

Law Amendments Committee

Bill 69 – Amendments to the Health Authorities Act

Janet Hazelton, President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

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Good afternoon. The Nova Scotia Nurses' Union is a professional union representing approximately 7000 Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners in Nova Scotia's hospitals, long term care facilities, adult residential centers, VON branches and Canadian Blood Services Centres. On behalf of the NSNU, thank-you for the opportunity to speak to this legislation.

In the first place, I am here to speak in favour of the amendments to the *Health Authorities Act*. The amendments provide what the four health care unions have asked for all along – the opportunity to continue to represent our current membership and collaborate on collective bargaining within the new amalgamated DHA structure.

It is extremely unfortunate that it took us so long to get to where we are today, especially since we were in virtually the same position last summer with the Union's Bargaining Association Model. None of this was necessary. If government had given us the opportunity, we would have been open to the minor adjustments that differentiate the new model from that one. We were not given that opportunity. Instead, the *Health Authorities Act* forced all parties into a contentious round of mediation and arbitration.

Even after this, the Unions were in the midst of discussing a way forward that would avoid moving members between unions. It was around the inception of those 11th hour talks that we received news from the Premier that he was ready to accept a collaborative model from the Unions.

This whole process has been unfair to health care workers who are the backbone of our most important public institution, who show up for work at all manner of hours and who deal with all manner of situations because they know that patients depend on them. Nurses welcome our newborns and comfort our dying and do every sort of task in-between, from administering life saving treatments to accompanying patients in their most intimate and

humbling moments. Ask a nurse or other health care worker about his or her stressors on a good day, and you are in for a very long conversation. The uncertainty of the *Health Authorities Act* was an absolutely unnecessary addition to this stress.

We did not ask for this. The new labour relations model will require transparent cooperation and collaboration from all parties. In spite of everything that has happened, we are ready to bargain together to get the best possible deal for health workers in Nova Scotia, one that will keep nurses and other health professionals in this province.

On behalf of the Nurses' Union, I urge passing of this Bill so that we can turn the page on this dark chapter and move on to continue servicing the members who spend their lives caring for Nova Scotians. Thank you.