

On May 15, 2025, NSCN held its 2025 Annual Meeting with 182 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 2025 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 paused the expedited process for international nurses at the beginning of the year. Why? Does this mean there was an issue with your process? What are your future plans?**

There was no issue with the expedited process for international nurses. From the beginning, NSCN has stated we are committed to making process enhancements where those opportunities exist. Additionally, while the expedited process is on hold, there is still a process in place to license nurses who are interested in coming to Nova Scotia through the National Nursing Assessment Service.

During the initial launch of this process, the number of applications we received was incredible. We received over 30,000. By the fall of 2024, it became clear that we would not get all the applications processed by the time the temporary staff contracts ended in December. These were roles that were funded by the one-time government funding so timing was crucial.

The temporary pause has given us space to allow the team to focus entirely on processing and managing the remaining 3,300 active and 7,000 existing ongoing applications in queue. It's also given us the time needed to work on the final program evaluation and create a sustainable HR strategy to manage the work once the pause is lifted.

Our approach has always been to process applications of international nurses living in Nova Scotia first, then those living in Canada, followed by those living abroad. Our evaluations started to show that applicants with a Nova Scotia address were trending down, and we were approving more nurses living outside of Canada. We were also seeing a rise in the number of requests for documentation (VORs) from IENs that typically signal an intent to seek licensure elsewhere in Canada.

We know that registration and licensing nurses to practice in Nova Scotia is just one piece of the puzzle. We can register and license qualified nurses but they also need support to immigrate to Nova Scotia, be provided employment, be transitioned to the health system as a new nurse in Nova Scotia, and settled in our communities. NSCN currently sits on an IEN Action Team made up of health system partners including employers, Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) and others who are trying to look at the integrations of IENs from a system perspective. We intend to have this group validate the findings of our evaluation and inform recommendations for next steps.

NSCN will be completing the last survey and looking at two years of evidence that will inform the type of enhancements that can be made to the process. We recognize the role NSCN plays in terms of supplying the health system with qualified nurses and that remains of importance to the Board and all levels of the organization. We look forward to sharing more information over the summer.

**2. NSCN is reporting a significant surplus for 2024. Why did this happen?**

2024 was an atypical year for NSCN. We received one-time funding from the provincial government to help us set up the infrastructure needed to process the increased volume of applications and licences we received last year through our expedited licensure process.



While all of those funds were allocated and spent as anticipated, there was a significant increase in the number of licenses issued and assessment applications received, particularly from nurses outside of the province and country seeking a licence in Nova Scotia.

In addition to this, our investment income was higher than anticipated, which was based on the markets last year. This surplus has been transferred to NSCN's investment account.

**3. There is a lot of coverage about nurses wanting to leave the US right now and come work in Canada. Is now the time to be pausing the registration process? Don't we need to be welcoming American nurses who want to work here?**

NSCN has been working directly with Nova Scotia Health (NSH) to support their US nursing recruitment campaigns. We are fast-tracking applications for registration and licensure from US nurses with employment offers from Nova Scotia Health while the expedited process is on hold.

We have approved several applications since temporarily pausing the expedited process and are working on several others in the registration and licensure queue.

In addition to NSH, we are also working with long-term care employers to fast track international applicants with confirmed job offers while the expedited process is temporarily on hold. To date, we have processed approximately 30 nurses in this manner.

**4. Given the surplus for 2024, will the Board consider reducing licensing fees?**

NSCN has never increased licensing fees. 2024 was an atypical year, and it is important to point out that NSCN continues to operate in a changing health care environment and the surplus from operations will not continue at the 2024 level.

NSCN is mindful that the future continues to be uncertain and with rising costs. 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 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. NSCN will continue to monitor and assess the situation as part of our ongoing work.

**5. I read about the Right-touch Regulation Guiding Principles in your annual report. I provided feedback when you consulted on the principles. Where can I find more information about them and the impact you expect them to have?**

We thank all those who participated in the public consultation. We heard from over 550 individuals who were very supportive of the guiding principles.

For those who may not be familiar, the principles of 'right-touch regulation' were developed by Sir Harry Cayton who is an internationally recognized advisor on professional regulation and governance. NSCN worked closely with Harry Cayton as part of our work to develop NSCN's approach to right-touch regulation and we shared a draft of guiding principles this time last year inviting feedback.

The guiding principles enable NSCN to:

- make decisions about the efficient use of our resources that focus on advancing public safety;
- clearly communicate a consistent rationale for new policies and processes that are in line with organizational direction; and
- foster innovation in the interests of the public.

The NSCN staff have used the new guiding principles over the past year and there are plans to formally launch the *Right-touch Regulation Guiding Principles* externally this summer.

The principles have already guided much of our decision-making, including the changes to our registration and licensure process and we are currently applying them toward NSCN's conduct processes. We see the principles as overarching strategy for the way we regulate so we look forward to sharing more throughout 2025.

**6. How many of the international nurses you have licensed are currently employed and working in Nova Scotia?**

As a nursing regulator, it is our role to register and license those individuals who demonstrate they are qualified to practice as a nurse in Nova Scotia. Newly licensed nurses **are not required** to circle back to NSCN to tell us if and where they are employed.

The organizations that employ nurses are better suited to answer this question.

**7. I am in a group of nurses, LPNs and RNs from Egypt. We are interested in working in Canada and have already started to submit applications with World Education Services (WES). Now, I'm working in the UAE. Is there an available pathway that can make an easier process for us?**

While the expedited licensure process is temporarily on pause, international nurses seeking registration and licensure with NSCN must first apply to the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) via our traditional licensure process. [You can learn more on this process here.](#)

**8. I have been registered with NSCN as an RN since December 2024 last year, but have no job offer. What is the plan for me and for others like me?**

NSCN's role is to assess applications and issue licences to qualified nurses. We are a separate entity from employers and this falls outside our role as a nursing regulator.

We encourage you to view the employment resources we have available on our website. [View this information here.](#)

**9. I am one of the international Registered Nurses (RN) licensed with NSCN, NCLEX-RN passed, and now I want to join my husband in the USA. What is the process of transferring my reports to the USA?**

Please direct your question to the US regulatory body in which you are seeking registration and licensure.

**10. Nursing students graduate twice a year from Dalhousie University. The students who finish in the spring and write NCLEX start working in August and are required to pay for full licence fee and then pay again in the fall during renewal. Has there been any discussion about supporting a graduated payment structure?**

NSCN currently offers pro-rated fees for practising licences for registered nurses after July 1st and for licensed practical nurses after May 1 of each calendar year. This pro-rated licence expires on October 31st. Currently, there has been no discussion regarding a graduated payment structure. As a self-regulated professional, all nurses are required to renew their licence before the end of the renewal period on October 31 annually.

**11. Is there any data on how many nurses are leaving Nova Scotia (outside of retirement) over the last 1-2 years?**

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 following reports contain key metrics related to nursing supply in the province including inflow and outflow, total nurses employed, age distribution, and proportion of nurses employed by county. [You can view the reports here.](#)