***Resources for Self-Represented Litigants***

***Legal Research***

You can find federal laws and regulations online here: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/>

The federal Department of Justice has a really strong family law website here: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/>

You can find Nova Scotia laws here: <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/sol.htm>

You can find Nova Scotia regulations here: <https://www.novascotia.ca/just/regulations/consregs.htm>

You can find a table of Nova Scotia limitation periods here: <http://www.lians.ca/resources/risk-and-practice-management/risk-management/table-limitation-periods>

Federal and provincial laws and judges’ decisions are available on a national database called CanLII at [www.canlii.org](http://www.canlii.org). You can use keywords to search the database and find cases similar to yours. Remember that the law can differ significantly from province to province and that it evolves over time. Old Nova Scotia cases and cases from other provinces may or may not be applicable.

The Nova Scotia Courts website at [www.courts.ns.ca](http://www.courts.ns.ca) posts decisions as they come out and also includes an archive and a searchable database. The site also has many guides, booklets and some videos offering legal information on representing yourself in court. You will also find the **Civil Procedure Rules** and **Family Court Rules** here.

There are **law libraries** at the Schulich School of Law, Nova Scotia Legislature and on the 7th floor of the Halifax Law Courts.

There are a number of **legal textbooks** on areas like contracts, tort law (e.g. negligence) and family law that are accessible to non-lawyers. You can find legal textbooks in a law library or order them online. Many are very expensive to buy, but Irwin Law publishes a really good “Essentials of Canadian Law” series with each book in the $50-$70 range. You can order the books on Irwin Law’s website at <https://www.irwinlaw.com/>

***Nova Scotia***

**Nova Scotia Courts**

Self-represented people with civil cases in the Nova Scotia Supreme Court or Court of Appeal can access one hour of legal advice at **Free Legal Clinics** regardless of income. There are clinics operating in Halifax, Sydney, Truro, and Yarmouth. Advice is by appointment only. There is no drop in service. To make an appointment call 902 424-6900 (Halifax Supreme Court) or 902 424-6937 (Court of Appeal). For more information: <http://www.courts.ns.ca/Self_Reps/NSCA-NSSC_Free_Legal_Clinic.htm>

**Nova Scotia Department of Justice**

The Department of Justice has a web page for self-represented litigants at <http://novascotia.ca/just/srl/> . It includes helpful links to information and forms.

They fund **Family Law Information Program** (FLIP Centres) at the Supreme Court Family Division in Halifax and Sydney. The centres are staffed with court workers and by Schulich law student volunteers with Pro Bono Students Canada. They offer family law information, referrals, and computer access for filling out court documents.

The Department of Justice co-sponsors a fantastic legal information site at [www.nsfamilylaw.ca](http://www.nsfamilylaw.ca). This website includes a helpful booklet updated in 2018 called **Going to Court: Self-Represented Parties in Family Law Matters** that you can download for free.

**Free Legal Advice for Sex Assault Survivors**

The **Legal Advice for Sex Assault Survivors Program** provides up to four hours of free, independent legal advice for sex assault survivors 16 years of age or older. Survivors do not have to report the assault to police or take legal action to use the service. Register by dialing 211. More information: <https://novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice/>

**Workers’ Compensation Advice**

The **Workers’ Advisers Program** offers full legal representation to eligible injured workers and their families seeking compensation under the *Workers’ Compensation Act*. More information: <https://novascotia.ca/lae/wap/>

**Schulich School of Law**

The **Wills Project** matches low income seniors with lawyers who will prepare free wills, powers of attorney, and personal directives for health care decisions. More information: 902 494-3704 or email willsdal@gmail.com.

**Dalhousie Legal Aid Service**

DLAS was founded in 1970 and is the oldest clinical law program in Canada. It is staffed by lawyers and 3rd year law students and takes cases in the areas of **criminal law, family law** and **poverty law**. Criminal and family cases require a referral from Nova Scotia Legal Aid but **poverty law** matters are accepted directly at the clinic.

They publish excellent guides on **tenants’ rights** (2013), **income assistance** (2014), and **power disconnections** (2017), though the tenants’ rights guide does not yet reflect the most recent amendments to Nova Scotia’s residential tenancies law. More information: <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/law/dlas.html>

**ReachAbility**

ReachAbility is an advocacy organization for people living with disabilities. The organization offers referrals for **one hour of free legal advice** and **weekly drop in clinics** staffed by law students to help people fill out government forms. More information: <https://www.reachability.org>.

**Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)**

LISNS maintains a website full of legal information at [www.legalinfo.org](http://www.legalinfo.org). They also offer a number of free programs and services for self-represented litigants including a **legal information line**, **referrals to lawyers and mediators** for free or low cost consultations, **free legal clinics** and the award-winning **Public Navigator Program**. The Public Navigator program trains non-legal community members to guide self-represented individuals through civil proceedings in the Small Claims Court and Supreme Court. The program includes narrated PowerPoint slides and guides to court terms and procedures. You can find these materials by going to the website and clicking on “I have a legal question” and “Representing Yourself”.

There are two new apps on the website: a **Small Claims Court app** and a **Wills app**.

They sponsor the **IWK Family Legal Health Program**, which offers free legal assistance to eligible IWK Health Centre patients and their families where a legal issue impacts the patient’s health. Areas of assistance include: guardianship, adult capacity and decision-making, education, employment, immigration, housing, access to health care and government programs, tax, human rights, and wills & estates. To see if you qualify, call the IWK Social Work office at 902 470-8065 or 902 470-8076.

LISNS also maintains a **Free Legal Help List** compiling options for free and low cost legal information and advice. The best way to find it is to go to the LISNS website and search Low Cost Legal Help. If this handout doesn’t address the type of case you need help with, the LISNS Free Legal Help List likely will.

**Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA)**

NSLA provides services in 3 main areas: (1) **criminal law** (2) **family law** including child protection and (3) **social justice**. They offer outreach in and near First Nations communities and through the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre in Halifax.

Some services with NSLA require you to provide information about your financial situation and others do not. If you earn more money or have more assets than the cut off, you may still get a lawyer but may have to contribute some of the cost. In order to provide you with a lawyer, NSLA also has to be satisfied that your case has merit.

Even if you do not qualify for a lawyer, NSLA provides **legal information** on their website ([www.nslegalaid.ca](http://www.nslegalaid.ca)) and free legal advice in their core areas. These services DO NOT require financial qualification – they are available to everyone.

NSLA accepts appointments for free **summary advice** (typically a single appointment) in these areas: criminal law and provincial offences (*Motor Vehicle Act*, *Liquor Control Act*), family law, CPP disability, employment insurance, income assistance, residential tenancies, credit/debt issues. This program is available to all, regardless of income.

They also have summary advice lawyers based at the Supreme Court (Family Division) and the Nova Scotia Supreme Court/Court of Appeal. You can see the court-based lawyers more than once for advice but they do not go to court with you.

You can also **chat online** with a lawyer for free. Family law chats take place Tuesdays from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. and social justice chats (income assistance, CPP disability, residential tenancies, EI benefits) on Wednesdays from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. To access the chat, go to the NSLA website and click on the chat icon on the bottom right corner of the homepage.

***Other Resources***

**The National Self-Represented Litigants Project**

The project website at [www.representingyourselfcanada.com](http://www.representingyourselfcanada.com) has many resources for self-represented litigants including a CanLII primer to help with legal research.

**More Information on Access to Justice in Canada**

All of these materials are available online. I’ve chosen not to include lengthy links because such links often end up broken. A better way to find these resources is to Google the title – this will typically bring up the article as one of the first links.

Dr Julie Macfarlane, *The National Self-Represented Litigants Project: Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Self-Represented Litigants Final Report* (May 2013)

Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, *Meaningful Change for Family Justice: Beyond Wise Words* (April 2013)

Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, *Access to Civil and Family Justice: A Roadmap for Change* (October 2013)

Canadian Bar Association Access to Justice Committee, *Reaching Equal Justice: An Invitation to Envision and Act* (November 2013)

**Notes**