

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Requesting Human Rights, Equality and Democracy to be Respected

Linda MacDonald MEd, BN, RN

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Presented to

The Nova Scotia Law Amendments Committee

In relation to Bill No. 1 - Health Authorities Act

Contact Information:

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I have been a nurse employed in the Nova Scotia healthcare system since 1973. During my nursing training I was taught I was an equal member of the health care team and I aspired to such a reality. This statement has never come true in my entire work life profession. My nursing career has included hospital nursing, VON nursing, public health nursing and I will end my career in Continuing Care. I have cared for persons from birth to death. As a care coordinator I advocate for the human rights of older adults to be considered persons and to be treated with respect and with equality. But today I am here to advocate for my own human rights. My right to equality, my right to association and for democracy.

Nursing is still a female dominated profession as is medicine still male dominated. I do not believe that when it comes time for the Nova Scotia Government to negotiate with the physicians that such heavy handed tactics as used in Bill No 1 - The Health Authorities Act will be used against them. It is my belief that because nursing composes such a large part of the health care system and that nurses are for the majority women that such an attack on unions has been waged by this government.

In 1992 I was a member of the Nova Scotia Nursing Task Force and along with another nursing colleague presented on gender equality in nursing. And yet 22 years later here I am still dealing with discrimination, misogyny and still asking for the same solutions in health care. There are many other ways to save money within the healthcare system such as community based clinics, more nurse practitioners, more salaried physicians, reducing unnecessary health tests and addressing polypharmacy, to name a few. However sadly still today in 2014 there are plans by this government to save healthcare costs on the backs of women.

Democracy is one of my most cherished values and I am understanding that the liberal government is planning to take away my democratic right to choose what union I belong to. The Minister of Health has been referenced to say that a mediator will be chosen to facilitate this process. I do not want a mediator to make my choice. I want my human right and democratic right respected to exercise my own vote for my own choice of what union I belong to.

For the most part I am satisfied with my job, benefits and salary. My strong objection to this proposed legislation is based on my concern for democracy in Nova Scotia and in Canada, as this will be first time in Canadian history that such an action has been proposed. Canadian women before me fought for my right to vote and to be treated as a person and under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Section 2 (d) I have the individual right to freedom of association. I am not an object to be traded about. I am a woman and I am gravely offended by the government's proposed actions.

As a mother I have always taught my adult children that democracy is a precious and precarious right. I do not agree with Premier McNeil that this way of organizing the health merger will be better for everyone in the long run. Dictating choices to people is not democracy and all citizens lose when human rights are eroded.

What will be some of the losses in healthcare from such an abuse of power and violation of workers' rights? Loss of trust is what comes to my mind first. In August of 2013 Premier Stephen McNeil was quoted in the Chronicle Herald to have said, "We respect and will continue to respect your hard-earned rights and collective agreements." If Bill No.1 is passed these words will become a lie and with dishonesty comes loss of trust. Such loss of trust will bring disillusionment, low working moral, job dissatisfaction, increased sick time and people moving away to other provinces for employment. A union contract between employees and employers is about relationships. And in this case the union contracts are about how employees and employers agree to care for and about the health of Nova Scotians. Once such trust is broken in relationships it is very hard to repair. I think the costs from such a relational loss of trust is being ignored totally and will linger in this province for many years to come.

I am here today to recommend that the **Law Amendments Committee consider such ramifications noted above and say no to Bill No 1. - Health Authorities Act and recommend the combined unions proposal for a Bargaining Associations instead.**

I thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda MacDonald". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Linda MacDonald MEd, BN, RN