



Standing Committee on Health

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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Halifax

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Honourable Karla MacFarlane
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Madam 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 2022 to August 2023 of the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John A. MacDonald'.

John A. MacDonald, MLA, Hants East
Chair
Standing Committee on Health

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2023

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Health, an all-party committee of the House of Assembly, was struck in the First Session of the Sixty-Fourth 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. On August 31, 2023, the membership of the Health Committee was as follows:

Trevor Boudreau, MLA – Chair
Richmond

Hon. Brendan Maguire, MLA
Halifax Atlantic

Kent Smith, MLA – Vice-Chair
Eastern Shore

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA
Clayton Park West

Chris Palmer, MLA
Kings West

Gary Burrill, MLA
Halifax Chebucto

John White, MLA
Glace Bay-Dominion

Susan Leblanc, MLA
Dartmouth North

Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
Chester-St. Margaret's

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

There were no membership changes during this report period.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Health Committee normally meets on the second Tuesday of every month in the Legislative Chamber. Because of renovations at Province House, the committee met in the Legislative Committee Room from December 2022 through August 2023.

The committee agreed to postpone four meetings at the witnesses' request because of extraordinary circumstances: September 29, 2022 because of the aftermath of post-tropical storm Fiona; November 10, 2022 because the witnesses were unavailable and members could not find a new date during the House sitting; March 23, 2023 because witnesses were involved in Budget Day proceedings; June 15, 2023 because of damage caused by the Nova Scotia wildfires.

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

Gender Affirming Care Nova Scotia

- Riley Nielson Baker, Director

Cape Breton Transgender Network

- Veronica Merryfield, Founder

Department of Health and Wellness

- Tanya Penney, Senior Executive Director, Clinical

Office of Addictions and Mental Health

- Dr. Samuel Hickcox, Chief

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members acknowledged receipt of the 2022 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Health. They agreed to accept it as submitted and table it in the next sitting of the House of Assembly. During this discussion, a motion was introduced:

- I move we approve it.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested by the committee and has been received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- “I understood that there was the withdrawal of services from one person who had been providing top surgery. At that time, the minister assured me that there was a medium-term plan, and the fact that folks were quite excited to step into that role. There were these five plastic surgeons. I guess I would ask, and it might be Ms. Penney who would have this answer: Have those plastic surgeons started providing services, including top surgery?” (See Hansard transcript, Page 17.).
- “Mx. Nielson Baker has talked about the need for practitioners who understand how to practice medicine on trans bodies. Will there be any specific training undertaken for folks who are already working in the medical system – awareness training, competence

training for people who are already working in the system?” (Page 27). (At this point, Dr. Hickcox spoke about training for those working specifically in the Mental Health and Addictions Program for the IWK and NSHA. The committee would welcome any other information you can add.)

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

**SURGICAL BACKLOGS AND THE EXTENSION
OF OPERATING ROOM HOURS**

December 13, 2022

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Health

- Karen Oldfield, President and CEO
- Cindy Connolly, Director, Clinical Networks -- Perioperative/Surgical Services (Co-Lead for Surgical Access Initiative)

IWK Health

- Dr. Doug Sinclair, VP Medicine, Quality and Safety

Department of Health and Wellness

- Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister
- Colin Stevenson, Chief, System Integration

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

- Janet Hazelton, President

Doctors Nova Scotia

- Dr. Leisha Hawker, President
- Dr. Andre Bernard, Anesthesiologist and Chair, Board of Directors

Scotia Surgery Inc.

- Dr. Philip Cyr, President and Chief Executive Officer
- Denyse Neville, Surgical Services Manager

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

January meeting date: Members agreed by consensus to move the date of the January 10 meeting to Thursday, January 19, to accommodate the teaching schedule of one of the witnesses.

March meeting date: The Chair noted the committee's regular meeting date of March 14 would fall during the week of Nova Scotia schools' March Break, during which the committee traditionally does not meet. Members agreed by consensus to let the Clerk and the Chair come up with a tentative date based on witness availability, and bring it to the next meeting (Jan. 31) for committee approval.

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

WITNESSES

Department of Health and Wellness

- Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health
- Kathleen Trott, Associate Deputy Minister
- Jennifer Heatley, Executive Director, Public Health

Nova Scotia Health Authority

- Marcia DeSantis, Senior Director of Population and Public Health

Dalhousie University

- Dr. Sara Kirk, Professor, School of Health and Human Performance
- Dr. Katherine Fierlbeck, Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

- Jan. 16, 2023 letter to Chair from MLAs Leblanc and Burrill, requesting additions to Jan. 19 meeting witness list. The Chair noted that the request had not received the unanimous consent required in a poll held Jan. 16-17.
- Jan. 17, 2023 email to Chair from MLA Smith-McCrossin, requesting an urgent meeting. Acknowledged without comment.
- Jan. 17, 2023 email to Chair from Liberal Caucus, stating MLA Maguire's intent to make a motion at that day's meeting. See Motions, below.

Motions:

As per the intention stated in MLA Maguire's Jan. 17, 2023 email (See Correspondence, above), a motion was made:

- Due to the ongoing issues Nova Scotian's are facing with access to Emergency Care in this Province, the Liberal Caucus is making a motion to call an Emergency Meeting with the topic being "Access to Emergency Care" with the following witnesses:
 1. Karen Oldfield – CEO and President Nova Scotia Health Authority
 2. Jeannine Lagassé – Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness
 3. Dr. Kirk Magee – Department Head & NSHA Central Zone Chief; Charles V. Keating Emergency & Trauma Centre

4. Dr. Andrew Lynk – Chair and Chief Pediatrics, IWK Health Centre

This meeting should take place as soon as possible and happen within 7 days of this motion being passed.

- Moved by Hon. Brendan Maguire, MLA
- Motion defeated 5-4 in a recorded vote (Yes: Maguire, DiCostanzo, Burrill, Leblanc; No: Sheehy-Richard, Palmer, White, Barkhouse, Smith)

A second motion was introduced:

Preamble

People across the province are concerned about their ability to access emergency care. This is a years long crisis that has seen renewed urgency since the tragic deaths of Allison Holtoff and Charlene Snow.

The NSGEU represents staff at the Halifax Infirmary, many of whom are at their wits' end.

They came together and assembled a list of 59 straightforward suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary. Some of the suggestions are as simple as replacing the payphone in the waiting room with a free phone that people can use to call family when they're waiting for eight plus hours, or make sure that there is food available at all hours. Others would make a big difference in the recruitment crisis like covering nurse's parking expenses and providing retention bonuses.

Unfortunately, the government has yet to respond to the letter.

- I move that the committee write to the Department of Health and Wellness in support of the staff at the Halifax Infirmary, and ask that the department please provide a written response as soon as possible.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- That the committee write to the Department of Health and Wellness and ask that the department please provide a written response to the letter sent by the NSGEU listing 59 suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary as soon as possible.
 - Moved by John White, MLA
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested by the committee and has been received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- Can someone tell me how many Public Health nurse vacancies there are, and are there other job vacancies in Public Health right now? (See Hansard transcript, Page 19).

The following information was requested by the committee (See Motions, above) and has been received from the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, on behalf of the Minister:

- [A] written response to the letter sent by the NSGEU listing 59 suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary as soon as possible. (See Hansard transcript, pp. 35-37. The amended motion as carried appears near the top of Page 37.)

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

**DELIVERY OF 4.1 HOURS OF CARE PER RESIDENT
IN LONG-TERM CARE**

February 14, 2023

WITNESSES

Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care

- Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister
- Tracey Barbrick, Associate Deputy Minister
- Janet Lynn Huntington, Senior Executive Director
- Michelle MacDonald, Project Director

Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

- Craig Beaton, Associate Deputy Minister, Dept. of Health and Wellness
- Suzanne Ley, Senior Executive Director

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

- Janet Hazelton, President

Canadian Union of Public Employees

- Nan McFadgen, President, Nova Scotia
- Govind Rao, Atlantic Region Research Representative

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

- January 25, 2023 letter from Dept. of Health and Wellness re: public health job vacancies, in response to a request for information made at the Jan. 19 meeting. Accepted without comment.
- February 13, 2023 letter from Dept. of Health and Wellness re: NSGEU's 59 suggestions, in response to a request made at the Jan. 19 meeting. Accepted without comment.

Motions: None

Decisions:

- The Chair announced the clerk had arranged the March meeting for Thursday, March 23, since the regular date of March 14 would fall during the schools' March Break, and March 23 was the only date on which all the witnesses were available. (At the January meeting, the committee had directed the clerk to arrange a date with the witnesses.) It is set for 10:00 to noon, but if the House is sitting the meeting will take place an hour earlier, from 9:00 to 11:00 am, to leave more time before House hours begin. Members agreed by consensus.

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

WITNESSES

None

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence: None

Motions: See agenda-setting, below

Other business:

Potential date for meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities

- Members agreed by consensus to hold the meeting on Thursday afternoon, June 15, 2023, because of witness availability. The clerk has scheduled the meeting for 1:00 to 3:00 pm that day.

Agenda-Setting:

An agenda-setting was held. Members agreed to motions in support of the following:

Progressive Conservative

- Implementation of Additional Mental Health and Addictions Supports. Witnesses: Office of Addictions and Mental Health; Community partners (Note: members agreed the clerk would contact the DM to get suggestions of community partners, and take those suggestions to the committee at a later meeting for discussion and approval.
- Expanded Scope of Pharmacists. Witnesses: Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS); Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.
- Investment in Robotics. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Authority; IWK Health.

Liberal

- EHS Offload Times. Witnesses: Emergency Health Services Nova Scotia (EHS); Dept. of Health and Wellness (DM and appropriate staff); Nova Scotia Paramedics Union, IUOE Loc. 727.

- ER Closures and Doctor Retention. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Authority (Either CEO of Vice-President Medicine); Doctors Nova Scotia (President); Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister, ADM Craig Beaton and Suzanne Ley). Note: The committee passed the motion with an amendment from Kent Smith, MLA that ADM Beaton and Ms. Ley be added to the witness list.

New Democratic Party

- Home Care and Community Care. Witnesses: Victorian Order of Nurses (Regional Executive Director); Dept. of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Deputy Minister); Nova Scotia Nurses' Union (President); Canadian Union of Public Employees (President, NS).

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

WITNESSES

IWK Health

- Dr. Douglas Sinclair, VP Medicine, Quality and Safety

Nova Scotia Health

- Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy, VP Research, Innovation and Discovery, and Chief Nurse Executive
- Eileen MacGibbon, VP Operations, Central Zone
- Dr. Greg Bailly, Physician
- Dr. Gail Darling, Physician
- Nelson Ventura, Director of Innovation
- Dr. Tara Sampalli, Senior Director, Implementation Science and Evaluation, and Global Health Systems Planning, Research, Innovation and Discovery

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

May 4 email from Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister on Health and Wellness, in response to committee's April 18 request for suggestions of community partners to invite as witnesses at the meeting on "Implementation of Additional Mental Health and Addictions Supports," in addition to the Office of Addictions and Mental Health. Deputy Legassé had suggested Star Cunningham, president and CEO of the Mental Health Foundation, and Karn Nichols, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association. This led to a motion:

- I move to add Starr Cunningham, president and CEO of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, and Karn Nichols, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, to the PC topic of Implementation of Additional Mental Health and Addictions Supports.
 - Moved by Kent Smith, MLA
 - Motion carried

May 5 email from Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister on Health and Wellness, volunteering suggestions for witnesses on some of the other topics on the committee's agenda.

- The committee agreed by consensus to remain with its original witness choices, as approved in the April 11 agenda-setting.

Motions: None

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested from the Nova Scotia Health Authority. As of August 31, 2023, no reply has been received:

- Speaking of innovation, I want to talk about the website that the Progressive Conservative government promised that would track in real time the number of surgeries taking place in a day, what types of surgeries, how are the numbers, how the wait-lists have been impacted on a daily basis. It seems like we have some of that in place now with the Action for Health. It shows the numbers of surgeries performed each day and week, but not the other information that was promised.
I'm wondering if anyone can speak to that - if that information will be added to the system or to the website, and when. [See Hansard transcript, Pages 24-25]
- I wanted to know about wait times. It was reported recently that around 22,000 people are waiting for surgery. I'm wondering if we know what that number is today. [Hansard, Page 26]

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

WITNESSES

Department of Health and Wellness

- Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister
- Jeff Fraser, Executive Director, Emergency Health Services

Emergency Medical Care Inc.

- Charbel Daniel, Executive Director, Provincial Operations

Nova Scotia Health Authority

- Dr. Tanya Munroe, Co-Lead, Access and Flow Network

International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE), Local 727

- Kevin MacMullin, Business Manager

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

None.

Motions:

The preamble to an NDP motion circulated to members before the meeting included the statement: “The health care context has changed significantly since the last audit of a previous Emergency Health Services contract, and the Province’s relationship with EMCI needs to be reevaluated in this new context.” A motion was introduced:

- I move that the Health Committee write a letter to the Office of the Auditor General in support of an audit of our province’s Emergency Health Services contract with Emergency Medical Care Inc.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA

Some discussion followed, during which Chris Palmer, MLA read from the Auditor General’s website, noting that the AG’s office will produce an audit on Sept. 26 “to determine if ground ambulance services are meeting the needs of Nova Scotians in a cost-effective manner.” It was suggested that the committee wait until that audit was released, to see whether the EMCI contract was adequately covered.

- Motion withdrawn with unanimous consent

A motion was introduced:

- I move on behalf of the Health Committee that we write to the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and NSHA on how many family doctors have retired in the last 12 months, and how many family doctors - not total physicians - have been hired in the last 12 months.
 - Moved by Brendan Maguire, MLA
 - Motion defeated 4-5 in a recorded vote. YEAS: Leblanc, Lachance, Churchill, Maguire; NAYS: Smith, Palmer, White, Barkhouse, Boudreau

Other Business:

- The committee agreed by consensus to a request from Lindsay Peach, director of Tajikeymik and the main witness for the meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities, that the October meeting be held on Thursday, October 19.
 - It was noted that if the House of Assembly is sitting on that date, the committee meeting would have to be held in the morning.
 - This tentative date would still depend on whether the other witnesses were available.
- Susan Leblanc, MLA noted for the record that the August 8 meeting was scheduled for the same day as the recently announced by-election in Preston. There was no further discussion on the matter.

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

The following documents were read from and tabled during the meeting:

- Emergency Health Services tables listing monthly “Average Offload Interval (Minutes) By Facility” from April 2019 to March 2023 (Submitted by Hon. Zach Churchill, MLA)
- A letter to the Premier signed electronically by 39 emergency physicians at the Charles V. Keating Emergency and Trauma Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia (Submitted by Hon. Zach Churchill, MLA)
- News release from CAEP’s Advocacy Public Affairs Committee: “Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians Expresses Concerns Over Summer Closures of Emergency Departments Across Canada.” (Submitted by Susan Leblanc, MLA)
- A printout of the “Reports in Progress” page from the office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia (Submitted by Chris Palmer, MLA)

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

WITNESSES

Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia

- Allison Bodnar, CEO

Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists

- Beverley Zwicker, CEO and Registrar

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence: None. The Chair noted that the committee had received an email from a member of the public over the long weekend, but because of the short notice he suggested it be deferred to the Sept. 12 agenda. Members agreed.

Motions: None

Other Business:

- Members agreed unanimously to a request from Lindsay Peach, Executive Director of Tajikeimik that, if necessary, one or more of her team may participate via Zoom at the Oct. 19 meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities.

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

TRANSCRIPT:

A link to a transcript of this meeting can be found at:

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

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - MOTIONS

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

October 11, 2022

Members acknowledged receipt of the 2022 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Health. They agreed to accept it as submitted and table it in the next sitting of the House of Assembly. During this discussion, a motion was introduced:

- I move we approve it.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Motion carried

January 19, 2023

As per the intention stated in MLA Maguire's Jan. 17, 2023 email, a motion was made:

- Due to the ongoing issues Nova Scotians are facing with access to Emergency Care in this Province, the Liberal Caucus is making a motion to call an Emergency Meeting with the topic being "Access to Emergency Care" with the following witnesses:
 - Karen Oldfield – CEO and President Nova Scotia Health Authority
 - Jeannine Lagassé – Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness
 - Dr. Kirk Magee – Department Head & NSHA Central Zone Chief; Charles V. Keating Emergency & Trauma Centre
 - Dr. Andrew Lynk – Chair and Chief Pediatrics, IWK Health Centre

This meeting should take place as soon as possible and happen within 7 days of this motion being passed.

- Moved by Hon. Brendan Maguire, MLA
- Motion defeated 5-4 in a recorded vote (Yes: Maguire, DiCostanzo, Burrill, Leblanc; No: Sheehy-Richard, Palmer, White, Barkhouse, Smith)

A second motion was introduced:

Preamble

People across the province are concerned about their ability to access emergency care. This is a years long crisis that has seen renewed urgency since the tragic deaths of Allison Holtoff and Charlene Snow.

The NSGEU represents staff at the Halifax Infirmary, many of whom are at their wits' end.

They came together and assembled a list of 59 straightforward suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary. Some of the suggestions are as simple as replacing the payphone in the waiting room with a free phone that people can use to call family when they're waiting for eight plus hours, or make sure that there is food available at all hours. Others would

make a big difference in the recruitment crisis like covering nurse's parking expenses and providing retention bonuses.

Unfortunately, the government has yet to respond to the letter.

- I move that the committee write to the Department of Health and Wellness in support of the staff at the Halifax Infirmary, and ask that the department please provide a written response as soon as possible.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- That the committee write to the Department of Health and Wellness and ask that the department please provide a written response to the letter sent by the NSGEU listing 59 suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary as soon as possible.
 - Moved by John White, MLA
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

April 11, 2023

An agenda-setting was held. Members agreed to motions in support of the following:

Progressive Conservative

- Implementation of Additional Mental Health and Addictions Supports. Witnesses: Office of Addictions and Mental Health; Community partners (Note: members agreed the clerk would contact the DM to get suggestions of community partners, and take those suggestions to the committee at a later meeting for discussion and approval.)
- Expanded Scope of Pharmacists. Witnesses: Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS); Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.
- Investment in Robotics. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Authority; IWK Health.

Liberal

- EHS Offload Times. Witnesses: Emergency Health Services Nova Scotia (EHS); Dept. of Health and Wellness (DM and appropriate staff); Nova Scotia Paramedics Union, IUOE Loc. 727.
- ER Closures and Doctor Retention. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Authority (Either CEO of Vice-President Medicine); Doctors Nova Scotia (President); Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister, ADM Craig Beaton and Suzanne Ley). Note: The committee

passed the motion with an amendment from Kent Smith, MLA that ADM Beaton and Ms. Ley be added to the witness list.)

New Democratic Party

- Home Care and Community Care. Witnesses: Victorian Order of Nurses (Regional Executive Director); Dept. of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Deputy Minister); Nova Scotia Nurses' Union (President); Canadian Union of Public Employees (President, NS).

July 11, 2023

The preamble to an NDP motion circulated to members before the meeting included the statement: "The health care context has changed significantly since the last audit of a previous Emergency Health Services contract, and the Province's relationship with EMCI needs to be reevaluated in this new context." A motion was introduced:

- I move that the Health Committee write a letter to the Office of the Auditor General in support of an audit of our province's Emergency Health Services contract with Emergency Medical Care Inc.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA

Some discussion followed, during which Chris Palmer, MLA read from the Auditor General's website, noting that the AG's office will produce an audit on Sept. 26 "to determine if ground ambulance services are meeting the needs of Nova Scotians in a cost-effective manner." It was suggested that the committee wait until that audit was released, to see whether the EMCI contract was adequately covered.

- Motion withdrawn with unanimous consent

A motion was introduced:

- I move on behalf of the Health Committee that we write to the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and NSHA on how many family doctors have retired in the last 12 months, and how many family doctors - not total physicians - have been hired in the last 12 months.
 - Moved by Brendan Maguire, MLA
 - Motion defeated 4-5 in a recorded vote. YEAS: Leblanc, Lachance, Churchill, Maguire; NAYS: Smith, Palmer, White, Barkhouse, Boudreau

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

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

October 11, 2022

The following information was requested by the committee and has been received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- “I understood that there was the withdrawal of services from one person who had been providing top surgery. At that time, the minister assured me that there was a medium-term plan, and the fact that folks were quite excited to step into that role. There were these five plastic surgeons. I guess I would ask, and it might be Ms. Penney who would have this answer: Have those plastic surgeons started providing services, including top surgery?” (See Hansard transcript, Page 17.).
- “Mx. Nielson Baker has talked about the need for practitioners who understand how to practice medicine on trans bodies. Will there be any specific training undertaken for folks who are already working in the medical system – awareness training, competence training for people who are already working in the system?” (Page 27). (At this point, Dr. Hickcox spoke about training for those working specifically in the Mental Health and Addictions Program for the IWK and NSHA. The committee would welcome any other information you can add.)

January 19, 2023

The following information was requested by the committee and has been received from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- Can someone tell me how many Public Health nurse vacancies there are, and are there other job vacancies in Public Health right now? (See Hansard transcript, Page 19).

The following information was requested by the committee (See Motions, above) and has been received from the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, on behalf of the Minister:

- [A] written response to the letter sent by the NSGEU listing 59 suggestions to improve emergency care at the Halifax Infirmary as soon as possible. (See Hansard transcript, pp. 35-37. The amended motion as carried appears near the top of Page 37.)

May 9, 2023

The following information was requested from the Nova Scotia Health Authority. As of August 31, 2023, no reply has been received:

- Speaking of innovation, I want to talk about the website that the Progressive Conservative government promised that would track in real time the number of surgeries taking place in a day, what types of surgeries, how are the numbers, how the wait-lists have been impacted on a daily basis. It seems like we have some of that in place now with the Action for Health. It shows the numbers of surgeries performed each day and week, but not the other information that was promised.
I'm wondering if anyone can speak to that - if that information will be added to the system or to the website, and when. [See Hansard transcript, Pages 24-25]
- I wanted to know about wait times. It was reported recently that around 22,000 people are waiting for surgery. I'm wondering if we know what that number is today. [Hansard, Page 26]

July 11, 2023

The following documents were read from and tabled during the meeting:

- Emergency Health Services tables listing monthly "Average Offload Interval (Minutes) By Facility" from April 2019 to March 2023 (Submitted by Hon. Zach Churchill, MLA)
- A letter to the Premier signed electronically by 39 emergency physicians at the Charles V. Keating Emergency and Trauma Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia (Submitted by Hon. Zach Churchill, MLA)
- News release from CAEP's Advocacy Public Affairs Committee: "Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians Expresses Concerns Over Summer Closures of Emergency Departments Across Canada." (Submitted by Susan Leblanc, MLA)
- A printout of the "Reports in Progress" page from the office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia (Submitted by Chris Palmer, MLA)

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