The Legal Burden and Why AI Can't Carry It for You

The legal burden

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was condemned to roll a massive boulder up a hill, only for it to slip from his grasp and tumble back down each time he neared the top. His endless task has become a symbol of struggle without resolution.

Facing a legal problem can feel much the same. A landlord notice, an immigration form, or a custody dispute can quickly become overwhelming and difficult to navigate alone. Because legal services can be expensive or hard to access, many people turn to artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT or Gemini, hoping it can make things easier.

AI can be helpful at the very beginning. It can explain unfamiliar legal terms, help you organize your thoughts, or suggest questions to ask. However, AI is not a substitute for human legal help. It cannot take responsibility for your situation, protect your rights, or represent you in court. If you rely on it too much, the boulder can roll back on you.[1]

Why experts are cautious about AI

Experts caution against relying on AI for legal questions because it has important limitations that can create real risks for people who use it without legal training.[1]

- **AI can give incorrect information that sounds convincing.**
  AI systems can invent laws, deadlines, or court decisions that do not exist. Because the information often sounds confident and detailed, it can be difficult to recognize when it is wrong.[1]
- **AI does not understand your personal situation.**
  AI does not know your history, your stress, your safety concerns, or what is truly at

stake for you. It cannot assess urgency, context, or the human consequences of legal decisions.[1]

- **AI does not protect confidentiality.**
  Communications with a lawyer are protected by professional secrecy. AI tools do not have the same obligation, and information you enter may be stored or reused.[1]
- **AI has no accountability.**
  Lawyers are bound by professional rules and can be held responsible for their advice. AI tools are not subject to professional discipline and carry no responsibility if their information causes harm.[1]

These limitations explain why even trained professionals are encouraged to verify all AI-generated legal information before relying on it.[1]

When things go wrong : a Québec example

These risks are not theoretical. They have already appeared in Québec courts.

Quebec society of legal information SOQUIJ has warned that people who represent themselves may be tempted to use AI tools to prepare court documents or conduct legal research. This practice can require judges and opposing parties to spend significant time verifying sources and arguments, and Québec courts have issued guidance urging caution in the use of generative AI.[2]

In a recent case before the **Cour du Québec, Small Claims Division**, involving hidden defects, a person representing herself submitted a list of court decisions to support her claim. She explained to the judge that the list had been generated using ChatGPT. The decisions appeared detailed and relevant, including summaries, quotations, and outcomes.[2]

After reviewing the material, the judge found that **all of the cited decisions were fictitious**. The cases did not exist, and the neutral citations referred to unrelated judgments. The court

emphasized that the goal was not to reproach the litigant, who had been transparent about using AI, but to warn that AI-generated legal research can mislead individuals into believing that the law supports their position and that they have a chance of succes using this argumentation when it is not the case.[2]

The judge concluded that while AI may serve as a support tool, it cannot replace reliable official legal sources. Judicial decisions must be based on evidence and applicable law, not on information generated by an algorithm.[2]

What this means for you

Using AI for legal questions can lead to serious problems:

- **AI can invent court cases or legal support that does not exist**, which may undermine your credibility before a judge and mislead your reasoning and legal arguments.[2]
- **AI can provide real-looking citations that are incorrect**, leading you to rely on information that does not apply to your situation.[2]
- **AI can create a false sense of confidence**, causing you to underestimate what must actually be proven in your case.[2]

Other Québec cases have shown that courts may impose financial sanctions or formal reprimands when false AI-generated legal citations are submitted, even when there is no intent to mislead.[2]

Where AI can Help (and where it can't)

AI can be useful at the start of a legal process, such as helping you understand basic legal terminology or prepare questions before seeking help or to rephrase a mail .[1]

However, AI is not reliable enough to determine deadlines, give legal advice, choose legal remedies, or prepare court filings. When the stakes are high, such as eviction, immigration,

family law, or court proceedings, incorrect information can have serious, lasting and unrecoverable consequences.[1]

How to use AI safely

Think of AI as a tool to help you understand, not to decide:

- **Verify information using trusted sources**, such as **Éducaloi** and official **Québec government websites** (laws and regulations).[3]
- **Avoid sharing sensitive personal information** with AI tools.[1]
- **Use AI to prepare questions**, not to make legal decisions.[1]

Resources in Montréal and Québec

If you are unsure about a legal issue, especially after using AI, you can contact the Clinique d'information juridique du Y des femmes. The clinic offers confidential legal information and can help you understand your situation and identify appropriate next steps.[4]

The bottom line

AI is tempting because it is fast, accessible, and often free. It can make the first steps of a legal problem feel less overwhelming. However, it cannot guarantee accuracy, protect your rights, or replace human legal judgment.

The lesson is simple. AI can help you get your bearings, but it will not push the boulder for you. If the climb is steep, the only way to keep Sisyphus' stone moving uphill and keep it there is with trusted human guidance.

Footnotes / Sources

1. **Barreau du Québec.** *Guide pratique pour une utilisation responsable de l'intelligence artificielle générative par les personnes se représentant seules devant les tribunaux.* https://www.barreau.qc.ca/fr/nouvelle/guides-brochures/barreau-publie-guide-intelligence-artificielle-generative-personnes-seules-cour/

2. **SOQUIJ.** L'intelligence artificielle devant les tribunaux : prudence! *Blogue SOQUIJ, 15 janvier 2026.* https://blogue.soquij.qc.ca/2026/01/15/lintelligence-artificielle-devant-les-tribunaux-prudence/

3. **Éducaloi.** https://educaloi.qc.ca/

4. **Gouvernement du Québec.** *Légis Québec.* https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/

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