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Winnipeg, Manitoba R2H 0J2

Management Council Legal Aid Manitoba
c/o Chair Allan Fineblit
4th floor – 287 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0R7

le 14 septembre 2020

Via email: alfin@legalaid.mb.ca

Dear Council Members:

Re: Public Interest Law Centre (PILC)

I have been following closely the debate around removing PILC from under Legal Aid Manitoba with great interest.

I am a retired Social Worker who has worked over 25 years in child welfare and community development. I have also spent decades volunteering in support of community programs, non-profit organizations who advocate for social justice for vulnerable citizens, for children and families in the rich mosaic of cultures who are integral builders & engaged participants in our province.

I know first-hand the challenges related to having a charitable number and have seen many organizations dissolve due to exhaustion of volunteers, virtual operations, grant-based financing that does not meet the actual cost of basic administration costs of rent, staff, equipment, projects. These non-profit organizations do so much with so little financing – it would be most efficient for governments to actually fund them according to competitive wages & rates. Imagine what they could accomplish with the hours & weeks dedicated to soliciting funding from foundations & government funding! (I refer you to the Manitoba Federation of Non-profit Organizations for level of third sector labour force and employee subsidization of their workplaces.)

Manitoba is one of the poorest provinces yet most Manitobans are among the most generous in the country, giving in time & financial donations to the many local, provincial, national & international projects. Despite being in desperate situations themselves, many immigrants & refugees know the importance of respect of human rights and they consider themselves most fortunate to have landed in Manitoba /Canada. They are disappointed, however to find considerable racism & sexism despite the image Canada projects in the international stage. Hence, it is critical that we maintain and enhance our instruments which advance human rights and challenge laws which are discriminatory.

We need to make Legal Aid Manitoba & PILC even more accessible than it is now. I would hope to make Manitoba a model of public interest law & Legal Aid program. That means more funding for more staff, for competitive salaries & better work conditions & policies. All the organizations I have worked with, including the ones in my own francophone community, will be most interested to hear about the proactive, progressive commitments to keeping PILC with Legal Aid and appropriate funding.

We are following closely these consultations and hope for good news. I assure you of my best wishes for a positive outcome.

Sincerely, Sincèrement,

Gisèle Saurette-Roch, BSW 1973

cc Sam Raposo, Kate Kehler