

Law Amendments Committee

Bill 203 – Crown Attorneys' Labour Relations Act

Janet Hazelton, President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

October 18th, 2019

The Nova Scotia Nurses' Union is a professional union representing 7,400 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.

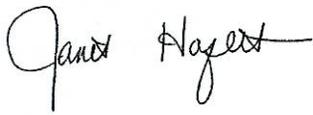
It is unfortunate to speak against yet another piece of legislation that undercuts fair labour relations in this province. We are reaching a point where ad hoc legislation is becoming a normalized part of the collective bargaining process, undermining the true spirit of collective bargaining enshrined in our labour relations legislation. Employees and employers are supposed to meet as equals in collective bargaining as they attempt to achieve workable solutions.

Legislation already in place allows for an arbitration process to determine solutions when an impasse has been reached. This was known by both parties, and is the context in which bargaining has taken place to date. Both sides are forced to appreciate that if they make unreasonable demands, a skilled and impartial arbitrator could decide against them.

The newly proposed regime would in theory grant crown attorneys the opportunity to withdraw their services in order to encourage a solution to the impasse. However, with the requirement of an essential service agreement, a strike would likely have little to no influence on employers. Attorneys are already struggling to keep up with current caseloads and so any essential service agreement is unlikely to allow for a significant reduction in services. An ineffective strike is a strike with no purpose. Clearly, this does not respect their Section 2(d) Charter Rights. Employees will be robbed of the rights that allow them to encourage progress on a negotiated deal. All of the cards will have been given to the employer, and the notion of 'collective' bargaining is replaced with one-sided negotiations. This is unacceptable.

On behalf of the Nurses' Union, I encourage our elected officials to stop interrupting Nova Scotia's collective bargaining regime which has served us well for many years. We have processes in place to ensure fairness for all involved, and these processes should be respected.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Hazelton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Janet Hazelton, BScN, RN, MPA
President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union