil servant
Sue Street – Occupational Therapist
Jeremy Porter – IT Graduate Student



The Public Navigators and members of the support team are shown on the steps of the Legislature with Honourable Diana Whalen, Minister of Justice following the recognition ceremony that was held on Nov 3.

AND ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS WHO SUPPORT US THROUGH:

- Involvement on the Legal Information Line
- Researching and preparing legal information materials
- Reviewing and preparing legal content for the website.



BOYNECLARKE's Lisa Delaney

We are so grateful to our many student volunteers, and want to say a particular thank you to Dalhousie's Schulich School of Law pro bono students Chris Casher, Elliott Bursey, Annie Tonken, and Cherise Hart for their wonderful work volunteering on our Legal Info Line. We were also pleased and fortunate to host BOYNECLARKE LLP summer student Lisa Delaney in 2016 (now articling), and third year law student (now articling with Nova Scotia Legal Aid) Angela Simmonds in her Public Law Placement in fall 2016.

AND OUR STAFF:

A huge thank you to Wendy Turner, LISNS Manager of Legal Information Services. She has been working with LISNS for over sixteen years and ensures the quality and integrity of LISNS legal information. She is knowledgeable about a broad range of areas of the law and is expert in plain language.

Wendy is just completing her term as Chair of the Board of Dalhousie Legal Aid. She works tirelessly promoting access to justice working with many LISNS stakeholders and is an incredible mentor to the many law students who volunteer with LISNS.

Wendy is a huge contributor to LISNS successes and it is a pleasure to recognize her commitment to access to justice for Nova Scotians.



LISNS Staff, Wendy & Heather

Statistics for Programs/Services

LISNS statistics for fiscal 2016-17 are presented in the table below. We receive many more requests for publications than we can respond to due to a lack of budget for mailout. All LISNS materials are available from our website.

Demand for the legal information line services remains high and staffing is a challenge due to low salaries. We know LISNS is the last resort for most of these callers with many referred by the courts, Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, law firms, legal aid, 211 etc. Our counselling information service is a critical support and the relationships which we continue to develop with lawyers through our Lawyer Referral Service provide access to justice for the many callers who cannot find this elsewhere. There is no question that LISNS delivers excellent value for the monies which it receives and is providing access to justice on the ground to people who desperately need it.

Legal Information Society of NS: April 2016 – March 2017 Stats **2017**

Website Social Media	Online Audio	Legal Information Line, Lawyer & Mediator Referral Service	Publications
Different Visitors Total: 337,623	Online audio (48 titles) Total: 28,240 downloads	Total Legal Information Line calls answered: 5,155 (incl. emails)	LISNS Publications distributed: 1,050
Total Visits: 385,948	Top 3 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Credit, debt, consumer 3. Wills & estates	Top 3 areas of law: 1. Family 2. Criminal 3. Wills & estates	Top 3 topics: ● It's In Your Hands: Legal Information for Seniors & Their Families ● Legal Information for Newcomers to Canada (various) ● Youth Criminal Justice (Youth Going to Court, Youth & Private Security, Youth at the Police Station)
Pages Viewed: 497,940	Phone system (81 titles): Total: 603*	# of referrals to the Lawyer Referral Service: 1,013	
Twitter: 970 followers Facebook: 570		# of referrals to the Mediator Referral Service: 26	
Top 5 pages: 1. Sentencing 2. Tickets 3. Peace Bonds 4. Impaired Driving 5. Common law relationships	*pre-recorded telephone message service ended Feb 2017; all titles will be available in audio online in 2017/2018.	# of callers representing themselves: 1,289	