

LAW AMENDMENTS

Bill 147, An Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network
(Jennifer Garus, Executive Manager, Nova Scotia Dietetic Association)

Mr. Chair and members of the Law Amendments Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support for the Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network.

I represent the dietetics regulatory body and will outline important aspects of this legislation from the context of a smaller regulatory body.

With 500 dietitians and nutritionists licensed in Nova Scotia, we are a relatively small organization. Being a member of the Network has provided us with a better awareness of best practices in professional regulation and of issues relevant to regulation that we would not otherwise have at our disposal. It has been extremely valuable for our organization to have been at the Network table for the past six years. This involvement has contributed to our capacity to be an effective regulator. Participation in discussions on regulatory and professional practice issues, along with the sharing of knowledge and expertise among the professions, has raised our capacity to excel in aspects of self-regulation.

As a member of the Working Group to develop this new legislation, I believe that the act reflects the realities of today's changing healthcare system and holds great potential to make our future regulatory system even better than it is today.

Speaking from experience, I can attest to how difficult it is to expand a profession's scope of practice within the current legislation, and how much more efficient and effective the process will be under the new legislation. The public and the healthcare system, as a whole, will benefit when regulators are able to reach more timely agreements authorizing health professionals to practise to their optimal scope of practice. In fact, the new legislation will strengthen our current regulatory processes by providing a formal legal framework for these agreements, with the Minister signing off on them only when there is substantive proof that they are in the best interest of the public.

Although our organization has not formally dealt with any practice complaints to date, this new legislation would enable calling upon the expertise of other more experienced regulators as necessary. This would maximize the use of available resources, strengthen the consistency of these regulatory processes, and further develop our capacity to fulfill this aspect of our mandate.

As a smaller organization with limited resources, another component of the new Act that will be especially appealing is the establishment of one registration appeals review committee. This committee would handle appeals for all the self-regulating health professions. Knowing that this is a requirement of the *Fair Registration Practices Act*, but not having this process available at the current time, our organization would have the advantage of offering this process to applicants through the parameters of the new Act. This would ensure a fair, efficient and consistent process for applicants, while allowing us to maximize the use of our financial and human resources.

I have highlighted only a few of the benefits and improvements the new legislation will enable. The Network is committed to promoting best regulatory practices and to upholding the public interest and the collaborative regulatory processes outlined in this new legislation will do that and more. Through these collaborative processes, the self-regulating health professions will have much more effective tools to protect the public, enhance public confidence, and improve the quality of care delivery. The Nova Scotia Dietetic Association fully supports this new Act.

Thank you.