

## CSU Legal Information Clinic Interim Summary Report dated 19 April 2023

### **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 mainly to issues on immigration, discrimination and consumer protection law as well as any other areas of law. On average, the majority of 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.

### **Statistics:**

From May 2022 to April 2023, the LIC has handled about 144 cases, not including the multiple appointments and follow-ups necessary for each case. Of these 144 cases, all of them had multiple appointments. On average, about 37.5% of the cases dealt with immigration law, about 11.1% with criminal law, statutory penal offences (including COVID and Bike fines) and discrimination, about 10.47% about family and testamentary law, about 7.6% with business, intellectual property and fiscal law, about 33.33% with contracts, civil disputes, labor and housing among other fields of law. These cases do not include community outreach or collaborative projects with community organizations or other CSU departments.

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

Following structural changes to increase student accessibility to the LIC during the ongoing pandemic, the LIC now operates in a hybrid system, with the Administrative Assistant and Assistant Manager ensuring a physical presence at the LIC office to allow for walk-in bookings (during the Winter semester 2023, Monday- Thursday 12h-17h and a virtual presence on Friday 12h-17h,) 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 has allowed for students to access the LIC services from the comfort and safety of their homes, facilitated access for mobility- challenged clientele, as well as for students who are overseas or outside of Montreal.

### **Services to GSA members:**

Previously, the LIC was mandated to provide services to only undergraduate students who fund the LIC through a CSU fee levy. After many years of effort, the LIC finally succeeded in obtaining a GSA fee levy in Fall 2021 to open our services to graduate students. Over the last year of 2022-2023, GSA members, who are usually older students with professional and personal issues which are often different from undergraduate students, have consistently expressed their appreciation for the quality and accessibility to the LIC's services.

### **Addition of Supervising Lawyers:**

The additional fees provided by the recent GSA fee levy allowed for the service contracting of new supervising lawyers to assist online the existing LIC staff and law student volunteers, and to provide value-added services to the LIC's Student Clientele and operations.

Previously, the Clinic Manager had to divide his time between attending student consultations as the sole supervising lawyer or attending to his other duties as the LIC Manager. Depending upon the circumstances, the LIC Manager was not always able to attend each and every student consultation.

Since the new addition of the supervising lawyers, the student clientele benefits from having each and every time a supervising lawyer present throughout the consultation process to allow for more in-depth exchanges, research and explanations on issues or questions raised by the student.

The supervising lawyer is present to ensure that legal information is given to the student within the limits imposed by the Quebec Bar and may assist and interject if the student clientele asks a question that the volunteer law student is unable to answer (while respecting that legal advice cannot be provided). The supervising lawyer is also able to provide some preliminary legal information to reassure the student client.

The supervising lawyers are present in all the appointments with students and provide a sense of comfort and reassurance to students in complex legal matters. The supervising lawyers work closely with the volunteer law students to complete the legal research. Not only does this ensure that the student clientele receive comprehensive and insightful legal information, but it also provides a unique learning environment for the volunteer law students. This has resulted in a positive reputation for the LIC that strengthens the relationship between the clinic and the surrounding law schools. The supervising lawyers provide a unique experience for both the student clientele and the volunteers. This has positively impacted our clinic and increased our visibility and recognition by students in need of legal information.

### **Absence of LIC Manager on Sick Leave:**

Also, due to the prolonged absence of the LIC Manager who was on sick leave for most of the past year, the number of community outreach activities of the LIC was severely limited in comparison to previous years. However, with the addition of the supervising lawyers, the LIC was still able to continue its clinic casework, assisting students during these months.

### **Summary of Activities since May 2022- April 2023:**

The LIC continued to provide 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.

- In particular, the LIC dealt with the plight of international students affected by increasingly complex and confusing federal and provincial immigration legislation and policies, due to the evolving situation of the pandemic.

- Assisting Ukrainian international students within Canada and their overseas family members and friends affected by the Russian invasion of their country, through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach.

An important number of Concordia students are of Chinese Canadian origin or are recent immigrants from overseas. In 2021, of Concordia's 10000 registered International Students, 16% (about 1600) were from China. Many seniors and new immigrants continue to rely on basic services located in Montreal's Chinatown and the area continues to play a pivotal role in the welcoming of newcomers.

In the context of the rise of anti-Asian hate incidents and racial and religious intolerance since the start of the pandemic, and at the request of Concordia students, LIC partnered with other community groups to pressure the City of Montreal to address issues of systemic racism and discrimination within the City, particularly on employment and internship, racial and social profiling, housing, the fight against inequality, and gentrification, urbanism and land-use planning.

During the months of May and June 2022, the LIC prepared and presented a brief containing its recommendations to the Office de Consultation Publique de Montreal (OCPM) as part of the latter's City-wide consultation on the urban development of Montreal's Chinatown. The CSU brief focused on issues of gentrification, green space, systemic racism, and voiced concerns about the need for effective heritage protection and appropriate community and economic revitalization.

Bike Rights Campaign during Fall Orientation 2022 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.

Working with Sexual Assault and Resource Centre (SARC) to facilitate training for staff and volunteers at the LIC, which is trauma-informed and survivor-centered;

Campaign questioning why the RCMP in Quebec, out of thousands of investigations conducted across the country, would publicly name and target two Asian community centers and their executive director Xixi LI (Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal, Sino-Québec) serving the Chinese communities in Québec, as national security risks for being 'secret Chinese police stations,' causing serious and potentially irreparable harm to the community.