



Standing Committee on Health

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

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Halifax

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Honourable Danielle Barkhouse
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 2023 to August 2024 of the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John A. MacDonald".

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

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2024

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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, 2024, the membership of the Health Committee was as follows:

John A. MacDonald, MLA – Chair
Hants East

Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
Bedford Basin

Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
Chester-St. Margaret's

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

Nolan Young, MLA
Shelburne

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- John A. MacDonald replaced Hon. Trevor Boudreau as member and Chair in September 2023.
- Danielle Barkhouse continued as a member and replaced Hon. Kent Smith as Vice Chair in September 2023.
- Nolan Young replaced Hon. Kent Smith as member in September 2023.
- Hon. Kelly Regan replaced Hon. Brendan Maguire as member in October 2023.

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 held most of its meetings in the Legislative Committee Room during this reporting period. Because of flood damage in the Legislative Committee Room, the meetings of March 19 and April 9, 2024 were held in the Red Chamber at Province House.

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

**IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL MENTAL
HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SUPPORTS**

September 12, 2023

WITNESSES

Office of Addictions and Mental Health

- Kathleen Trott, Associate Deputy Minister
- Francine Vezina, Executive Director

Nova Scotia Health

- Dana Pulsifer, Senior Director, Mental Health and Addictions

IWK Health

- Maureen Brennan, Director, Mental Health and Addictions

Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia

- Starr Cunningham, President and CEO

Canadian Mental Health Association – Nova Scotia Division

- Karn Nichols, Executive Director

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

Members acknowledged receipt of August 6 and August 16 emails from Matt Casey, re: “Nova Scotia Health Using Dirty Surgical Instruments on Patients.” A motion was made:

- That the Standing Committee on Health write a letter through you, Mr. Chair, to the Department of Health and Wellness requesting an update on the concerns outlined in the correspondence from Matt Casey.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested, other than that described in MLA Palmer’s motion, above.

TRANSCRIPT:

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

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

WITNESSES

Tajikeimik - Mi'kmaw Health and Wellness

- Lindsay Peach, Executive Director
- Sharon Rudderham, Director, Health Transformation (appearing virtually)

Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia Health Directors Committee

- Juliana Julian, Co-Chair; Health Director, Paqtnkek First Nation
- Elaine Allison, Co-Chair; Health Director, Wagmatcook First Nation

Nova Scotia Health

- Dr. Andrew Harris, Senior Medical Director, Mental Health and Addictions
- Nadine Wadden, Eastern Zone Mental Health and Addictions Director

IWK Health

- Maureen Brennan, Director, Mental Health and Addictions
- Dr. Alexa Bagnell, Chief of Psychiatry

Office of Addictions and Mental Health

- Francine Vezina, Executive Director

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

Letter from Minister of Health and Wellness in response to committee request during Sept. 12 meeting, arising from correspondence from Matt Casey. Accepted without comment.

Oct. 18 email from Strongest Families Institute. Accepted without comment

Motions:

Members acknowledged receipt of the 2023 Annual Report. A motion was introduced:

- That the standing committee ... accept the 2023 Annual Report as circulated, and that the Chair table it to the House of Assembly.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

Members discussed information presented by witnesses earlier in the meeting. A motion was introduced:

- I move that the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and encourage them, as a starting point, to each appoint - each of the health authorities to appoint a Mi'kmaw adviser to the executive team of those health systems.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- What I'd like to propose is requesting a letter from the Department of Health and Wellness asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed today - highlighting what we heard but asking for an update from what they're already doing about this.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA

Meeting time ended before members could vote. Motion and amendment remained on the table for consideration at a future meeting.

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

Victorian Order of Nurses Canada

- Jeff Densmore, Regional Executive Director, Central Western Zones
- Carol Curley, Regional Executive Director, North Eastern Zones

Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care

- Tracey Barbrick, Deputy Minister

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

- Janet Hazelton, President

Canadian Union of Public Employees

- Nan McFadgen, President - NS

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions:

Members discussed a motion and amendment still on the table after being introduced at the Oct. 19, 2023 meeting:

- I move that the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard [today] about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and encourage them, as a starting point, to each appoint - each of the health authorities to appoint a Mi'kmaw adviser to the executive team of those health systems.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

An amendment had been proposed:

- What I'd like to propose is requesting a letter from the Department of Health and Wellness asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed today - highlighting what we heard but asking for an update from what they're already doing about this.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Amendment carried

Meeting time elapsed before the committee could vote on the amended motion, or agree on its wording. Members agreed to bring proposed wording of the amended motion to the December meeting for a vote.

Other Business:

March meeting date: Members agreed by consensus to meet from 10:00 to noon on Tuesday, March 19, so as not to meet during the schools' March Break. If the House is sitting on March 19, the committee will meet from 9:00 to 11:00 am.

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

Nova Scotia Health

- Karen Oldfield, President and CEO
- Dr. Nicole Boutilier, Vice-President, Medicine

Doctors Nova Scotia

- Dr. Colin Audain, President

Department of Health and Wellness

- Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister
- Craig Beaton, Associate Deputy Minister

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions:

Members discussed an amended motion on the table. The original motion had been made at the October 19 meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities. An amendment was carried at the November 14 meeting, and in the last few minutes of that meeting, members decided to agree on a more precise wording of the amended motion and vote on it at the December 12 meeting. By general consensus, the amended motion reads as:

- That the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed.
 - Motion carried

With reference to discussion with witnesses at the November 14 meeting on Home Care and Community Care, a motion was introduced:

- I move that the Health Committee direct the Chair of the committee to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care outlining what we heard at last month's meeting. The letter should note that we understand next year's budget is being prepared, and we want to bring these recommendations made by our witnesses directly to the minister's attention. This letter should outline the committee heard compelling cases made for the following improvements to the system, specifically that:

- 1) To improve the health and safety of Nova Scotia's home care workers and clients, timely in-person home assessments should be completed prior to initial care visits. Those first home care visits should be performed by a team of two home care workers. Until such time as cell service is extended to the entire province, in areas where cell phone service is currently non-existent or unreliable, tracking tags be provided so the locations of workers are known to their employers. Nurse practitioners be hired to ensure clients receiving home care who are not attached to a family practice can receive the timely health care they need. An increase to the budget of AWARE-NS be included in the upcoming budget.
- 2) To improve retention and to ensure the home care system is not being underwritten financially by our home care workers: home care providers - companies and organizations - be required to schedule and pay for continuous hours of work to those workers providing this care; an increase to the vehicle allowance be provided to home care workers using their own vehicles to ferry them to each home care client location.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

A motion was made:

- To table this until the next meeting.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

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

- If I could get the number of physicians who have reduced their practices - I think we would need to see the data. There's a reduction. It's a big difference to have somebody reducing their practice hours by 10 per cent versus somebody who's doing it 50 per cent.

The following information was requested and received from Nova Scotia Health:

- Unfortunately, the most recently released data on physician vacancies, physician hiring, and ER closures is well over a year old. I'm wondering if someone can provide up-to-date numbers for these different categories for the past month. How many physician vacancies are there currently in emergency departments, and how many emergency physicians have been hired, i.e., net increase for the last month?
- The other number I was wondering about was how many physicians have been hired through the Come Home to Nova Scotia campaign in the last month.

Tabled Documents:

- “Doctors Nova Scotia’s New President Wants to Stabilize Family Practice,” Dalhousie Alumni Spotlight (Emailed to clerk by PC Caucus on behalf of Nolan Young, MLA)
- Letter from Dr. Nicolae Botan to patient, informing them practice is closing (Hard copy provided by Liberal Caucus on behalf of Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA)
- “How Houston Government Threw Gas on Halifax Doctor Shortage Fire” – Paul Schneidereit, Saltwire Publishing (Hard copy provided by Liberal Caucus on behalf of Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA)
- Transcript of Facebook post by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, on Doctor Waitlist (Emailed to clerk by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, on behalf of Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA, who read aloud from it during the 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

Agenda-Setting:

An agenda-setting was held. After some discussion, motions for the following were carried. (Motions and amendments may be paraphrased):

1st PC topic:

- Long-Term Care Builds: Impact and Approach. Witnesses: Dept. of SLTC; Mountain Lead Lodge Administrator OR Queens Manor Administrator; Reps from GEM Health Care Group OR Shannex.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

1st Liberal topic:

- Links Between Health Outcomes and Lack of Safe Affordable Housing. Witnesses: Deputy Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Health and Wellness, and Community Services; Representatives from the North End Community Health Centre and Adsum for Women and Children.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
- Amendment: to replace Deputy Ministers with representatives from each department.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

2nd PC topic:

- Withdrawal Management Services. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health (Dana Pulsifer, Senior Director, Mental Health and Addictions Program); Office of Addictions and Mental Health (Deputy Minister and representatives – Dr. Samuel Hickcox, if available); Ally Centre of Cape Breton and/or Direction 180.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

NDP topic:

- Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health CEO), Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister), Nova Scotia Health Coalition (Executive Director), NSGEU (Representatives) and CUPE (Representatives)
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
- Amendment: to change the topic title to Public-Private Partnerships in Health Care, to change the specified witnesses to representatives of each department or organization, and to add three organizations: Doctors Nova Scotia, PANS and the Nova Scotia Dental Association
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Sub-amendment: To drop CUPE and the Dental Association from the witness list, simply to keep numbers more manageable
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Sub-amendment carried
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

3rd PC topic:

- Cancer Screening Programs. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Cancer Care Program (Dr. Helmut Hollenhorst, Senior Medical Director and Jill Flinn, Executive Director); IWK Health (Anne Yuill, Breast Screening Program); Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine (Dr. Sîan Iles, Dept. of Diagnostic Radiology)
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

2nd Liberal topic:

- Impacts of the Labour Shortage on the Health Care System. Witnesses: NSNU (President); Doctors Nova Scotia (President); Nova Scotia Health (CEO); Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister); Paramedics Union, IUOE 727.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
- Amendment: New witness list, same as original except for changing the Nova Scotia Health witness from CEO to Representatives, and replacing DM of Health and Wellness with Representatives from the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Sub-amendment 1: To include the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, instead of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

Chair ruled sub-amendment 1 out of order

- Sub-amendment 2: To include the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, in addition to the witnesses named in the amendment
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Sub-amendment 2 defeated
 - Amendment carried

- Amended motion carried

Other Business:

Members discussed a motion still on the table. It had been made at the Dec. 12, 2023 meeting, with reference to discussion with witnesses at the November 14 meeting on Home Care and Community Care, and deferred until January to give members time to consider it:

- I move that the Health Committee direct the Chair of the committee to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care outlining what we heard at last month's meeting. The letter should note that we understand next year's budget is being prepared, and we want to bring these recommendations made by our witnesses directly to the minister's attention. This letter should outline the committee heard compelling cases made for the following improvements to the system, specifically that:
 - 1) To improve the health and safety of Nova Scotia's home care workers and clients, timely in-person home assessments should be completed prior to initial care visits. Those first home care visits should be performed by a team of two home care workers. Until such time as cell service is extended to the entire province, in areas where cell phone service is currently non-existent or unreliable, tracking tags be provided so the locations of workers are known to their employers. Nurse practitioners be hired to ensure clients receiving home care who are not attached to a family practice can receive the timely health care they need. An increase to the budget of AWARE-NS be included in the upcoming budget.
 - 2) To improve retention and to ensure the home care system is not being underwritten financially by our home care workers: home care providers - companies and organizations - be required to schedule and pay for continuous hours of work to those workers providing this care; an increase to the vehicle allowance be provided to home care workers using their own vehicles to ferry them to each home care client location.
- Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
- Motion defeated

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>

**LONG-TERM CARE BUILDS:
IMPACT AND APPROACH**

February 13, 2024

WITNESSES

Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care

- Tracey Barbrick, Deputy Minister
- Paula Langille, Executive Director of Infrastructure

Mountains and Meadows Care Group

- Joyce d'Entremont, CEO

GEM Health Care Group Ltd.

- Mahmood Hussain, Director of People Relations

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Witness at March 19 meeting: Members agreed by consensus to a request from Doctors Nova Scotia that past president Dr. Leisha Hawker represent the organization, if current president Dr. Colin Audain, the approved witness, is required in the operating room that day.

Correspondence:

January 18, 2024 email from the office of Deputy Minister Byron Rafuse, re: participation of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing in a meeting on “Links Between Health Outcomes and Lack of Safe Affordable Housing.”

- Members agreed that representatives of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing should be required to attend that meeting, whenever it is scheduled.

January 24, 2024 letter from the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health in response to requests for information made at December 12, 2023 meeting on ER Closures and Doctor Retention

- The committee asked the clerk to follow up with the department and ask for information covering a broader timeframe.

January 24, 2024 letter from the Minister of Health and Wellness, and CEOs of IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health, in response to a request for information made at the December 12 meeting, arising from discussion at the October 19 meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities. Accepted without comment.

February 7, 2024 letter from Sandra Mullen, President of NSGEU, re: inclusion in meetings on issues affecting NSGEU members. In the discussion that followed, a motion was introduced:

- I move that we receive this very reasonable criticism in Sandra Mullen's correspondence, and we undertake as a committee to rectify it in the future.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion defeated

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care:

- We heard there's about a 10 per cent vacancy across the sector. Can you give us an idea of how many positions that is in each of these health care categories: nurses, LPNs, CCAs?
- I'm thinking of the 2,500 new rooms that were proposed, those that are involving new construction. What is the balance between for-profit facilities and not-for-profit facilities, approximately - provincially?

TRANSCRIPT

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

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

**IMPACTS OF THE LABOUR SHORTAGE
ON THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

March 19, 2024

WITNESSES

Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

- Craig Beaton, Associate Deputy Minister, Dept. of Health and Wellness

Nova Scotia Health

- Dr. Annette Elliott Rose, Chief Nurse Executive and Vice-President of Clinical Performance and Professional Practice

Doctors Nova Scotia

- Dr. Leisha Hawker, Past President

Nova Scotia Paramedics Union (IUOE Local 727)

- Kevin MacMullin, Business Manager

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

- Janet Hazelton, President

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

February 23, 2024 email from Nova Scotia Health, in response to a request for additional information made at the Feb. 13 meeting, following up on a reply to a request from the Dec. 12 meeting on "ER Closures and Doctor Retention." Accepted without comment.

Undated letter (forwarded Feb. 26, 2024) from the Deputy Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care in response to two requests for information made at the Feb. 13 meeting on "Long-Term Care Builds: Impact and Approach." Accepted without comment.

March 13, 2024 letter from Sandra Mullin, President of NSGEU, re: the witness list for today's meeting. See "Motions," below.

Motions:

At the beginning of the meeting, after witness introductions, Susan Leblanc, MLA, noted that

observers in the room included Sandra Mullen, President of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union. A motion was introduced:

- That this committee amend our witness list for today’s meeting so that we can add NSGEU and Ms. Mullen to the witness list so that we’re able to hear from the representatives on behalf of the NSGEU members in the province.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Motion defeated

Members discussed the March 13 letter from NSGEU President Sandra Mullen (See “Correspondence,” above) and a similar letter of February 7, re: inclusion in meetings on issues affecting NSGEU members. A motion was introduced:

- I would move that an explanation of the agenda-setting process and the witness selection practice of the committee be included, as well as a link to the January 9th Hansard report and the April 11, 2023 Hansard report highlighting the motion related to the topics that affected them, and that the Chair write a letter with those elements involved.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Meeting time ended before members could vote. Motion to remain on the table for consideration at a future meeting.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment:

- We recently received a FOIPOP back that indicates there were already 31 physician departures in the first six weeks of this year here in Nova Scotia. That means we’re well beyond halfway to last year’s number of 50 departures. Could we get a regional breakdown of where those physician losses were?

The following information was requested and received from IUOE 727, the Paramedics Union:

- Can you provide the number of paramedics who have both exited and entered the profession in the past year?

TRANSCRIPT

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

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

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Health – Mental Health and Addictions Program

- Dana Pulsifer, Senior Director
- Janah Fair, Director, Northern Zone
- Dr. David Martell, Physician Lead, Addictions Medicine

Office of Addictions and Mental Health

- Kathleen Trott, Deputy Minister
- Dr. Samuel Hickcox, Physician Consultant

Direction 180

- Paula Martin, Program Manager

Ally Centre of Cape Breton

- Jill Gardiner, Manager, Managed Alcohol Program

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

March 19, 2024 letter from Paramedics Union President Kevin MacMullin, in response to a request for information made at the March 19 meeting on "Impacts of the Labour Shortage on the Health Care System."

- Accepted without comment.

Motion still on the table:

At the March 19 meeting, members discussed correspondence received from the Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union (NSGEU) re: the witness list for that day's meeting. A motion was introduced, but meeting time ended before the motion could be put to a vote, so it was carried over to the April 9 meeting:

- I would move that an explanation of the agenda-setting process and the witness selection practice of the committee be included, as well as a link to the January 9th Hansard report and the April 11, 2023 Hansard report highlighting the motion related to the topics that affected them, and that the chair write a letter with those elements involved.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No further requests for information were made at this meeting.

Tabled Document:

Lisa Lachance, MLA, tabled the 2023-24 Government Business Plan document “More Healthcare, Faster,” from which they had read while questioning a witness.

TRANSCRIPT

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

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

WITNESSES

Nova Scotia Health

- Derek Spinney, Vice-President of Corporate Services, Infrastructure, Chief Financial Officer

Department of Health and Wellness

- Kim Barro, Associate Deputy Minister
- Colin Stevenson, Chief, System Integration

Nova Scotia Health Coalition

- Alexandra Rose, Provincial Coordinator

Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union

- Sandra Mullen, President

Doctors Nova Scotia

- Dr. Colin Audain, President

Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia

- Allison Bodnar, Chief Executive Officer

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

April 26, 2024 letter from the Department of Health and Wellness, written in response to a request for information made to the Office of Health Care Professionals Recruitment during the meeting of March 19. Accepted without comment, except for MLA DiCostanzo's thanks to the clerk.

Other Business:

July 9 meeting witnesses: Because some witnesses may be unavailable for a meeting on Cancer Screening Programs on this date, the committee agreed by consensus to a request for alternate witnesses to represent Nova Scotia Health's Cancer Care Program at this meeting, if necessary.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from Nova Scotia Health:

- Does the department track not just downloads, of course, but use [of the YourHealthNS app]? Do we know, you know, 20 per cent of users are using it X number of minutes per day? Do we have that kind of data? And if we do, what does that look like, generally speaking?
- Do we have any figures of what have been used up to the announcements of the cap [on travel nurses' hours]? Since then, what is the reduction in the dollar value that we have seen?
- Can you table that information, the data that you're referencing? Is there something that you can table? That is interesting to me. Do we know for sure that because somebody went to a pharmacy clinic, they didn't go to the emergency? Do we have numbers on drops? I wasn't aware that our number of visits to emergency rooms had dropped substantially since these programs have opened, so I'd love to see that data.
- I'm wondering if the department or the Nova Scotia Health Authority has developed any metrics to ensure effectiveness. What are all the things you're looking at to know that this is working, basically?

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:

May 29, 2024 email from Theresa Cunningham, Strongest Families Institute, re: “Nova Scotia Standing Committee – Health – Witness Opportunity.” After some discussion about how best to deal with outside requests to appear at meetings, members advised the clerk to ensure the applicants understand the committee’s agenda-setting procedure. Referring them to individual members or caucuses was suggested.

May 31, 2024 letter from Colton Profitt, Mental Health Commission of Canada, re: “MHCC – NS Health Standing Committee Presentation Request.” Accepted without comment.

June 5, 2024 email from Marie Kavanaugh re: “AI Empowers Early Diagnoses: How Artificial Intelligence is Helping Physicians Diagnose Skin Cancer” and accompanying June 6 email from Aimee Levy, “Melanoma Early Detection Funding.” Accepted without comment.

Agenda-Setting:

An agenda-setting was held. As it began, Gary Burrill, MLA, noted that the third NDP topic was very similar to the first Liberal topic. A motion was introduced:

- That we amend the proposed witness sheet we have in front of us by, in the final NDP proposal, moving the bottom two proposed witnesses – the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network – up to the top Liberal proposal, which is the Protection of Health Data, and then remove from this sheet the NDP proposal Access to the Protection of Personal Health Information.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion carried

After Chris Palmer, MLA, made a motion to carry all three of the proposed PC topics, a motion was introduced:

- That we separate these topics. We have concerns about some of them.
 - Moved by Kelly Regan, MLA

- Motion carried unanimously. Original motion was withdrawn from the table with unanimous consent of the committee, and each of the PC topics was introduced as a separate motion. The Chair noted for the record that the original motion and MLA Regan's motion were both in order.

After some further discussion, motions for the following were carried. (The following motions and amendments may be paraphrased.):

1st PC topic:

- Promoting Physical Activity. Witnesses: Representatives from the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation, and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- An amendment was proposed to add the Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Amendment defeated
 - Motion carried

2nd PC Topic:

- Integrated Youth Services. Witnesses: Representatives from the IWK Health Centre, Integrated Youth Services New Glasgow, Integrated Youth Services Halifax YMCA.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried.

[Note: Members agreed by consensus that this topic would be scheduled at the end of the roster, because the programs are not expected to be operating until January 2025.]

3rd PC Topic:

- Advancing Diabetes Care. Witnesses: Representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health Authority, the IWK Health Centre and Diabetes Canada (formerly called the Canadian Diabetes Association).
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

[Note: An earlier motion had been carried, in which Diabetes Canada was not included as a witness. Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, had proposed an amendment to add Diabetes Canada, and it was defeated. Later in the meeting, the original motion was rescinded with unanimous consent of the committee, and the above motion including Diabetes Canada was carried.]

1st Liberal topic:

- Protection of Health Data. Witnesses: Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness, CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Deputy Minister of the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried

2nd Liberal topic:

- The Status of Surgeries in Nova Scotia. Witnesses: Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness, CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Doctors Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, and President of NSGEU.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried

[Note: Members had defeated an earlier motion by MLA Regan that the second Liberal topic be Reasons for Doctors Exiting the Nova Scotia Health System.]

NDP topic:

- Barrier-Free Access to Contraception for Nova Scotians. Witnesses: Access Now Nova Scotia, the North End Community Health Centre, a representative from Wellness Within, the clinical director from the ROSE Clinic, and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
- An amendment was proposed: that a representative of the Halifax Sexual Health Centre be added to the witness list.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

DOCUMENTATION

No further information was requested at this meeting.

Tabled document:

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA, tabled a document from which both she and Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, had read aloud: An April 10, 2024 news release from the Office of Addictions and Mental Health entitled "Youth Mental Health Sites Announced."

TRANSCRIPT

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

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

WITNESSES:

Nova Scotia Health Cancer Care Program:

- Dr. Helmut Hollenhorst, Senior Medical Director
- Dr. Robert Grimshaw, Medical Director, Cervical Cancer Screening
- Krista Rigby, Director, Population Oncology
- Eileen Kilfoil, Manager, Cancer Screening Programs (Cervical, Colon, Lung)
- Dr. Michael Stewart, Medical Director, Colon Cancer Screening Program

Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program:

- Dr. Sîan Iles, Medical Advisor
- Trena Metcalfe, Program Manager
- Anne Yuill, Director, Healthy Populations and Provincial Initiatives, IWK Health

COMMITTEE BUSINESS:

Correspondence:

July 2, 2024 letter from Derek Spinney, Nova Scotia Health, in response to requests for information made at the May 14 meeting on Public-Private Partnerships in Health Care. Accepted without comment.

Motion:

After the recess following the witnesses' dismissal, a motion was introduced:

- In consideration of the information received today from NS Health Cancer Program and the NS Breast Screening Program and in recognition of the significance and potential impacts of the Find it Early Act and Expanding HPV Testing Act , I move that this committee should write a letter to the department/government to pass this legislation.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion defeated

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>

**LINKS BETWEEN HEALTH OUTCOMES AND
LACK OF SAFE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

August 13, 2024

WITNESSES

Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

- Tatiana Morren-Fraser, Executive Director, Housing Strategy and Analytics

Department of Community Services

- Suzanne Ley, Executive Director, Employment Support and Income Assistance

Department of Health and Wellness

- Joy Knight, Senior Executive Director, System Integration

North End Community Health Centre

- Marie-France LeBlanc, President and CEO

Adsum for Women and Children

- Sheri Lecker, Executive Director

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence:

July 11, 2024 email from the Department of Health and Wellness, following up on the July 9 meeting with a link to a video promoting the province's colon cancer screening program. Accepted without comment.

Motions:

After the recess following the witnesses' dismissal, a motion was introduced:

- Whereas housing precarity and homelessness have a direct negative impact on people's health and wellness; and whereas so much homelessness is being caused by the government's abetting landlords' misuse of fixed-term leases as a way to evict tenants and get around the rent cap and whereas one reason the numbers of homeless people are increasing so sharply, is the dramatic rise in rents enabled by a rent cap that excludes new tenants; therefore the Standing Committee on Health calls on the government, in light of the information that has been presented this afternoon, to review and re-evaluate its approach to these policies on housing.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA

- Defeated 5-4 in a recorded vote. (Yeas: Clark, DiCostanzo, Burrill, Leblanc. Nays: MacLeod, Palmer, White, Young, MacDonald.)

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:

September 12, 2023

Members acknowledged receipt of August 6 and August 16 emails from Matt Casey, re: “Nova Scotia Health Using Dirty Surgical Instruments on Patients.” A motion was made:

- That the Standing Committee on Health write a letter through you, Mr. Chair, to the Department of Health and Wellness requesting an update on the concerns outlined in the correspondence from Matt Casey.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

October 19, 2023

Members acknowledged receipt of the 2023 Annual Report. A motion was introduced:

- That the standing committee ... accept the 2023 Annual Report as circulated, and that the Chair table it to the House of Assembly.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

Members discussed information presented by witnesses earlier in the meeting. A motion was introduced:

- I move that the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and encourage them, as a starting point, to each appoint - each of the health authorities to appoint a Mi'kmaw adviser to the executive team of those health systems.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

An amendment was proposed:

- What I'd like to propose is requesting a letter from the Department of Health and Wellness asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed today - highlighting what we heard but asking for an update from what they're already doing about this.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA

Meeting time ended before members could vote. Motion and amendment remained on the table for consideration at a future meeting.

November 14, 2023

Members discussed a motion and amendment still on the table after being introduced at the Oct. 19, 2023 meeting:

- I move that the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard [today] about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and encourage them, as a starting point, to each appoint - each of the health authorities to appoint a Mi'kmaw adviser to the executive team of those health systems.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

An amendment had been proposed:

- What I'd like to propose is requesting a letter from the Department of Health and Wellness asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed today - highlighting what we heard but asking for an update from what they're already doing about this.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Amendment carried

Meeting time elapsed before the committee could vote on the amended motion, or agree on its wording. Members agreed to bring proposed wording of the amended motion to the December meeting for a vote.

December 12, 2023

Members discussed an amended motion on the table. The original motion had been made at the October 19 meeting on Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities. An amendment was carried at the November 14 meeting, and in the last few minutes of that meeting, members decided to agree on a more precise wording of the amended motion and vote on it at the December 12 meeting. By general consensus, the amended motion reads as:

- That the Chair write, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister of Health and Wellness, to the acting CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the CEO of the IWK Health Centre, to let them know what we heard about the need for Mi'kmaw representation in higher levels of the health system and asking for an update on the hiring practices of what we discussed.
 - Motion carried

With reference to discussion with witnesses at the November 14 meeting on Home Care and Community Care, a motion was introduced:

- I move that the Health Committee direct the Chair of the committee to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care outlining what we heard at last month's meeting. The letter should note that we understand next year's budget is being prepared, and we want to bring these recommendations made by our witnesses directly

to the minister's attention. This letter should outline the committee heard compelling cases made for the following improvements to the system, specifically that:

- 1) To improve the health and safety of Nova Scotia's home care workers and clients, timely in-person home assessments should be completed prior to initial care visits. Those first home care visits should be performed by a team of two home care workers. Until such time as cell service is extended to the entire province, in areas where cell phone service is currently non-existent or unreliable, tracking tags be provided so the locations of workers are known to their employers. Nurse practitioners be hired to ensure clients receiving home care who are not attached to a family practice can receive the timely health care they need. An increase to the budget of AWARE-NS be included in the upcoming budget.
- 2) To improve retention and to ensure the home care system is not being underwritten financially by our home care workers: home care providers - companies and organizations - be required to schedule and pay for continuous hours of work to those workers providing this care; an increase to the vehicle allowance be provided to home care workers using their own vehicles to ferry them to each home care client location.

- Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

A motion was made:

- To table this until the next meeting.
 - Moved by Danielle Barkhouse, MLA
 - Motion carried

January 9, 2024

An agenda-setting was held. After some discussion, motions for the following were carried. (Motions and amendments may be paraphrased):

1st PC topic:

- Long-Term Care Builds: Impact and Approach. Witnesses: Dept. of SLTC; Mountain Lead Lodge Administrator OR Queens Manor Administrator; Reps from GEM Health Care Group or Shannex.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

1st Liberal topic:

- Links Between Health Outcomes and Lack of Safe Affordable Housing. Witnesses: Deputy Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Health and Wellness, and Community Services; Representatives from the North End Community Health Centre and Adsum for Women and Children.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
- Amendment: to replace Deputy Ministers with representatives from each department.

- Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Amendment carried
- Amended motion carried

2nd PC topic:

- Withdrawal Management Services. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health (Dana Pulsifer, Senior Director, Mental Health and Addictions Program); Office of Addictions and Mental Health (Deputy Minister and representatives – Dr. Samuel Hickcox, if available); Ally Centre of Cape Breton and/or Direction 180.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

NDP topic:

- Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health CEO), Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister), Nova Scotia Health Coalition (Executive Director), NSGEU (Representatives) and CUPE (Representatives)
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
- Amendment: to change the topic title to Public-Private Partnerships in Health Care, to change the specified witnesses to representatives of each department or organization, and to add three organizations: Doctors Nova Scotia, PANS and the Nova Scotia Dental Association
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Sub-amendment: To drop CUPE and the Dental Association from the witness list, simply to keep numbers more manageable
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Sub-amendment carried
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

3rd PC topic:

- Cancer Screening Programs. Witnesses: Nova Scotia Health Cancer Care Program (Dr. Helmut Hollenhorst, Senior Medical Director and Jill Flinn, Executive Director); IWK Health (Anne Yuill, Breast Screening Program); Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine (Dr. Sian Iles, Dept. of Diagnostic Radiology)
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

2nd Liberal topic:

- Impacts of the Labour Shortage on the Health Care System. Witnesses: NSNU (President); Doctors Nova Scotia (President); Nova Scotia Health (CEO); Dept. of Health and Wellness (Deputy Minister); Paramedics Union, IUOE 727.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

- Amendment: New witness list, same as original except for changing the Nova Scotia Health witness from CEO to Representatives, and replacing DM of Health and Wellness with Representatives from the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Sub-amendment 1: To include the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, instead of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA

Chair ruled sub-amendment 1 out of order

- Sub-amendment 2: To include the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, in addition to the witnesses named in the amendment
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Sub-amendment 2 defeated
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

In other business, members discussed a motion still on the table. It had been made at the Dec. 12, 2023 meeting, with reference to discussion with witnesses at the November 14 meeting on Home Care and Community Care, and deferred until January to give members time to consider it:

- I move that the Health Committee direct the Chair of the committee to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care outlining what we heard at last month's meeting. The letter should note that we understand next year's budget is being prepared, and we want to bring these recommendations made by our witnesses directly to the minister's attention. This letter should outline the committee heard compelling cases made for the following improvements to the system, specifically that:
 - 1) To improve the health and safety of Nova Scotia's home care workers and clients, timely in-person home assessments should be completed prior to initial care visits. Those first home care visits should be performed by a team of two home care workers. Until such time as cell service is extended to the entire province, in areas where cell phone service is currently non-existent or unreliable, tracking tags be provided so the locations of workers are known to their employers. Nurse practitioners be hired to ensure clients receiving home care who are not attached to a family practice can receive the timely health care they need. An increase to the budget of AWARE-NS be included in the upcoming budget.
 - 2) To improve retention and to ensure the home care system is not being underwritten financially by our home care workers: home care providers - companies and organizations - be required to schedule and pay for continuous hours of work to those workers providing this care; an increase to the vehicle allowance be provided to home care workers using their own vehicles to ferry them to each home care client location.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion defeated

February 13, 2024

Members discussed a February 7, 2024 letter from Sandra Mullen, President of NSGEU, re: inclusion in meetings on issues affecting NSGEU members. A motion was introduced:

- I move that we receive this very reasonable criticism in Sandra Mullen’s correspondence, and we undertake as a committee to rectify it in the future.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion defeated

March 19, 2024

At the beginning of the meeting, after witness introductions, Susan Leblanc, MLA noted that observers in the room included Sandra Mullen, President of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union. A motion was introduced:

- [T]hat this committee amend our witness list for today’s meeting so that we can add NSGEU and Ms. Mullen to the witness list so that we’re able to hear from the representatives on behalf of the NSGEU members in the province.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
 - Motion defeated

Members discussed the March 13 letter (and a similar letter of February 7) from NSGEU President Sandra Mullen, re: inclusion in meetings on issues affecting NSGEU members. A motion was introduced:

- I would move that an explanation of the agenda-setting process and the witness selection practice of the committee be included, as well as a link to the January 9th Hansard report and the April 11, 2023 Hansard report highlighting the motion related to the topics that affected them, and that the Chair write a letter with those elements involved.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Meeting time ended before members could vote. Motion to remain on the table for consideration at a future meeting.

April 9, 2024

Members discussed a motion still on the table. At the March 19 meeting, members had discussed correspondence received from the Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union (NSGEU) re: the witness list for that day’s meeting. A motion was introduced, but meeting time ended before the motion could be put to a vote, so it was carried over to the April 9 meeting:

- I would move that an explanation of the agenda-setting process and the witness selection practice of the committee be included, as well as a link to the January 9th

Hansard report and the April 11, 2023 Hansard report highlighting the motion related to the topics that affected them, and that the chair write a letter with those elements involved.

- Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
- Motion carried

June 11, 2024

An agenda-setting was held. As it began, Gary Burrill, MLA, noted that the third NDP topic was very similar to the first Liberal topic. A motion was introduced:

- That we amend the proposed witness sheet we have in front of us by, in the final NDP proposal, moving the bottom two proposed witnesses – the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network – up to the top Liberal proposal, which is the Protection of Health Data, and then remove from this sheet the NDP proposal Access to the Protection of Personal Health Information.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Motion carried

After Chris Palmer, MLA, made a motion to carry all three of the proposed PC topics, a motion was introduced:

- [T]hat we separate these topics. We have concerns about some of them.
 - Moved by Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried unanimously. Original motion was withdrawn from the table with unanimous consent of the committee, and each of the PC topics was introduced as a separate motion. The Chair noted for the record that the original motion and MLA Regan's motion were both in order.

After some further discussion, motions for the following were carried. (The following motions and amendments may be paraphrased.):

1st PC topic:

- Promoting Physical Activity. Witnesses: Representatives from the Healthy Tomorrow Foundation, and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- An amendment was proposed to add the Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Amendment defeated
 - Motion carried

2nd PC Topic:

- Integrated Youth Services. Witnesses: Representatives from the IWK Health Centre, Integrated Youth Services New Glasgow, Integrated Youth Services Halifax YMCA.

- Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
- Motion carried.

[Note: Members agreed by consensus that this topic would be scheduled at the end of the roster, because the programs are not expected to be operating until January 2025.]

3rd PC Topic:

- Advancing Diabetes Care. Witnesses: Representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health Authority, the IWK Health Centre and Diabetes Canada (formerly called the Canadian Diabetes Association).
 - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
 - Motion carried

[Note: An earlier motion had been carried, in which Diabetes Canada was not included as a witness. Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, had proposed an amendment to add Diabetes Canada, and it was defeated. Later in the meeting, the original motion was rescinded with unanimous consent of the committee, and the above motion including Diabetes Canada was carried.]

1st Liberal topic:

- Protection of Health Data. Witnesses: Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness, CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Deputy Minister of the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried

2nd Liberal topic:

- The Status of Surgeries in Nova Scotia. Witnesses: Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness, CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, Doctors Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, and President of NSGEU.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion carried

[Note: Members had defeated an earlier motion by MLA Regan that the second Liberal topic be Reasons for Doctors Exiting the Nova Scotia Health System.]

NDP topic:

- Barrier-Free Access to Contraception for Nova Scotians. Witnesses: Access Now Nova Scotia, the North End Community Health Centre, a representative from Wellness Within, the clinical director from the ROSE Clinic, and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness.
 - Moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA
- An amendment was proposed: that a representative of the Halifax Sexual Health Centre be added to the witness list.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Amendment carried
 - Amended motion carried

July 9, 2024

After the recess following the witnesses' dismissal, a motion was introduced:

- In consideration of the information received today from NS Health Cancer Program and the NS Breast Screening Program and in recognition of the significance and potential impacts of the Find it Early Act and Expanding HPV Testing Act , I move that this committee should write a letter to the department/government to pass this legislation.
 - Moved by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
 - Motion defeated

August 13, 2024

After the recess following the witnesses' dismissal, a motion was introduced:

- Whereas housing precarity and homelessness have a direct negative impact on people's health and wellness; and whereas so much homelessness is being caused by the government's abetting landlords' misuse of fixed-term leases as a way to evict tenants and get around the rent cap and whereas one reason the numbers of homeless people are increasing so sharply, is the dramatic rise in rents enabled by a rent cap that excludes new tenants; therefore the Standing Committee on Health calls on the government, in light of the information that has been presented this afternoon, to review and re-evaluate its approach to these policies on housing.
 - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
 - Defeated 5-4 in a recorded vote. (Yeas: Clark, DiCostanzo, Burrill, Leblanc. Nays: MacLeod, Palmer, White, Young, MacDonald.)

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

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

December 12, 2023

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

- If I could get the number of physicians who have reduced their practices - I think we would need to see the data. There's a reduction. It's a big difference to have somebody reducing their practice hours by 10 per cent versus somebody who's doing it 50 per cent.

The following information was requested and received from Nova Scotia Health:

- Unfortunately, the most recently released data on physician vacancies, physician hiring, and ER closures is well over a year old. I'm wondering if someone can provide up-to-date numbers for these different categories for the past month. How many physician vacancies are there currently in emergency departments, and how many emergency physicians have been hired, i.e., net increase for the last month?
- The other number I was wondering about was how many physicians have been hired through the Come Home to Nova Scotia campaign in the last month.

Tabled documents:

- "Doctors Nova Scotia's New President Wants to Stabilize Family Practice," Dalhousie Alumni Spotlight (Emailed to clerk by PC Caucus on behalf of Nolan Young, MLA)
- Letter from Dr. Nicolae Botan to patient, informing them practice is closing (Hard copy provided by Liberal Caucus on behalf of Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA)
- "How Houston Government Threw Gas on Halifax Doctor Shortage Fire" – Paul Schneidereit, Saltwire Publishing (Hard copy provided by Liberal Caucus on behalf of Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA)
- Transcript of Facebook post by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA on Doctor Waitlist (Emailed to clerk by Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA on behalf of Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA, who read aloud from it during the meeting.)

February 13, 2024

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care:

- We heard there's about a 10 per cent vacancy across the sector. Can you give us an idea of how many positions that is in each of these health care categories: nurses, LPNs, CCAs?
- I'm thinking of the 2,500 new rooms that were proposed, those that are involving new construction. What is the balance between for-profit facilities and not-for-profit facilities, approximately - provincially?

March 19, 2024

The following information was requested and received from the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment:

- We recently received a FOIPOP back that indicates there were already 31 physician departures in the first six weeks of this year here in Nova Scotia. That means we're well beyond halfway to last year's number of 50 departures. Could we get a regional breakdown of where those physician losses were?

The following information was requested and received from IUOE 727, the Paramedics Union:

- Can you provide the number of paramedics who have both exited and entered the profession in the past year?

April 9, 2024

Tabled Document:

Lisa Lachance, MLA, tabled the 2023-24 Government Business Plan document "More Healthcare, Faster," from which they had read while questioning a witness.

June 11, 2024

Tabled document:

Rafah DiCostanzo, MLA, tabled a document from which both she and Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA, had read aloud: An April 10, 2024 news release from the Office of Addictions and Mental Health entitled "Youth Mental Health Sites Announced."

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