



# **Standing Committee on Health**

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*ANNUAL REPORT*

*2020*

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Halifax

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**Legislative  
Committees Office**  
House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

PO Box 2630, Station M  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3P7  
Telephone: (902) 424-4432  
Fax: (902) 424-0513

Honourable Kevin Murphy  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
Province House  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Health, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Committee for the period from September 2019 to August 2020 of the Sixty-Third General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'B' and 'J' followed by a horizontal line.

Ben Jessome, MLA  
Hammonds Plains-Lucasville  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Health

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
2020

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## INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Health, an all-party committee of the House of Assembly, was struck in the Second Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(f) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*:

The Health Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters relative to access to and delivery of health care services.

## MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no more than nine members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to this committee. As of August 31, 2020, membership of the Health Committee was as follows:

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA – Chair  
Lunenburg

Barbara Adams, MLA  
Cole Harbour – Eastern Passage

Keith Irving, MLA – Vice-Chair  
Kings South

Colton LeBlanc, MLA  
Argyle-Barrington

Hon. Margaret Miller, MLA  
Hants East

Susan Leblanc, MLA  
Dartmouth North

Ben Jessome, MLA  
Hammonds Plains - Lucasville

Kendra Coombes, MLA  
Cape Breton Centre

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA  
Clayton Park West

## MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- Colton LeBlanc, MLA replaced Karla MacFarlane, MLA, in September 2019.
- Claudia Chender, MLA was appointed to fill a vacant seat in February, 2020. The committee seat had become vacant earlier that month when Tammy Martin, MLA resigned her seat in the House.
- Kendra Coombes, MLA, replaced Claudia Chender, MLA in May 2020.

- Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA, replaced Hon. Gordon Wilson, MLA, as Chair of the committee in August 2020.
- Keith Irving, MLA, replaced Vice Chair Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA, as Vice-Chair of the committee in August 2020.
- Hon. Margaret Miller, MLA replaced Hon. Gordon Wilson, MLA as a member in August 2020.

## **PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS**

The Health Committee normally meets on the second Tuesday of every month in the Legislative Chamber, Province House, 1726 Hollis Street, Halifax.

Because of physical distancing protocols observed during the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the acting Chair cancelled the April 14 meeting. On April 29, 2020, she announced that all further meetings of this committee were cancelled until further notice.

## **NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS**

### **NOTICES**

Notice of committee meetings are sent to all members of the committee, caucus office staff, legislative staff and Communications Nova Scotia. The notices are also posted in Province House and are on the Nova Scotia Legislature website at the following address:

<http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/calendar>

### **TRANSCRIPTS**

Transcripts of the Health Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office, or on the Health Committee web page at the following address:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/health/archive/health>

### **REPORTS**

All reports of the Standing Committee on Health are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

Distribution of the report is as follows:

To the Speaker and the Clerk of the House of Assembly, committee members, all witnesses who appeared before the committee, the Nova Scotia Legislative Library, caucus offices and the media. This report is available to the general public upon request from the Legislative Committees Office, and is available on the Health Committee web page at the following address: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/health/reports>

## **RESEARCH MATERIAL**

Research material for the Health Committee is compiled by the Legislative Library in consultation with the committee clerk and distributed to members by the committee clerk. Reference material is provided to members and caucus staff prior to the meeting date. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the committee, to the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Reporting Services.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office; Hansard Reporting Services; Legislative Television and Broadcast Services; and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.

# **PUBLIC HEARINGS**



**WITNESSES**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

Dr. Thomas Marrie -- Interim Deputy Minister

Donald Grant -- Senior Executive Director, Physician Services

Jonathan Veale -- Chief Design Officer

Denise MacDonald-Billard -- Project Executive

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Dr. Nicole Boutilier -- Vice President, Medicine

Grayson Fulmer -- Senior Director, VP Medicine Portfolio

Lynn Edwards -- Senior Director, Primary Health Care & Chronic Disease Management

Dr. Maria Alexiadis -- Head, Department of Family Practice

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**Correspondence:**

The committee accepted without comment a letter from Ms. Paula Bond, NSHA, in response to a request for information made at the meeting of May 14, 2019.

The committee accepted without comment a letter from Dr. Marcy Saxe-Braithewaite, NSHA, in response to a request for information made at the meeting of July 9, 2019.

**Agenda-setting:**

An agenda-setting was held. The following motions were made:

**Liberals:**

- Topic number one would be 811 Nova Scotia, witness being Dr. Todd Howlett, Executive Director of 811 from the NSHA. Our second topic we'd like to propose is the Youth Mental Health Outreach Program, the CaperBase Program, witness being Samantha Hodder, Director of Mental Health and Addictions, Eastern Zone, NSHA. We'd like to pick up the walk-in from the Canadian Cancer Society who have written us with respect to youth smoking and vaping. As you know, the Legislature recently worked with them with respect to flavoured cigarettes, and this issue of youth smoking and vaping seems very topical and important. We would like to ask the Canadian Cancer Society and also the Lung Association of Nova Scotia to be witnesses to talk about this very important subject. I would like to move those three topics with the associated witnesses.

- Moved by Keith Irving, MLA
- Motion carried

Progressive Conservatives:

- [T]he first two topics on our list, the pharmacists' role in health care and scope of practice, as well as Doctors Nova Scotia and the ongoing doctor shortage as our two topics.
  - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- [That] we have that topic at the end of the rotation, and it will be the last one that will be heard by the committee.
  - Moved by Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA
  - Amendment carried
  - Amended motion carried

New Democratic Party:

- [C]hildren's oral health, with representatives from the College of Dental Hygienists, and the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness.
  - Moved by Tammy Martin, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- [To] add the witness of Angela Purcell, the dental association executive director, or designate. I would like to move that the additional witness be added to the NDP's motion for the topic of children's oral health.
  - Moved by Keith Irving, MLA
  - Amendment accepted
  - Amended motion passed

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority:

- Is there a hierarchy chart that outlines everybody in the Department of Health and Wellness and where the vacancies might be and everybody in the Nova Scotia Health Authority in administration that we can get our hands on that says this is what everybody does, and this is who they report to? .... An organizational chart for the Department of Health and Wellness, an organizational chart for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and how they interact – as to who reports to who.
- Has the department done any financial analysis or modelling around how much money CEDs can save the health care system by providing primary care in that setting?
- [W]hat is the proportion of CECs that are doing well as compared to those that could be struggling [in terms of closures]?

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20190910.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20190910.pdf)

## WITNESSES

### **811 Program**

Dr. Todd Howlett – Medical Director

Natalia Gallant -- TeleHealth Manager of Quality and Privacy

Wendy Boutilier -- TeleHealth Manager of Operations and Clinical Services

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### Correspondence:

The committee accepted without comment a letter from Dr. David Anderson, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University, in response to requests for information made at the meeting of August 14, 2019.

Barbara Adams, MLA asked about the status of requests for information made at the Sept. 10 meeting: hierarchy charts from both the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The clerk reported she had written to both departments asking for the information.

### Clarification of witnesses for meeting on Children's Oral Health:

- In the September agenda-setting, the NDP had asked for Representatives from the College of Dental Hygienists, and for the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness. The committee approved, along with a Liberal amendment that added "Angela Purcell, the dental association executive director, or designate." Since then, however, the committee has learned Ms. Purcell is in fact the executive director of Pharmaceutical Services & Extended Health Benefits with the Department of Health and Wellness.
  - The committee agreed by consensus to invite Ms. Purcell to the meeting anyway.

### 2019 Annual Report:

The committee considered the annual report for tabling in the House of Assembly. A motion was made:

- To approve and have it sent to the Legislature
  - Moved by Ben Jessome, MLA
  - Motion carried.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was requested and received from the 811 Program:

- What percentage of people calling 811 are without a family doctor?
- How many of the calls are about children versus adults versus seniors?
- Aside from H1N1, what has the trend been in the usage of – you spoke about H1N1 showing a significant increase, but has it been an upward or downward trend?
- How many calls do you receive from non-English speaking clients?
- I'm wondering if you could ... table or send with the other data that you're sending us, the information around how those performances work. What would the annual review entail? What happens if a nurse is not meeting their performance targets? Does their salary go down? Does it stay the same?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20191008.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20191008.pdf)

**YOUTH SMOKING AND VAPING**

**November 12, 2019**

**WITNESSES**

**Canadian Cancer Society**

Kelly Cull -- Advocacy Lead

Rob Cunningham -- Senior Policy Analyst, National Office

**Heart and Stroke**

Pamela Fonseca -- Nova Scotia Health Promotion Manager

**Nova Scotia Lung Association**

Robert MacDonald -- President and CEO

Dr. Mohammed Al-Hamdani -- Director of Health Initiatives; Executive Director, Smoke-Free Nova Scotia

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**Correspondence:**

- Correspondence from Nova Scotia Health Authority
  - Response to request for information made at meeting of Sept. 10, 2019. Accepted without comment.
- Correspondence from Department of Health and Wellness
  - Response to request for information made at meeting of Sept. 10, 2019. Accepted without comment.
- Correspondence from Dr. Todd Howlett, Telecare 811
  - Response to requests for information made at meeting of Oct. 8, 2019. Accepted without comment.
- Correspondence from Duncan Rayner, Temple Scott Associates Ltd.
  - Request from Imperial Tobacco Canada to appear before the committee. Request declined in vote held by email poll Oct 10-15, 2019.
- Correspondence from Jessica Crane, Atlantic Convenience Stores Association
  - Request to appear before the committee on Nov. 12. Request declined in vote held by email poll Nov. 4-6, 2019.

**Motions:**

Barbara Adams, MLA asked that the Department of Health and Wellness, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, continue to send the committee updated organizational charts on a quarterly basis, starting in time for the January 2020 meeting. A motion was made:

- [T]hat the Health Committee request a four-time-a-year update of the organizational charts of the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority and for the clerk to provide that information and make that request.
  - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA
  - Motion passed

## **DOCUMENTATION**

There was no information requested at this meeting.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20191112.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20191112.pdf)

**PHARMACISTS' ROLE IN HEALTH CARE AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

**December 10, 2019**

**WITNESSES**

**Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia**

Allison Bodnar -- Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Curtis Chafe -- Chair of the Board

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**Correspondence:**

- Letter from Rafah DiCostanzo, Chair, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, referring a potential agenda topic to the Health Committee. The committee determined that its next regular agenda-setting was likely to take place on March 10, 2020. A motion was made:
  - That we should not wait for the agenda-setting meeting, that we should add it to the list ... that we would make this topic the April meeting of the Health Committee.
  - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
  - Motion defeated.

A second motion was made:

- To defer this to the agenda-setting meeting.
- Moved by Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA
- Carried.

**Witnesses for January 14, 2020 meeting:**

Because the Department of Health and Wellness may not have a new deputy minister in place by January 14, the committee agreed by consensus that Angela Purcell could represent the department, with her own staff. She is the executive director of pharmaceutical services and extended health benefits.

**DOCUMENTATION**

There was no information requested at this meeting.



## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20191210.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20191210.pdf)

## CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH

January 14, 2020

### WITNESSES

#### **College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia**

Stacy Bryan, RDH -- Registrar

Patricia Grant, RDH -- Former Registrar

Shauna Hachey, RDH -- Assistant Professor, School of Dental Hygiene, Dalhousie University

Dianna Major, RDH -- Dental Hygiene Practice Owner

#### **Department of Health and Wellness**

Jeannine Lagassé -- Acting Deputy Minister

Angela Purcell -- Executive Director, Pharmaceutical Services and Extended Health Benefits

Dr. Ferne Kraglund -- Dental Consultant

### COMMITTEE BUSINESS

#### **Correspondence:**

- The committee received updated organizational charts from the Department of Health and Wellness, with an accompanying request: "In order to ensure we are providing useful information to the Committee, DHW would like to propose that going forward, information on our organizational structure and staffing be provided for the executive leadership team and staff down to the director level. Please let us know if this will satisfy the interests of the Committee or whether more information is required."
  - The committee agreed by consensus to ask the Department of Health and Wellness to continue with the current level of detail in its quarterly organizational charts.
- The committee received updated organizational charts from the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Accepted without comment.

### DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- "Over 500 children are currently waiting to get into the IWK – sorry, I'm not sure if that's the exact number now. Can you tell me if the number of kids waiting and the wait time has improved or declined over the last five years?"

- “In my great year of guiding my daughter through her several extractions, I came to understand that MSI, as the payer of last resort, covers the extractions for children, but does not cover the sedation for children. ... Why is that not covered?”

## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20200114.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20200114.pdf)

## **WITNESSES**

### **Mental Health and Addictions, Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Samantha Hodder -- Senior Director

Ruth Harding -- Director of Policy and Planning

Nadine Wadden -- Eastern Zone Director

Tara MacDonald -- Manager Child and Adolescent Services (Eastern Zone)

Robert Graham -- Northern Zone Director

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **Correspondence:**

The committee discussed a letter received from the Nova Scotia Dental Association (NSDA), which commented on the discussion at the Jan. 14 meeting on Children's Oral Health. Some committee members asked about the NSDA's statement that "we did offer to attend to assist the committee."

Barbara Adams, MLA asked whether the NSDA had asked to appear before the committee. The clerk said this letter was the first correspondence the committee had received from the NSDA, and there was no record of any other communication. The committee agreed by consensus to send a letter to the NSDA asking for clarification.

A motion was made:

- That we take the Nova Scotia Dental Association up on their offer to respond to the 2016 Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia report and recommendations.
  - Made by Barbara Adams, MLA
  - Motion defeated

### **Other committee business:**

The Chair reminded members the committee is due to hold an agenda-setting in its March 10 meeting, and asked each caucus to send its list of proposed topics to the committee clerk by February 27.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was requested and received from Mental Health and Addictions staff of the Nova Scotia Health Authority:

- I'm wondering if someone could provide us a list of the physicians within the NSHA working in child and youth mental health by region and if you can, in those lists, identify any vacancies.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he\\_20200211.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/he/he_20200211.pdf)

# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A - MOTIONS

The following is a list of motions introduced by the Standing Committee on Health:

### September 10, 2019

An agenda-setting was held. The following motions were made:

#### Liberals:

- Topic number one would be 811 Nova Scotia, witness being Dr. Todd Howlett, Executive Director of 811 from the NSHA. Our second topic we'd like to propose is the Youth Mental Health Outreach Program, the CaperBase Program, witness being Samantha Hodder, Director of Mental Health and Addictions, Eastern Zone, NSHA. We'd like to pick up the walk-in from the Canadian Cancer Society who have written us with respect to youth smoking and vaping. As you know, the Legislature recently worked with them with respect to flavoured cigarettes, and this issue of youth smoking and vaping seems very topical and important. We would like to ask the Canadian Cancer Society and also the Lung Association of Nova Scotia to be witnesses to talk about this very important subject. I would like to move those three topics with the associated witnesses.
  - Moved by Keith Irving, MLA
  - Motion carried

#### Progressive Conservatives:

- [T]he first two topics on our list, the pharmacists' role in health care and scope of practice, as well as Doctors Nova Scotia and the ongoing doctor shortage as our two topics.
  - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- [That] we have that topic at the end of the rotation, and it will be the last one that will be heard by the committee.
  - Moved by Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA
  - Amendment carried
  - Amended motion carried

#### New Democratic Party:

- [C]hildren's oral health, with representatives from the College of Dental Hygienists, and the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness.
  - Moved by Tammy Martin, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- [To} add the witness of Angela Purcell, the dental association executive director, or designate. I would like to move that the additional witness be added to the NDP's motion for the topic of children's oral health.
  - Moved by Keith Irving, MLA

- Amendment accepted
- Amended motion passed

### **October 8, 2019**

The committee considered the annual report for tabling in the House of Assembly. A motion was made:

- To approve and have it sent to the Legislature
  - Moved by Ben Jessome, MLA
  - Motion carried.

### **November 12, 2019**

Barbara Adams, MLA asked that the Department of Health and Wellness, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, continue to send the committee updated organizational charts on a quarterly basis, starting in time for the January 2020 meeting. A motion was made:

- [T]hat the Health Committee request a four-time-a-year update of the organizational charts of the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority and for the clerk to provide that information and make that request.
  - Moved by Barbara Adams, MLA
  - Motion passed

### **December 10, 2019**

The committee considered a letter from Rafah DiCostanzo, Chair, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs, referring a potential agenda topic to the Health Committee. The committee determined that its next regular agenda-setting was likely to take place on March 10, 2020. A motion was made:

- That we should not wait for the agenda-setting meeting, that we should add it to the list ... that we would make this topic the April meeting of the Health Committee.
- Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
- Motion defeated.

A second motion was made:

- To defer this to the agenda-setting meeting.
- Moved by Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA
- Carried.

### **February 11, 2020**

The committee discussed a letter received from the Nova Scotia Dental Association (NSDA), which commented on the discussion at the Jan. 14 meeting on Children's Oral Health. ... A motion was made:



- That we take the Nova Scotia Dental Association up on their offer to respond to the 2016 Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia report and recommendations.
  - Made by Barbara Adams, MLA
  - Motion defeated

## APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documents and information requested and received by the Standing Committee on Health:

### September 10, 2019

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority:

- Is there a hierarchy chart that outlines everybody in the Department of Health and Wellness and where the vacancies might be and everybody in the Nova Scotia Health Authority in administration that we can get our hands on that says this is what everybody does, and this is who they report to? .... An organizational chart for the Department of Health and Wellness, an organizational chart for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and how they interact – as to who reports to who.
- Has the department done any financial analysis or modelling around how much money CEDs can save the health care system by providing primary care in that setting?
- [W]hat is the proportion of CECs that are doing well as compared to those that could be struggling [in terms of closures]?

### October 8, 2019

The following information was requested and received from the 811 Program:

- What percentage of people calling 811 are without a family doctor?
- How many of the calls are about children versus adults versus seniors? [Hansard, Page 6]
- Aside from H1N1, what has the trend been in the usage of – you spoke about H1N1 showing a significant increase, but has it been an upward or downward trend?
- How many calls do you receive from non-English speaking clients?
- I'm wondering if you could ... table or send with the other data that you're sending us, the information around how those performances work. What would the annual review entail? What happens if a nurse is not meeting their performance targets? Does their salary go down? Does it stay the same?

### January 14, 2020

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- "Over 500 children are currently waiting to get into the IWK – sorry, I'm not sure if that's the exact number now. Can you tell me if the number of kids waiting and the wait time has improved or declined over the last five years?" [Hansard transcript, Page 7]
- "In my great year of guiding my daughter through her several extractions, I came to understand that MSI, as the payer of last resort, covers the extractions for children, but does not cover the sedation for children. ... Why is that not covered?"

**February 11, 2020**

The following information was requested and received from Mental Health and Addictions staff of the Nova Scotia Health Authority:

- I'm wondering if someone could provide us a list of the physicians within the NSHA working in child and youth mental health by region and if you can, in those lists, identify any vacancies.

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES OFFICE**

**PO Box. 2630, Station M**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia**

**B3J 3P7**

**Telephone: 902-424-4432 or Toll Free 1-888-388-6489**

**Fax: 902-424-0513**

**Email: [legcomm@novascotia.ca](mailto:legcomm@novascotia.ca)**

**Website: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/health>**