

## **LAW AMENDMENTS**

### **Bill 147 – An Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network November 29, 2012**

(Donna Denney, Executive Director, College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia)

Mr. Chair, and other members of the Committee on Law Amendments, thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 147, an Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network.

When the Network first started working together in 2007 the goal was to create a forum for health profession regulators to promote best practices in health profession regulation. Over the past five years, the Network has achieved some major milestones. For instance, we collaborated in the development of the province's Fair Registration Practices Act. We have been called upon by government to provide feedback on a number of new legislative documents, and during the H1N1 outbreak government was able to rely on the Network to assist with the potential need for expanded scope for various health professions. District health authorities have also consulted on changes in health system delivery and impact on professional practice.

However, we are particularly proud of the introduction of Bill 147. This legislation was designed with the input and support of all the regulated health professions in the province and is a strong indicator of how well we work together, how determined we are to strengthening our regulatory processes, and how committed we are to upholding and protecting the public interest. While working with government in the development of this legislation, the Network also consulted with key stakeholders and provided opportunities to clarify and discuss any concerns that they might have had with the intent of various sections of the Act.

Incorporation of the Network through Bill 147 will confirm the purpose of the Network in law, and establish a formal governance structure with clearly defined decision-making processes. Incorporation will strengthen the leadership of the health professions. As a corporate entity, the Network will be able to formally speak on behalf of all the professions (as one voice) to government and other stakeholders when it is in the best interests of the public, and to serve as a central access point for those parties wanting to convey their messages to all the professions.

However, the ultimate strength of this legislation lies in the new collaborative regulatory processes that will make it possible for us, as health profession regulators, to further uphold and protect the public interest by being more responsive to and supportive of changes in the delivery of health care.

Collaboration is a key component in our changing healthcare system. We are becoming increasingly reliant on collaborative interprofessional teams for the safe delivery of quality care. It only seems logical that the bodies regulating these professions would have equally effective collaborative processes.

With this legislation, health profession regulators will be enabled, but not required, to work together in areas such as investigation of patient complaints, review of decisions on licensing and registration, and interpretation and modification of professions' scopes of practice ... when it is in the best interests of the public or when the regulators determine it is the best way in which to resolve an issue. In other words, this legislation will remove existing legislative barriers and enable health professions to introduce more efficient, effective and responsive regulatory processes.

For instance, this legislation will help improve the delivery of quality care by providing us with more efficient and effective processes by which to enable health professionals to practise to their optimal scopes of practice.

We will also have the option to collaborate in the investigation of complaints involving health professionals in collaborative practice teams.

In addition to enabling more effective investigations and the collection of more comprehensive data, this collaborative investigation process should reduce stress for witnesses, increase efficiencies in the use of time and resources, and build capacity among those regulators with less experience in these processes.

Another advantage to having the regulators working together in investigations would be to increase their ability to identify health systems issues impacting patient safety and healthcare delivery.

However, it is important to note that this unique legislation reflects two vital principles:

- the autonomy of each self-regulating profession is maintained
- involvement in collaborative processes is voluntary.

In fact, there are very few mandatory provisions in this Act. Network members will be accountable to Nova Scotians to show that they are collaborating in ways that produce results that matter. Therefore, annual meetings must be held and the Minister must ensure a review of the Network is undertaken after five years. Ministerial approval is also required for public protection in relation to Network agreements on the interpretation or modification of a profession's scope of practice.

Overall, we fully support this legislation because it will take a regulatory system that is already working at peak performance and make it that much better.

Collaborative regulatory processes clearly reflect the realities of our changing healthcare environment, and will enable regulators to be more responsive to and supportive of these changes while upholding and protecting the public interest.

Thank you.