

**September 14, 2020**

The Management Council

Legal Aid Manitoba

c/o Chair Allan Fineblit

4th floor – 287 Broadway

Winnipeg, MB R3C 0R7

Via email: [alfin@legalaid.mb.ca](mailto:alfin@legalaid.mb.ca)

**Re: Public Interest Law Center (PILC)**

Dear Council Members:

It has come to my attention that the Legal Aid / Public Center Law Center Council will be meeting later this week to make a determination and recommendations as to the status and future funding model for the PILC.

Others will have written to express concern that the PILC not be severed from Legal Aid and converted to a not for profit charity and no doubt you will also hear from in person presentations to that effect. I wish to strongly add my voice to theirs, but will keep my comments brief.

The current Provincial Government seems predisposed in the direction of privatization of social service and public sector organizations; and if those efforts meet public resistance then slow suffocation by reducing or withholding resources appears to be the next favoured option. For social service organizations, resources that were once directed towards serving the particular client base are then of necessity are directed to include the tread mill of never ending fund raising. It would seem to me that the PILC would be much better off, and the needs of Manitobans better served, by doing what you do best, namely Public Interest Law.

Under your stewardship the Public Interest Law Center has taken on a significant role in the regulatory framework of Manitoba and it is sometimes the last recourse for citizens when confronted with Government over-reach or error. On behalf of consumers, the PILC also plays an important role in areas and instances of market failure. Perhaps these activities explain the seeming enthusiasm by Government to see your work hobbled and diminished.

As Council members then, you have the opportunity this week to not collude in damaging the fabric of Manitoba civil society and to not go along with weakening the scarce and often inequitable legal representation available to Manitobans for issues of general importance. Some might say, you have an opportunity to speak truth to power.

Thank you for your consideration and I trust that the minutes of your deliberations and your recommendations will be made public.

Sincerely, Mr. Siegfried (Sig) Laser - 109 Egerton Rd. Winnipeg, Mb R2M 2V9

cc S. Raposa - Dir. Legal Aid Manitoba

K. Kehler - SPCW

B. Williams PILC