



April 3, 2024

Media Release

Funding Cuts Jeopardize Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC) in Saskatoon

For nearly two decades, Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC) has played a vital role in providing accessible legal services and programming to people who experience poverty and injustice. The clinic offers a wide range of services, addressing issues from housing evictions to immigration and refugee cases to social services matters.



Amid rising inflation and an unprecedented access to justice crisis, the Provincial Ministry of Justice withdrew its service contract and partnership from Saskatchewan's sole community legal clinic on April 1st. This funding cut deeply affects the clinic's ability to operate at a time when capacity is already an issue.

The funding cut could directly impact whether CLASSIC will offer the clinical law program to law students in the future. CLASSIC's clinical law program has won an international award for university and community partnership and nearly 1000 students have received enriched legal education through CLASSIC since its inception 18 years ago. CLASSIC has already made cuts to its student program offering due to revenue issues. Students often identify their experience at CLASSIC as the highlight of their law school education because they learned real legal skills in many areas of law and helped people who would otherwise be on their own through their process.

CLASSIC was opened in Saskatchewan due to our restrictive legal aid system.

"In Saskatchewan, CLASSIC stands alone as the only community legal clinic of its kind, unlike in Ontario, where there are over 70 community clinics with more reliable government funding," says Chantelle Johnson, the Executive Director. "Now, when more people need our help and everything is getting more expensive, the Ministry of Justice is cutting our funding. This puts us at a disadvantage across the country. As a result, CLASSIC will need to depend more on donations and funds from other sources to make sure that everyone can get the legal help they deserve."



April 3, 2024

Media Release

This funding cut is out of line with the Canadian Bar Association's call for strengthened public legal services. With studies showing that every \$1 invested in legal aid generates approximately \$6 in savings on other social services, the decision to cut funding to CLASSIC is detrimental to societal well-being and counterproductive.

CLASSIC's work extends beyond the courtroom; it includes educating and empowering individuals to understand and assert their rights.

To illustrate the common challenges faced by CLASSIC clients, a staff member shared an example: "We helped a single mother from the north who moved to Saskatoon seeking educational opportunities. In the coldest part of winter, her furnace broke down. Instead of fixing it, her landlord suggested she warm the house with her oven, endangering both her and her young child. She only came to CLASSIC after the oven stopped working."



In another instance, CLASSIC tackled the disturbing issue of landlords exploiting tenants by demanding sexual favors in lieu of rent. Our team has played a vital role in providing accessible legal services and programming to people who experience poverty and injustice. The impending funding cuts to CLASSIC not only undermine our ability to address these critical injustices but also signal a departure from our collective responsibility to uphold accountability and rights.

We also appeal to the public and the media to join us in advocating for the vital need for legal aid services, especially during this period of economic uncertainty. CLASSIC urgently calls on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice to reconsider its decision and restore funding. CLASSIC wants to see the Ministry of Justice reassess their approach and support strong communities instead of cutting funding. For further information and to learn how you can support CLASSIC, please visit: <https://classiclax.ca/news-and-documents/news-and-updates/support-justice-in-saskatoon.html>

For questions please contact:

Chantelle Johnson, Executive Director at chantelle_j@classiclax.ca or (306) 657-6100