

New Legislation for the Social Work Profession in Newfoundland and Labrador

An Act Respecting the Practice of Social Work (short title: *Social Workers Act*) received Royal Assent at the provincial House of Assembly on June 24th, 2010. The proclamation date is March 31st, 2011. This legislation will replace the current Social Workers Association Act which received Royal Assent on June 11th, 1992. The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers has been anticipating new legislation for several years. All other professional regulatory bodies have had legislation reviewed and amended throughout the past decade. The principle guiding all of the amendments is a greater accountability to the public through the establishment of uniform governance structures, requirements for public representation and consistent complaints and discipline procedures.

The Act applies to all social workers currently registered to practice social work in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The title “social worker”, “RSW” or any abbreviation is protected and there is an expanded definition of the profession. The new definition as outlined in Section 2 (f) follows:

“social work” means the assessment, remediation and prevention of psycho-social problems and the enhancement of the social, psycho-social functioning and well being of individuals, families, groups and communities by

- (i) Providing direct counselling and therapy services to a client
- (ii) Developing, promoting and delivering human service programs, including those done in association with other professions
- (iii) Contributing to the development and improvement of social policy
- (iv) Conducting research in the science, technique and practice of social work

NLASW continues to have both regulatory and association functions. There will be changes to the composition of the Board of Directors and to the role of board members. Three additional public representatives appointed by the Minister of Health and Community Services will be added and board members will also be members of the Complaints Authorization Committee. Board elections must be held within six months of the proclamation date of March 31st, 2011. New regulations and by-laws will need to be developed.

Other changes include the ability to resolve complaints using alternate dispute resolution, the ability of the Complaints Authorization Committee to issue a caution and the requirement of the Discipline Panel to publish the outcomes of decisions following hearings.

Various aspects of the legislation will be highlighted for NLASW members in the monthly electronic bulletins titled *NLASW Update*.