

On May 16, 2024, NSCN held its 2024 Annual Meeting with 201 participants registered for the event. Every year, the NSCN Board includes a dedicated 'Discussion Period' in the meeting agenda with an opportunity for meeting participants to raise questions about the NSCN Annual Report and other regulatory matters. While we endeavour to respond to all questions raised, this is not always possible in the time allotted. As a result, we have created this Q&A document that answers all questions asked during the 2024 NSCN Annual Meeting.

A special thank you to all those who joined us for the meeting and for the thought-provoking questions we are pleased to respond to below.

1. NSCN is reporting a significant surplus for 2023. Why did this happen?

The surplus was driven by revenues that were unforeseen when we created the budget. Factors included the overwhelming response to our new registration and licensure process for international nurses, as well as Government's Licence Reimbursement Program, which appeared to increase the number of out of province nurses seeking licensure in Nova Scotia.

These two factors alone increased our revenues. In addition, our investment income was higher than anticipated. This surplus is transferred to NSCN's investment account.

2. Given the surplus for 2023, will the Board consider reducing licensing fees?

NSCN has never increased licensing fees. The two main drivers of NSCN's increased revenues are a direct result of the changing health care environment. It is too soon to say whether the increases from these two changes will permanently change NSCN's revenue. Given the future continues to be uncertain and with rising costs, we believe it is better to maintain and reassess when there is more stability.

NSCN does not want to be in a position of decreasing fees only to incur rising and unforeseen costs and then have to increase fees again. The decision to reduce licensing fees requires a long-term view and we feel it would be short-sighted to reduce fees now given the uncertainty of today's climate. NSCN will continue to monitor and assess the situation as part of our ongoing work.

3. What are NSCN's future-facing plans for equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging work?

NSCN remains committed to being an ongoing respectful and supportive regulator that creates programs and services that meet the diverse needs of those we serve. We continue to implement plans outlined on the EDIB roadmap we developed – this is a structured approach to incorporate EDIB into NSCN's operations and at the Board level. As always, NSCN is committed to sharing important development on our EDIB journey with all of our stakeholders.

At the Board level, EDIB is also a priority. The Board felt so strongly about the implementation of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging that it was incorporated into NSCN's first strategic plan set by the Board when the College was created in 2019. The Board has also incorporated development opportunities at each of their Board meetings to further learning with respect to EDIB.

4. Many organizations moved to virtual meetings as a result of COVID-19. Now that we have moved past the pandemic, will there be any attempt to move back to an in-person NSCN Annual Meeting?

The online format provides greater access for the public, registrants and all stakeholders regardless of where people are joining us from. As an organization that is here for the public, it is important that NSCN is accessible to Nova Scotians. Holding an in-person event in one location in the province may pose barriers for some. An online Annual Meeting is also a more economical way to conduct the business meeting yet provide opportunities for NSCN to demonstrate our accountability to a wide range of stakeholders.

NSCN does offer team-based consultation and education for those who would like to benefit from learning more about a specific area of nursing practice. It provides an opportunity for NSCN to provide education to a

team of individuals through an in-person or virtual interactive approach. Please contact practice@nscn.ca for more information.

5. I am an international applicant that is having difficulty finding employment as a nurse in Nova Scotia.

What is NSCN is doing to support international nurses to find work?

It is important to understand NSCN's role - what we have authority to do and not do. Our role is to ensure qualified nurses are **registered and licensed** to practice nursing in Nova Scotia. While NSCN has always done this, the changes we made to the registration and licensure process last year just expedited things.

We review applications and other registration requirements to ensure applicants are eligible for a nursing licence. Once NSCN grants a licence to a nurse, you are eligible to find work as a nurse and others are responsible for this next step. NSCN does not have a role in recruitment or helping nurses secure employment.

NSCN works closely with the organizations that employ nurses and collaborate where possible. To highlight just some of this work:

- We brought together key stakeholders and shared information that would help them to support international nurses from an employment, immigration and settling perspective.
- We connect all applicants to Nova Scotia's International Community of Healthcare Workers Engagement (NICHE) program. This connects the program with international health care workers looking for jobs and immigration supports in Nova Scotia.
- We continue to evaluate the new registration and licensure process with surveys. We have shared feedback with key partners in health care.
- We also share employment resources on the NSCN website that is accessible to applicants.

6. It was announced that NSCN would be amalgamating with the midwives at some point in the future. What can you share about the impact this will have on nurses, including licensing fees?

This work is still early in the process, but conversations are ongoing, including a timeline for the work that needs to be accomplished. Government directed the two Colleges to amalgamate. The timing aligns with when we are both expected to migrate to the new Regulated Health Professions Act - by June 2026.

Both Colleges have a legacy of collaborating with one another and our health system partners to enhance protection of the public through regulation. As always, both of our Colleges remain open to ongoing discussions about how, as a single regulator, we can continue to benefit Nova Scotians and the health system.

Midwives and nurses are autonomous health care providers and fulfill different roles in health care. What is similar between the two regulatory bodies, however, is the regulatory role and commitment to public protection.

Both Colleges are committed to sharing developments with the public, registrants and other stakeholders as they unfold.

From a Board perspective, the NSCN Board looks forward to learning from MRCNS Board Colleagues and for the opportunity to come together at joint Board meetings, perhaps starting as early as this fall.

7. The state of health care is concerning with an extraordinary burden on nurses in our province. What is NSCN doing to help add more nurses to the system to help ease the load nurses are carrying?

Adding to the supply of safe nurses for all Nova Scotians is behind our work to expedite and streamline the registration and licensure process for nurses. Making nurses eligible for licensure is just one component but we also have a team who is working to support the transition of these nurses to the health system once they have been given jobs.

While there is focus on the supply of nurses for good reason, it's also important to look at optimizing the capacity of those already in the system.

We continue to work with our partners and leverage our regulatory tools to support employers to optimize the scope of practice for nurses in long term care. We are supportive of work environments that optimize the professional scope of practice of all health care providers.

Optimizing scopes shouldn't occur in isolation - optimizing the scope of one profession provides an opportunity for others to be optimized. This is about increasing clients' access to health care services. The professional scope of practice nurses is broad - regulation is not the barrier, so we continue to highlight opportunities with those who can remove potential obstacles and streamline processes. Some of those opportunities include:

- Collaborating with Seniors and Long-Term Care as they look for innovate ways to optimize the scope of practice of LPNs and RNs:
 - **Optimizing the LPN Role in Care Planning**
 - **In Wound Care** – Enabling nurses with advanced education to recommend or prescribe over the counter wound care products and topical creams.
 - **RN Prescribing** – Exploring how an RN Prescriber can enhance client service.
 - **Interventions and Nursing Practice** – Building supports to enable nurses to engage in interventions (i.e., IV therapy) that will reduce the temporary transfer of residents in LTC to acute care facilities.

8. Could you please identify what good standing and good character mean in the context of the expedited licensure and registration process?

Good standing and character mean you are not subject to any outstanding fees or complaints with your current regulator; and there are no prohibitions, conditions, agreements or restrictions on your licence or registration with your current regulator that would prevent registration and licensure with NSCN. This applies to every applicant applying for registration and licensure with NSCN, including the expedited licensure process.

9. Are NSCN's EDIB principles and vision applicable in the actual compilation of the NSCN Board itself? This would seem to be an important example of Leadership in Action.

The NSCN Board is committed to creating a diverse, inclusive and equitable environment, and encourages applications from all candidates who would contribute to the diversification of our organization.

The Board governs using a Composition Matrix, which includes self-assessment of the competencies, skills and attributes that the NSCN Board seeks to encompass. The Nominating Committee seeks candidates who possess these same competencies, skills and attributes in order to have a Board that is best able to represent the public interest. Not every Board member is required to possess all of the competencies, skills and attributes, nor does the Board seek to have each represented equally. The goal of the Board is to achieve balance and reflect diversity in its composition.

Since all Board members are required to represent the public's interest, this model incorporates best practice, reflects the Board's accountability to the public, and recognizes that the Board functions best when there are individuals with diverse competencies, skills, and attributes.

10. What is NSCN doing for nurses who have been unable to get a job and their conditional licence is about to expire?

Please see question 5 to read more about NSCN's role regarding employment.

In regard to the expiry of conditional licensure, if you are living outside of Canada, have already activated your conditional licence, and are still waiting for a job offer or an immigration pathway, you do not need to activate your next conditional licence until:

- You have been advised by immigration officials it is necessary for your immigration pathway, or
- You arrive in Canada and are eligible to work in Canada.

11. As it pertains to all the work NSCN has done to bring internationally educated nurses to Canada, can you share how this differs from, or what barriers there are, in being able to register Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) who were educated in and already reside in Canada, but wish to work in NS?

NSCN recognizes the demand for enhanced psychiatric, mental health and addictions services in Nova Scotia and the importance of supports that enhance the mental health and well-being of the public.

To that end, NSCN was pleased to participate in a study to determine the feasibility of addressing psychiatric, mental health and addictions needs in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia through the introduction of registered psychiatric nurse (RPNs) regulation.

There are currently provisions in the flexible Nursing Act to enable RPN practice in Nova Scotia in several models under a regulatory framework, which means regulation is not a barrier. The depth and breadth of the final model depends on the approach directed by the provincial government.

12. Would NSCN consider inviting registrants to reflect and provide info in relation to nursing issues management during the pandemic as relates to safety for the public (i.e., what worked well, what did not work well, any suggestions for the next time)?

One of our regulatory tools involves the provision of one-on-one and team-based consultations to support nursing practice upon request, which was maintained during the pandemic. This enabled NSCN to answer nursing practice questions received during COVID-19. NSCN also worked closely with health partners during COVID-19 on issues including supporting the supply of safe and competent nurses for the health system. NSCN also provided nurses with various practice support tools to help guide them in their practice during COVID-19 and included specific practice scenarios.

13. Does NSCN capture information to know how many nurses are self-employed and in what roles?

Registrants are asked to self-report their employment category, which includes the ability to indicate if they are self-employed.

Each year, the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness creates a report containing a snapshot of the nursing workforce using data provided by the Nova Scotia College of Nursing. The latest report from 2022 shows the following:

- 52 LPNs indicated they were self-employed (less than 5% of the number of LPNs in Nova Scotia)
- 63 RNs indicated they were self-employed (less than 5% of the number of RNs in Nova Scotia)
- No NPs indicated they were self-employed

Access the report [here](#) under 'Nursing Workforce Data Reports'.

14. There is no NCLEX-RN test center found within 5000 miles to my location after eligibility and payment. What can I do with visa procedures to write my examination at closer test centers?

As the nursing regulator, we cannot answer questions about visa procedures as this is outside our mandate. Please direct this question to your local immigration office.

- Nova Scotia Immigration: <https://novascotiainmigration.com/> and/or,
- Canadian Immigration and Citizenship <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/immigration-citizenship.html>

15. Are there many former nurses, all scopes, returning to practice?

Effective April 29, 2024, NSCN reactivated 756 nursing licences for the 2023-2024 licensure year. Reactivated licences are for those who have not held a licence for two years.

16. A question regarding entry to practice competencies for the new expedited pathway. Can you clarify the commitment from the NSCN to baccalaureate education for new applicants in Nova Scotia, and the relationship with that entry to practice requirement and the international educated nurse competency assessment?

The expedited registration and licensure process NSCN introduced in 2023 is reflective of what we have learned through our lengthy experience with Advisory Reports provided the National Nursing Assessment Service. These Reports contain an evaluation of an applicant's education according to Canadian standards,

which is compared to current Canadian nursing requirements for entry to practice. The expedited process we introduced is shaped by this knowledge. NSCN is committed to ongoing opportunities for enhancement, which is why an evaluation process has been implemented and will continue for a two-year period.

17. Is there an Evaluation Framework in place systemically within Nova Scotia other than a political one to recognize if all of these approaches are actually working and keeping the public safe?

NSCN has committed to ongoing evaluation of the expedited registration and licensure process we introduced in in 2023. You can find the most recent report [here](#) on the NSCN website.

We have developed a number of resources to support nurses and employers to successfully transition to practice and recently hosted the Supporting Professional Practice in Nursing Workshop on May 13, 2024 with over 130 registrants. The Workshop was shaped by feedback provided by registrants.

NSCN also monitors the environments in which we operate and all inquiries received to identify trends and potential opportunities for enhancement and support.

We are unable to speak to other initiatives that are happening provincially. Please contact other partners in health care to better understand what evaluation processes they may have in place.

18. I note that the minutes from the 2023 AGM do not indicate how many registrants were in attendance. Could you provide that number? Can you also please provide today's numbers of those attending the 2024 Annual Meeting?

In 2023, NSCN had a record-breaking year with 356 people register for the Annual Meeting. For the 2024 Annual Meeting, NSCN had 201 people register for the Annual Meeting. The number of individuals who attend the meeting virtually changes through the meeting and we are unable to determine if the meeting is being viewed by an individual or a group.