

Law Amendments Committee
Bill 121 – Nursing Act

Janet Hazelton, President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union
April 8th, 2019

The Nova Scotia Nurses' Union is a professional union representing 7,300 Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners in Nova Scotia's hospitals, long term care facilities, adult residential centers, VON branches, primary healthcare practices and Canadian Blood Services centres. On behalf of the NSNU, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to this important legislation.

I would like to start by congratulating the Colleges of Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses who helped develop this important and necessary legislation. The Bill sets the framework for the two colleges to merge and work as one in the province. Working side-by-side could allow for improved mutual appreciation for the contribution of all nurses to our healthcare system.

Nursing is a highly technical and advanced profession. It is also a dynamic profession. Over the past 50 years we have witnessed tremendous changes to nurses' scope of practice including the introduction of Nurse Practitioners and advancements to their capabilities, greater authority and responsibility for Registered Nurses, and the growth of licensed practical nursing into a unique nursing designation with an independent scope. These changes have been positive, but they have also been very difficult, in part due to the legislation governing the nursing profession. We believe this new bill provides greater flexibility to recognize the dynamic scope of the nursing profession, while also ensuring safeguards are in place, such as standards for consultation.

Importantly, the new legislation also removes the requirement for Nurse Practitioners to sign a collaborative practice agreement with a physician. Let me be clear. This does not in any way change the

standard that requires all nurses to practice collaboratively, an explicit requirement in nurses' standards of practice which are publicly available on the college websites. Removing this language helps clarify confusions around what Nurse Practitioners can do. It recognizes the broad and independent scope of practice of Nurse Practitioners, a vital group of nurses who are integral to the evolution of acute care, long-term care, home care and primary healthcare in our province. Nurse Practitioners have always consulted with physicians and specialists when required. This had nothing to do with the former collaborative practice agreements, and this practice will not change going forward.

Lastly, on behalf of the Nurses' Union, I would like to thank the nursing colleges for engaging in meaningful consultation leading up to the introduction of this Bill. I have had several conversations with the Colleges over the past several months, and I believe our concerns were given sincere consideration, and very often they

were remedied by changes to the language. For example, the Bill now ensures the governing board will always have at least one Registered Nurse and one Licensed Practical Nurse; unions will continue to be able to fully represent members dealing with college complaints; and large potential changes, like the addition of a new nursing designation, will only be done after significant consultation with the public and stakeholders. We truly appreciate the meaningful dialogue and exchanges we had with the Colleges, and we thank them for listening.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. On behalf of the nurses of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, I encourage all members to support it.