

AJEFM logo] [AJEFM logo]

September 15, 2020

Legal Aid Manitoba
287 Broadway, 4th Floor Winnipeg,
Manitoba
R3C 0R9

To the attention of the Board of Directors

Re: Planned restructuring of the Public Interest Law Centre

Ladies,
Gentlemen,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Association des juristes d'expression française du Manitoba, whose general mandate is to promote access to justice in French. We wish to inform you that our organization opposes the proposed restructuring of the Public Interest Law Centre ("Centre juridique de l'intérêt public").

As you know, the Centre's primary mission is to provide legal services to groups with limited financial means who wish to bring issues of public interest before the courts. The Centre is well known for the cases it has been involved in involving indigenous rights, environmental protection and poverty alleviation, among others.

In language matters, the Centre acted before the Manitoba Court of Appeal in 2006 in the *Rémillard* case, which dealt with the interpretation of legislative guarantees for French-language services provided by the City of Winnipeg. In addition, AJEFM staff regularly consult with the Centre's lawyers on various issues. The Centre is therefore a valuable ally for the Francophonie with respect to language rights and access to justice in French.

According to the recommendations currently under consideration, the Centre would be subject to a new regime with the following two main thrusts:

- the Centre would be detached from the Legal Aid Society and become an autonomous entity;
- the Government of Manitoba would cease funding the Centre's operations.

We believe that, in the context of the financial uncertainty resulting from the pandemic, such measures would make the Centre extremely precarious and fragile. We therefore believe it is absolutely essential



that the government maintain the Centre's anchoring within the Legal Aid Society and that it provide it with adequate and stable funding.

We urge you to take this fully into account in your advice to the provincial political authorities on the future of the Centre.

Please accept, Ladies and Gentlemen, our best regards.

The President,

Alain Laurencelle

c. c.: ^{Me} Christian Monnin, President of the Société de la francophonie manitobaine

^{Ms.} Kate Kehler, Executive Director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

