

September 11, 2020

Management Council Legal Aid Manitoba

c/o Chair Allan Fineblit
4th floor – 287 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0R7

Via email: alfin@legalaid.mb.ca

Re: Public Interest Law Centre (PILC)

Dear Council Members:

I write today to express my concern over your pending decision regarding PILC's future within Legal Aid Manitoba. While I can appreciate that you did not initiate the need for this decision, we hope that you will consider very carefully the points raised in the May 25th, 2020 letter of the Social Planning Council as the need for PILC has only been amplified by the gaps and systemic injustices that have been laid bare by COVID-19.

For any government to consider destabilizing PILC at any time, given the Courts' role as our third pillar of government and PILC's role in ensuring access to the protection of those Courts, would be inexcusable. However, in these times of renewed public calls through the work of the various commissions such as the Truth and Reconciliation, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls and such movements as Black Lives Matter, while remaining the government's decision, is one that the electorate can hold them to account. *However, we are asking you to not be complicit in this decision.* Should you agree that despite our demonstrating the very real and practical concerns that face the charitable and not-for-profit sector, which COVID-19 has also exacerbated as calls for more funding to address the needs increase, you will be providing the government with the 'cover' they will undoubtedly count on when their decision is made public.

It is my understanding that a request was made for more presenters to be allowed at your meeting and for interested parties to be present for the deliberations. Since that was denied, should your decision be to agree that PILC must move out of Legal Aid Manitoba, I am asking that you make your full decision public along with your rationale. I would also be interested in knowing who spoke in favour of PILC being moved and what reasons they gave.

In closing though, I hope this last request is not necessary and that you simply choose to vote to support PILC and its extraordinary body of work, past, present and future. We simply cannot pretend to be a just society or even be working towards becoming one when we fail to support mechanisms that have proven themselves to be the much needed checks and balances against successive governments' over-reach and adherence to ideology at the expense of basic human rights.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Hnatiuk

cc.: Sam Raposo, Kate Kehler