

**Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia
Wills App**

WILLS APP OVERVIEW

LISNS is the first public legal education organization in Canada to develop (at no additional cost to taxpayers) and launch a free online wills app <http://wills.legalinfo.org> that helps people prepare for making a will including the provision of templates. The wills app has been 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 Public Legislature in the Fall 2016 as part of LISNS public navigator project launched in Bridgewater in 2016.

LISNS successfully launched the wills app at the first wills preparation clinic held in Bridgewater on May 19, 2017 using LISNS public navigators. The public navigators are community volunteers from the south shore who have been trained to assist people with legal information. A further wills preparation clinic in June held in Bridgewater was full to capacity and received positive reviews. Another clinic was held in Halifax in August and a clinic scheduled for Truro in November was filled to the capacity of 50 attendees within the first 3 days of being announced. The public navigators are community volunteers from the south shore who have been trained to assist people with a variety of legal issues. The public navigator project was recognized by the Canadian Bar Association NS Award for Innovation in Spring 2016.

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. The wills app has three phases.

Phase 1 is the static version whereby you can save to a USB stick or print the information you enter on the 12 screen process – it also includes a wills template that a person can then use the prepare a will with our strong recommendation that it be reviewed by a lawyer. We are hoping that lawyers will be interested in being added to our roster so we can provide this to individuals upon request and across the Province. The NS Health Authority is interested for its use in palliative care and we see this extending across the entire hospital spectrum.

Phase 2 is an online portal whereby information is saved and lawyers can go on the portal and view a file and accept it and prepare information online. This phase will be developed based upon lawyer feedback of its usefulness. It is proposed that lawyers be asked to participate in the testing of Phase 2 through a notice in NSBS Inforum.

Phase 3 involves 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

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(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. A majority of Nova Scotians do not have a will 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.

Recent coverage of our work to date can be found at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/will-writing-legal-information-society-app-1.4027620> and: <http://www.cbc.ca/listen/shows/information-morning-cape-breton/segment/12020849> and http://halifaxchamber.com/pub_categories/business-voice/ .

LISNS hopes to use the wills app to support the need that exists for seniors in the Preston communities for will preparation. LISNS has hosted pro bono wills clinics, in partnership with the MLA Keith Colwell, over the past three years to support this need but feedback from participating lawyers has indicated challenges involved with multiple meetings and travel required. The wills app will support involvement of students to do intake and hopefully reduce the number of meetings required thereby making participation more attractive to lawyers.

The Cyberjustice Laboratory, University of Montreal is leading innovation in digital legal service delivery in Canada and internationally and has recognized LISNS app development work as an important source of innovation.

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