



**Notes for a Submission**

**By**

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President**

**Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union**

**Law Amendments Committee:**

**Bill 11 *Protecting Access to Health Services*  
Act**

Good evening,

Madame/Mr. Chairperson and Committee members – I am here today to speak to Bill 11 the Protecting Access to Health Services Act.

My name is Jason MacLean and I am President of NSGEU.

The NSGEU is the largest public sector union in the province representing over 33,000 hardworking women and men across the public sector.

Our members are employed throughout the provincial government, corrections, public schools, community colleges, universities, municipalities, community organizations and health care.

For the past eighteen months our health care members have put their own health and safety on the line to serve during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For many health care workers this meant that while others were told to stay home, health care workers continued to go to work and care for those in need.

They did what needed to of them including supporting vulnerable seniors in Northwood during the uncertainty of wave one, they staffed COVID positive units, and did what was asked of them – because that is what they are trained to do.

It should be noted that all these health care heroes did their job despite the

disrespect and poor treatment they were shown by the previous Liberal government. When Nova Scotians needed them, health care workers were there.

I would like to commend Premier Houston on making it a priority to get out and meet health care workers where they work.

The Premier's tour gave health care workers hope that help was on the way and that those doing the work would, after eight very long years, have their voices acknowledged and heard.

Many of our members have said how refreshing it was to have a Premier willing to listen.

During the introduction of Bill 11 the union had some early concerns on how the Bill would impact our members ability to picket or protest during any potential labour dispute.

However, in the day that followed its introduction the Premier and his government clarified that Bill 11 would not have any impact on labour unions and their rights to picket or protest.

NSGEU welcomes that important amendment and appreciates the government's willingness to hear our concern.

NSGEU agrees that the many thousands of women and men who went work and were on the front line of the pandemic response deserve to enter work without being yelled at or intimidated.

Nova Scotians, have in all respects, answered the call and followed all public health measures, including getting vaccinated, to help protect vulnerable people from COVID and the Delta variant.

Health care workers have the right to go to work without facing intimidation. This bill responds to how many of our health care workers were feeling and we thank the government for listening and acting.

The Premier did the right thing in clarifying the governments intent....

After eight long years of health care workers having their rights trampled on by the previous government it was refreshing to have a Premier owning the mistake and making it right.

We fully support the government's intent to protect health care workers from intimidation at their workplace.

The NSGEU would recommend the Committee take the time to examine similar legislation in Quebec. The interesting thing about the Quebec legislation, Bill 105 ) is that it is explicitly targeted to the anti vaccine protests we have seen across the country. It is focused on the here and now, the pandemic and is temporary and includes a sunset clause, it can only be extended as long as the current health emergency declared in March 2020 exists. That bill can be found here:

<http://www.assnat.qc.ca/Media/Process.aspx?MediaId=ANQ.Vigie.Bil.Docu>

[mentGenerique\\_176891en&process=Default&token=ZyMoxNwUn8ikQ+TRKYwPCjWrKwg+vIv9rjij7p3xLGTZDmLVSmJLoge/vG7/YWzz](#)

Bill 11 came into existence due to very similar circumstances however, as much as the NSGEU agrees with the need for this legislation here and now, Bill 11 is broad and forever as written. While Bill 11 would halt anti vax protests, it would also penalize communities from holding an information gathering at any hospital to raise awareness about parking fees.

COVID has revealed many limitations in our health care system. Some of these issues have been raised by workers for many years. The NSGEU is ready and willing to be a partner in fixing health care and making it the best system it can be.

For eighteen months health care workers, in all settings, had the backs of Nova Scotians. It is our hope that this government will have their backs as we move on from this awful pandemic.

Thank you.