

Law Amendments Committee – February 28, 2014

Re: An Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services

Janet Hazelton, RN, BScN, MPA

President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this legislation. The Nova Scotia Nurses' Union is a professional union representing approximately 6500 Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners in Nova Scotia's hospitals, long term care facilities, adult residential centres, VON branches and Canadian Blood Services centres.

I am a nurse. I have been a nurse for 30 years, and every day I work and speak with nurses who are front line health care providers. I represent close to a thousand Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses, employees of the Victorian Order of Nurses, who work alongside and in collaboration with home care support workers. We respect these colleagues and their invaluable contribution to the health and well-being of many of Nova Scotia's most vulnerable and needy residents.

I also have a 20-year history as a trade union activist. I am extremely disappointed that the bargaining process for these workers has come to this. In all of my years as a union member and a union leader I have never been on strike and only once have we, the Nurses' Union, taken a strike vote. I know that it is only with a heavy heart that health workers even contemplate such action. I continue to believe that collective bargaining, in an atmosphere of respectful collaboration, is always the best means of dealing with contract issues. I urge the government to commit to a process that continues to respect the rights of health care workers and to bargain in good faith with health care unions.