

For Immediate Release

New App Launches to Help Self-Represented Nova Scotians in Small Claims Court

October 30, 2017 | HALIFAX – Today, the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS) is launching the *Small Claims Court App*, designed to assist people representing themselves and considering an action in Small Claims Court. A first of its kind in Nova Scotia, the app provides clarity and easy-to-understand legal information for self-represented individuals during often stressful and sometimes complex situations.

“Our goal at LISNS is that individuals dealing with a real or potential legal issue will feel confident and informed through accessing our many offerings, including our telephone help line, online resources and innovative apps, such as the Small Claims Court App,” says LISNS Executive Director Heather de Berdt Romilly. “Research shows that when clearly explained legal information is accessible at an early stage it helps address potential litigation problem areas in a significant majority of cases.”

The app, available on the LISNS website at <https://www.legalinfo.org/smallclaims/>, is the result of many individuals and organizations collaborating in the spirit of access to justice. The Small Claims Court Adjudicators, LISNS, Saint Mary’s University and Dalhousie University have all played significant roles in bringing this LISNS initiative to launch.

Gavin Giles, Q.C., the Chief Adjudicator of the Small Claims Court, recognized a need to better assist the many self-represented individuals and reached out to LISNS for its expertise and assistance. With contributions from Adjudicators Eric Slone and W. Augustus Richardson, LISNS turned to Saint Mary’s University Computer Science Graduate Kislav Trivedi to develop the app.

The app will be part of a pilot project also launching today at the Small Claims Court in Halifax. For the month of November, students from the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University will be available at the courthouse to provide in-person assistance to self-represented litigants. The pilot will help identify the benefit of in-person assistance using the Small Claims Court app and the findings will inform how public navigator programs are developed for other areas where few resources are currently available.

“We are extremely privileged to work with individuals who share LISNS’ desire to provide access to justice for all Nova Scotians and help develop tools to provide peace of mind in difficult legal situations,” says de Berdt Romilly. “It is important to remember that unresolved conflicts take a huge toll on individuals, families, friends and communities – this toll is ultimately what keeps LISNS focused on innovative new tools like the Small Claims Court App.”

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About LISNS (www.legalinfo.org)

The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS) is a charitable non-profit organization providing Nova Scotians with easy access to legal information and resources since 1982.

LISNS is committed to removing real or perceived barriers to justice through free, respectful and anonymous provision of legal information through various channels including but not limited to phone lines; online resources; innovative apps; Public Navigator Programs; seminars etc. We are passionate about providing piece of mind and confidence in decision making when it comes to navigating Nova Scotia's legal system.

In recent years, LISNS has been recognized for innovation in promoting access to justice for Nova Scotians through its Public Navigator Program, the first program of its kind in the country which received the Canadian Bar Association NS 2016 Law Day Award. LISNS launched a free wills app in spring of 2017 to assist Nova Scotians with preparing to make a will. Recent national research indicates LISNS wills app is only one of 6 legal apps in use in Canada and the only app to be developed as a social partnership with no additional cost to taxpayers.