

## **CSU Legal Information Clinic Annual Summary Report dated 19 April 2024**

### **Mandate**

The CSU Legal Information Clinic is a free service that provides legal information, referrals, and accompaniment in both French and English to undergraduate and since Fall 2021, graduate Concordia students. The LIC offers information related to issues on immigration, discrimination and consumer protection law and any other areas of law.

On average, most clients require multiple consultations, appointments and follow-ups for legal information and assistance with complex and sensitive issues such as immigration, discrimination and racial profiling, fines, sexual violence, contracts, civil disputes cases and much more.

The LIC's mandate of access to justice also includes community outreach or collaborative projects with community organizations or other CSU departments to address issues of systemic racism and discrimination.

### **Empowerment and Wellness Model**

The Clinic uses an empowerment model to check the wellness of the student clientele and to take the necessary time and care to listen to them, their questions, their frustrations, their confusion and to help them arrange their thoughts.

With the assistance of supervising lawyers and law students, we initially meet and help clients to organize their documents and the facts pertaining to their situation, to understand their needs and issues, both legal and non-legal, such as stress, trauma, academics, mental health, immigration or other difficulties affecting them in their immediate lives.

The Clinic carefully explains and educates students through legal information, research and examples on all their possible options so that they can come to a fully informed decision themselves on which choices are best for them, especially since they are the ones who will assume the consequences of their decisions.

Through this empowerment and wellness method, supported by supervising lawyers and law students, over 90% of students seeking help are satisfied with the legal information and support provided by the Clinic, and do not require the additional services and costs of a lawyer.

### **Survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach**

The Clinic spends at least 2-8 hours for simpler cases and many more hours for more complex cases, applying a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach, especially for those cases involving sexual violence, discrimination and trauma.

The Clinic is an integral part of the ecosystem of CSU services for students, Concordia and the community at large along with our in-depth grassroots knowledge and collaboration with the resources available to students at the CSU, Concordia University and Concordia community, (eg: HOJO, CSU Advocacy, International Student Office, Sexual Assault Resource Center, Counselling and Psychological Services, Centre for Gender Advocacy, Access Centre for Students with Disabilities, Multi-faith and Spirituality Centre, Center for Research Action and Race Relations, Solidarity Across Borders, etc. etc);

Through these means, the Clinic provides timely, holistic, multifaceted, and intersectional services to persons in need.

### **Increased Clinic Accessibility through Hybrid System:**

Following structural changes to increase student accessibility to the LIC during the recent pandemic, the LIC now operates in a hybrid system, with the Administrative Assistant and Assistant Manager ensuring a physical presence at the LIC during its open office hours to allow for walk-in bookings, while the rest of the LIC works virtually throughout the week. Usually, appointments and meetings are done via Microsoft Teams Monday to Friday, while allowing the student clientele the possibility of arranging in-person consultations, if necessary. This transition to a hybrid system allowed students to access the LIC services from the comfort and safety of their homes, facilitated access for mobility-challenged clientele, and students overseas or outside Montreal.

### **Legal Network, Legal Fee Fund and Legal Representation**

Although the Clinic and its law student volunteers cannot act as lawyers for the clients, the Clinic does provide legal representation and advice to students through our Legal Network list where we refer them to qualified and experienced lawyers and advocates, who are community-minded and engaged.

The Clinic had an annual budget line of about 18000\$ for Legal Fee Funding which the Clinic provides to students who, in addition to our legal information services, truly need a lawyer for legal representation and advice, especially if they do not qualify for government legal aid which pays for their lawyer's legal fees and costs.

Of the cases who benefitted from the LIC Legal Fee Fund May 2023- April 2024, legal representation and fees were provided for 8 clients on the following subject matters:

- resolving precarious temporary immigration status and obtaining permanent residency for an Asian survivor of conjugal violence
- same-sex sexual harassment at work
- review of Concordia policies on Sexual violence following lawsuit by survivor of sexual violence on campus
- civil lawsuit against City of Montreal for police brutality and racism towards Black student despite Quebec Human Rights Commission refusal to proceed
- lawsuit against Concordia and City of Montreal police for gross negligence by survivor of sexual violence on campus
- resolving precarious temporary immigration status and obtaining permanent residency following refusal of Postgrad work permit due to study break during Covid 19 pandemic
- defense of Black student criminally charged and assaulted by racist Concordia security guard during sports activity on campus
- assisting a Palestinian refugee with Immigration Canada's overly restrictive Special Measures for Gaza, to reunite with his wife who was at risk in Gaza and succeeded in joining him in Montreal.

All these complex cases involved clients who were traumatized and at risk, and whom the Clinic has continuously supported, in addition to providing them with legal representation.

## Statistics:

### Number of Cases

From May 2023 to April 2024, the LIC has handled a total of **138 cases, (92 Undergraduates and 46 Graduates)** not including the multiple appointments and follow-ups necessary for each file.

### Number of Hourly Appointments

Due to the complexity of their cases, many students require more than one appointment to deal with their issue. From May 2023 to April 2024, the LIC has handled a total of **227 appointments** (lasting on average 1 hour each) for an average of 1.6 appointments per student.

60 appointments in Summer 2023

69 appointments in Fall 2023

98 appointments in Winter 2024

Total appointments for 2023-2024= 227

### Research, Case Management and Communications with students.

Furthermore, for each case, apart from the time spent on a case during appointments, at least additional 2-4 hours is spent by the volunteer law students and supervising lawyers on legal information research, case management and communications with the students.

### Fields of Law for Undergraduate & Graduate Student Combined (138 cases)

About 47% of the files dealt with immigration, 28% criminal /civil penal infractions and fines, and the rest of the files dealt with harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, family law, business, contracts, intellectual property, civil disputes among other fields of law. This does not include community outreach or collaborative projects with community organizations or other CSU departments.

65 Immigration= 47.1014493%

39 Criminal/Civil Penal= 28.2608696%

8 Family= 5.79710145%

7 Employment= 5.07246377%

4 Business= 2.89855072%

3 Housing= 2.17391304%

2 Consumer= 1.44927536%

2 IP law= 1.44927536%

1 Human Rights= 0.72463768%

1 Harassment= 0.72463768%

6 Other= 4.34782609%

### Fields of Law for Undergraduates (92 cases)

31 Immigration= 33.6956522%  
30 Criminal/Civil Penal = 32.608699%  
7 Employment= 7.60869565%  
6 Family law= 6.52173913%  
4 Business= 4.34782609%  
3 Multifaceted Housing law= 3.26086957%  
2 Consumer law= 2.17391304%  
2 IP law= 2.17391304%  
1 Human Rights= 1.08695652%  
6 Other= 6.52173913%

### Fields of Law for Graduate Students (46 cases)

34 Immigration= 52.173913%  
9 Criminal/Civil Penal= 13.0434783%  
1 Harassment= 2.17391304%  
2 Family= 4.34782609%

### Summary of Activities May 2023 -April 2024

#### **LIC Outreach Activities**

The LIC successfully relaunched with new community partners such as the Petit Velo Rouge, its Bike Rights Campaign during Fall Orientation 2023 for CSU Services to sensitize and encourage Concordia students and community about updated bike laws, bikers' rights, and the function of the Legal Information Clinic.

During Summer and Fall 2023, LIC continued to partner with other community groups to pressure the City of Montreal to address issues of systemic racism and discrimination within the City, particularly during the Chinatown Reimagined Forum held from September 28 to 30, 2023 which brought together community stakeholders, urban planners, social housing professionals, policymakers, government officials, and change-makers from across North America to share innovation, best practices, and current knowledge.

As usual, the LIC provided ongoing support and information to international students on the many confusing, arbitrary and unfair applications of federal and Quebec immigration policies and procedures to their immigration files.

#### **LIC advocacy against new Quebec provincial Immigration Reforms**

However, the main focus of the LIC from May 2023- Dec 2023 was dealing with the new provincial immigration reforms proposed in June 2023 and how the new rules unfairly discriminated against non-francophone international students studying in English educational institutions, and excluded them from immigrating to Quebec.

Over Summer and Fall 2023, the LIC submitted a brief and led a CSU delegation in September 2023 to present its recommendations in Quebec City to the the Quebec government's Commission des relations avec les citoyens as part of the Consultation générale et auditions publiques sur La planification de l'immigration au Québec pour la période 2024-2027.

As the only English student organization at the Consultation, representing Concordia's 37,000 undergraduate students of diverse racial, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, including more than 11,000 international students from non-francophone countries such as in Asia and South America, we spoke on the devastating effect of the Quebec government's proposed immigration policy on students and Quebec's international reputation by excluding qualified non-francophones immigrants who have otherwise acquired the necessary French language skills to integrate into the Quebec labour market.

Although the discriminatory reforms were eventually implemented by the Quebec government in November 2023, our efforts did result in obtaining certain transitional measures exempting international students who were already enrolled in study programs in English at the time of the reform's implementation.

### **Special Measures for Gaza,**

One of the community initiatives this year was the Clinic's collaboration with the Canadian Bar association to provide legal assistance to people affected by the dire and urgent situation in Gaza. In one of these cases, the Clinic assisted a Palestinian refugee with Immigration Canada's overly restrictive Special Measures for Gaza, to reunite with his wife who was at risk in Gaza, and who succeeded in joining him in Montreal. This success story was one of the highlights for the Clinic staff and volunteers this year.

### **GSA Referendum and Exclusion of Graduate students from LIC Services**

Over the last period of May 2023- April 2024, there was an increase in graduate student clientele, who are usually older students with more complex professional and personal issues, and who have consistently expressed their appreciation for the quality and accessibility to the LIC's services.

However, the LIC may soon **no longer be able to assist any graduate students** because of the Graduate Student Association's (GSA) recent referendum proposal to eliminate the *fee levy of \$2.75 per term paid by GSA members for the CSU Legal Information Clinic (LIC), which would cut-off and exclude all graduate students from the services of the LIC.*

This is particularly frustrating because of the CSU's recent stated intentions to keep the Clinic open pending a review of its services in accordance with the resolution adopted by CSU Student Council on February 14, 2024.

The GSA's referendum proposal was made without any previous consultations or communications with the LIC. It will have an immediate and severe impact on all graduate students we are presently assisting and those who are seeking help with immigration, discrimination, contracts, business, criminal or any other fields of law.