

The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

Organization Structure Review

Final Report

* This final report was edited by Council to do the following:

1. Correct, with the consultant's approval, for errors of fact in the original.
2. Remove sensitive personnel information that is protected by privacy concerns
3. Add a specific comment under 6.1.3

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1 Executive summary

1.1 General

In August 2009 an Interim Report (Operational Review – Phase 1 – Review of Structural Model) was presented to the Executive Committee of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (NSASW) that reported the research and data gathering, issues and concerns regarding the organizational structure and management practices of the Association.

This Report outlines the research and data gathering that has identified possible resolutions to the issues that were reported in the Interim Report.

1.2 Conclusions and Issues:

The conclusions in this report form the basis of the recommendations to the NSASW:

- 1.1 Social Workers are regulated for the protection of the public interest, to ensure that services are provided in an ethical and competent manner.
- 1.2 There are different models of self regulation and governance among social worker associations in Canada.
- 1.3 The governance and regulatory regimes of Associations of Social Workers are similar to other professional associations.
- 1.4 Generally, where there is more than a single association in a Canadian Province, the association that does not regulate the profession has significantly less membership, and hence, financial capacity than the regulatory organization. (Example – Ontario mandatory regulatory association has 11,500 members; volunteer professional association has 3,700 members)
- 1.5 From the organizations' perspectives, each system of governance and regulation meets the expectations of the public, governments, and memberships, with few exceptions.

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- 1.6 The number of complaints received by Social Worker associations is increasing and requires more resources to process in an efficient manner.
 - 1.7 Provincial Governments in Canada make public citizen appointments to regulatory organizations in the interest of public protection.
 - 1.8 The size of social worker governance organizations varies across Canada, ranging from approximately 10 members to 30 members.
 - 1.9 Larger associations have professional managers to coordinate the day to day activities of the associations, and to carry out research and social advocacy issues.
 - 1.10 NSASW mirrors the legislation under which it was established.
 - 1.11 The NSASW governance Council and Board of Examiners require improved relationship to enable the association to be more effective.
 - 1.12 Staff roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of NSASW require improvement to be more efficient in the future.
 - 1.13 The NSASW Council and Board require the development of specific future goals and objectives against which the success of NSASW and performance of staff can be measured.

1.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations address the issues identified, conclusions reported, and the needs of the NSASW which will result in an improved organization for the stakeholders:

- 1 It is recommended that the current structure remain in place, that is, the Council and Board of Examiners model. This system is effective in assuring the public interest, while at the same time representing the interest of the profession. There are a number of improvements that can be made to the structure as noted in the following recommendations.
- 2 It is recommended that the Council membership of 30 be reduced to 15 members. The current structure does not result in efficient decision making, is unwieldy in

numbers, and the system of co-members from regions does not assist in efficient decision making. It is recommended that the membership on Council consist of the Immediate Past President, President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair of the Board of Examiners, one faculty and one student representative each from the Dalhousie School of Social Work and from the Universite Sainte Anne social work program, one representative of the Canadian Association of Social Workers, one representative of the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers, and three elected representatives of the general membership, one of whom shall be an Aboriginal social worker who does not concurrently fill any of the other positions on Council.

- 3 It is recommended that the Finance Sub-Committee and Personnel Sub-Committee be deleted by the Executive Committee. The roles of these subcommittees will become the responsibility of the Executive Committee and the Executive Director.
- 4 It is recommended that the recent successful attempts to improve the relationship between the Council and Board of Examiners be continued through the Council/Board Liaison Committee, whose Terms of Reference should be formalized in the By Laws of the Association.
- 5 It is recommended that the Council and Board should jointly develop an acceptable regular accountability reporting system that provides the necessary data to manage the Association's regulatory activities and resources.
- 6 It is recommended that the role of the Executive Director, who reports directly to the Council, be more formally recognized as the day to day manager of the affairs of the Association in accordance with the by laws and policies of the Association.
- 7 It is recommended that the Executive Director be held accountable to the duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Position Description through an effective regular reporting system to Council.

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- 8 It is recommended that the new Executive Director resolve the human resource issues identified.
 - 9 It is recommended that staff position descriptions should be formally approved by Council. The Executive Director should implement these to facilitate the performance management system of the Association.
 - 10 It is recommended that a review be undertaken of the Human Resource Policy Manual to ensure its consistency with current legislation, with the Association's human resource philosophy, and with current financial capacity of the Association.
 - 11 The Executive Director should examine the level of staff for the NSASW, which appears to be adequate, but at times excessive.
 - 12 In order to improve the efficiency and fiscal capacity of the Association, it is recommended that a strategy be developed for information technology (IT), to assist the Association in communication issues, research capacity, financial controls and accounting, data base issues, and other global issues.
 - 13 It is recommended that the NSASW begin a process of identifying its future position through the development of a Strategic Plan, and specific actions to achieve that plan

2 Terms of reference

The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (NSASW) “promotes and regulates the practice of social work so its members can provide a high standard of service that respects diversity, promotes social justice, and enhances the worth, self-determination and potential of families and communities”. (Mission Statement)

The NSASW has been operating under the structure outlined in the Social Workers Act proclaimed in 1994. The Act introduced major changes, in particular the mandatory

regulation of social work practice. In Nova Scotia, both the title “social worker” and the practice of social work are protected. There have been a number of internal and external changes within NSASW since the act was proclaimed, and the Association wishes to determine if the current structure meets the needs of the membership, remains consistent with its legal authority and responsibility, and provides organizational sustainability into the future.

Internally, the association has experienced a major increase in membership which has resulted in the need to increase staff, financial resources, expanded office requirements, and increased need for technology. In addition, the complexity of the profession has required the association to comply with regulations, increased standards and ethics issues.

Externally, pending provincial and federal legislation to further regulate the profession and labour mobility issues causes the Association to examine its effectiveness.

The study was managed by the Executive Committee, to which the consultant was ultimately responsible. It is understood that the Final Report will be presented to the Council.

Specifically the Request for Proposals requested the consultant to:

- Review the Social Workers Act, NSASW By-laws, Regulations, the Vision, Values and Mission statement, and the Code of Ethics
- Review and assess the congruence of the Act, By-laws and Regulations with the structural model as it currently operates.
- Review staffing structure, including job descriptions for all positions
- Assess staffing in terms of fit with current structural model, gaps (identified areas which are not currently in any job description), coherence (the ways in which responsibilities are grouped within particular job descriptions), and potential for adaptation
- Review committee mandates - Board committees and Council committees

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- Interview key informants, including the Executive, selected Council members, selected Board members, the 4 professional staff
 - Review structural model of the Alberta College of Social Workers, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers, and other relevant regulatory bodies, such as the Nova Scotia Barristers Society, the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology, and the Association of Psychologists in Nova Scotia for their potential applicability to the future needs of the NSASW

3 The approach to the review

3.1 General Approach

The approach used in this review was a combination of research of current legislative framework under which the association manages its affairs, a review of relative other associations. Data was gathered that provided the basis of our review of the organizational structure, and management practices related to organizational efficiencies and effectiveness. A review was carried out of the current mission and vision statements and the strategic plan to determine to what extent the association views its future organizational values.

3.2 Specific Work Plan

We have reviewed the following pertinent background materials and other literature regarding the NSASW, as well as current legislation that may have a future impact on the Association:

- Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Act
- Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Regulations
- Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers By-Laws
- Audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2008

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- Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Annual Report May 2009
 - Organizational Manuals
 - Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
 - Nova Scotia Labour and Workforce Development Guidelines Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade
 - Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Discipline Manual
 - Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Standards of Practice
 - “Strategic Planning for NSASW” September 2005, prepared for the consideration of Council
 - Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Vision, Mission and Values statements
 - “The Board of Examiners: document and “Duties of Registrar” document
 - Position Descriptions for all staff positions
 - Board of Examiners and Council sample agendas and draft minutes

We reviewed the Social Workers Act, NSASW By-laws, policies, and Regulations in order to get an understanding of the legislative structure under which the Association operates to determine if the Association operates within its legislative mandate.

We reviewed the Vision, Values and Mission statement, and the Code of Ethics to ensure that they conform to the legislative framework.

We interviewed members of the Executive, all staff, the former Executive Director, and the Interim Executive Director to acquire an understanding of the issues impacting on the efficient governance and management of the Association.

We interviewed the Chair and one other member of the Board of Examiners to determine, from that point of view, organization structural issues that impact on the effective operation of the Board.

Information was gathered regarding current membership service levels and current delivery methods. We did not carry out interviews to determine the service needs of the membership, and undertake a gap analysis to determine any inconsistencies between the needs and current services, as this was not determined to be a priority for Phase 1.

We examined a number of human resource practices through a series of interviews and reviewed current job descriptions to identify efficiencies in service delivery and to identify the qualifications and sufficiency of human resources for Association operations. The review will also provide data to make recommendations on the appropriate staff structure, responsibilities and authority of staff.

We reviewed the flow of work and task assignments to ensure the efficient flow of information within the organization.

We determined if the information provided to the Council ensures accountability through the identification of key performance indicators.

We determined the current roles, mandates, and reporting requirements for Committees through interviews with the Executive Committee and other sources. We determined if a formal accountability system is in place within the governance structure to effectively meet the needs of the Association.

The structures of social worker association in other Canadian Provinces were examined. In particular, telephone interviews were conducted with the following associations:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers
- Ontario Association of Social Workers
- Ontario College of Social Workers

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- Alberta College of Social Workers
 - British Columbia College of Social Workers
 - British Columbia Association of Social Workers

In addition, in accordance with the Proposal, interviews were held with the Nova Scotia Association of Psychologists. A review was also carried out of the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists. We reviewed the Nova Scotia Association of Physiotherapists structure.

4 The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

The objects of the Association are legislated in Section 5(1) of the Social Workers Act of Nova Scotia. They are to:

- Regulate the practice of social work and govern the association in accordance with this act;
- Improve and increase the knowledge, efficiency, and ability of its members to encourage and promote on-going professional development;
- Ensure that the public at all times receives the services of proficient and competent social workers of high ethical standards;
- Do all such lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of its objects, and
- Address any other matters that the Association deems to be in the best interests of its members.

The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers is the only professional association of social workers in the province. It represents over 1,600 social workers working in very diverse settings most in institutional and others engaged in private practice. Some are working in direct practice settings in government agencies such as children's services, income assistance, corrections, medical settings, education, and justice.' Others are in community-based settings and not-for-profit organizations.

The Association provides membership services to social workers such as professional development, a code of ethics, standards of practice, and legislation under which social

workers practice in the province. The Association also provides a base for members to work on social issues and advocate for changes in social policy.

The Association consists of an elected Council, Executive and Standing Committees assisted by a staff that ensures that the Association functions on behalf of the membership between annual general meetings. Five full-time staff are employed by the Association. Some services, such as accounting, technology, legal and investigative are contracted out.

The Association is organized into eight (8) regions each represented by a Regional or Co-Representatives who are elected members of the NSASW Council. The regions include one or more counties and are (from north to south): Cape Breton; North Shore; Colchester; Cumberland; Halifax; Annapolis Valley; South Shore; and Fundy Shore.

The social work legislation provides for a regulatory body, the Board of Examiners, which consists of nine members of the NSASW, three government appointees together with a staff to ensure that the public receives the services of skilled and competent social work professionals.

The Association is a member of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) originally founded in 1926 and is currently a federation of all provincial and territorial associations (with the exception of the Province of Quebec). The CASW role is to provide national leadership in and strengthen the social work profession in Canada. By its affiliation with CASW, the NSASW is part of the International Association of Social Workers founded in 1956 and comprised of over 50 countries. In addition to publishing a newsletter, position and research papers, an international symposium is held every two years.

5 The existing governance and operations structures

5.1 Governance

The Social Workers Act of Nova Scotia (Chapter 12 of the Acts of 1993) provides for the governance of the Association. The Association operates within By-Laws, under the authority of the Act. The By-laws are reviewed regularly, the latest revisions being approved at the May 2009 Annual Meeting.

The Council of the Association is the governance body for the Association and has charge of the business and affairs of the Association, and has and may exercise such powers and functions as are conferred or imposed upon it by the Act or By-Laws. It consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Immediate Past President, Chair of the Board of Examiners, or designated Board member, chairs of the Program Committee, Standards of Practice Committee, Public Relations Committee, Professional Development Committee, Social Justice/Social Action Committee, Private Practice Committee, Nominating Committee, one person from each of the eight regions elected at the annual general meeting, representative of the Canadian Association of Black Social Workers, one Aboriginal social worker who does not concurrently fill any of the other positions on the Council, one faculty and one student representative each from the Dalhousie School of Social Work and from the Universite Saint Anne social work program. The Executive Director may be a non-voting member of the Council. The total of voting members totals thirty (30).

The President presides over all meetings of Council and of the Association meetings.

In accordance with the By-laws of the Association, a number of Committees (eight) must be in place; they are:

- ✓ Nomination Committee
- ✓ Professional Development
- ✓ Membership
- ✓ Program
- ✓ Standards of Practice
- ✓ Public Relations
- ✓ Social Justice/Social Action
- ✓ Private Practice

Also there is a Finance Sub-Committee and a Personnel Sub-Committee appointed by the Executive Committee to handle financial and human resource issues.

The Act also requires that a Board of Examiners be in place, consisting of nine (9) members appointed by the Council and three (3) members appointed by the Governor in Council. The Board is responsible for:

- a. registration and renewal of membership of members and the maintenance of the Register of Social Workers and Social Worker Candidates
- b. regulation of the members' practice to protect the public
- c. appointment of its officers
- d. participation in information sessions to the membership respecting any aspect of the Board's work, particularly with respect to the registration of members, discipline and complaints procedures, code of ethics issues etc
- e. administration of examinations

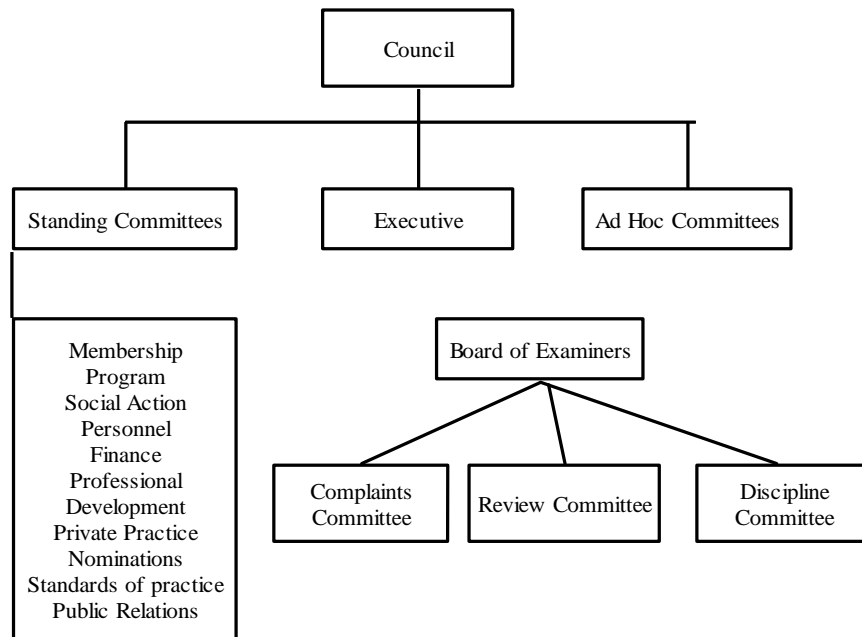
Section 20 of the Act permits the Council to make regulations regarding the system of registration, examinations, applications, complaints, discipline, and professional development.

The Act establishes a Complaints Committee, consisting of three (3) members of whom one is an appointee of the Governor in Council, to consider and investigate complaints regarding the conduct of any member.

The Act establishes a Discipline Committee, consisting of five (5) persons, three (3) of whom shall be members of the Board, one of whom is a member of the Association, and one who is appointed by the Governor in Council, to act on matters referred to it by the Complaints Committee.

These appointments by the Governor in Council to the Board are clearly to meet the mandate of the public assurance for ethical, proficiency and competency in the social worker field.

NSASW Governance Organization Chart

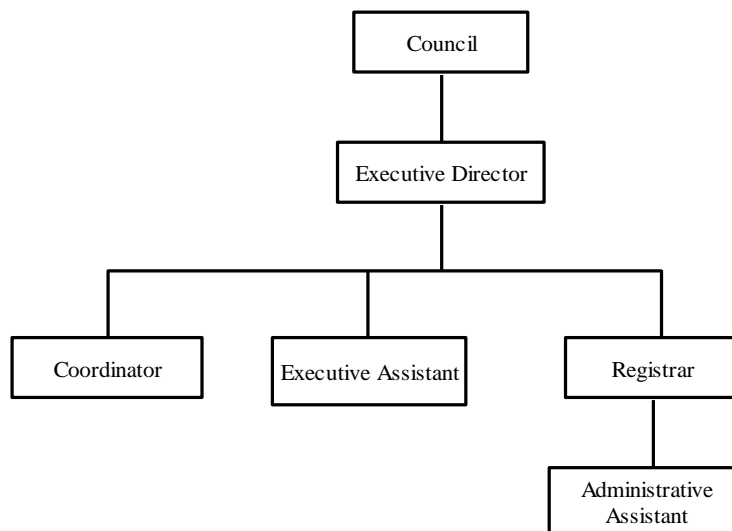


5.2 Administrative Organization Chart

The staff organizational structure is led by an Executive Director appointed by the Council and who manages the affairs of the association on a day-to-day basis within the policies and by laws of the Association.

In addition to the Executive Director, the Coordinator (60% time) provides support to the Association, in particular to the Committees, carries out research, and assists the Committee Chairs in coordinating their activities. The Executive Assistant provides office management, membership services and administrative assistance to the Executive Director and other staff. The Registrar of the Board of Examiners is responsible for the effective day-to-day operations that support the implementation of the Board's regulatory responsibilities. The Administrative Assistant provides support to the Registrar and the Board of Examiners. A part-time Investigator is contracted by the Association to assist the Registrar in complaints investigations.

NSASW Administration Organization Chart



6 Potential organizational Structures

6.1 Key attributes of an effective governance structure

One of the principle components of an effective professional organization is to have an awareness of the key roles and their impact on the system as a whole. It is very important that the membership knows who is responsible for the delivery of services, and who is accountable to the membership for the efficiency of the delivery system.

Governance has been defined as “the process of exercising corporate leadership by the policy-making authority to the organization as a whole in terms of its purpose, control and future and overseeing the organization to ensure that its mandate is achieved.” (George Cuff; *Municipal World* January 2000)

Mr. Cuff, in writing in the *Municipal World*, set out ten (10) basic principles of governance, which have been adapted to the NSASW:

6.1.1. Clarity of mandate

The mandate of the Council (NSASW) must be clearly articulated in legislation, by-laws, and policies, and must be clearly understood. Council must understand what its authority, responsibilities, and powers are so that its mandate can be carried out in a clear, concise manner.

6.1.2. Clarity of Authority

The roles of the Council, Executive, Board of Examiners, and administration must be clearly understood. These should be clearly outlined in legislation, regulations/policies and by-laws. The authority of the Council is to set policy. The role of the Executive Director and staff in advising the Council must be set out in policy for clarity.

6.1.3 Accountability and Responsiveness

As stewards of trust, the Council must not lose sight of the right of the membership to be involved and to be fully informed, with the exception of personnel related matters. Decisions made by Council must be based on a sense of what is in the best interests of the membership. **[Council would suggest that Council's decisions should be based on (a) protection of the public; and (b) what is best for the profession, and (c) what is best for NSASW and (d) what is best for the membership (not just what is best for the membership)]** At the very least, Council must regularly advise the membership of its goals and objectives and strategies, reporting on how effectively these are being achieved. The Board of Examiners has a mandate to ensure that social work in Nova Scotia is being carried on in a manner that ensures public protection.

6.1.4 Clear sense of purpose

The Association requires a clear understanding of its purpose, as stated in its mandate, as well as goals and objectives and strategies. This will maintain relevancy and focus and to be accountable for achieving its targets. Commonly known as a strategic or corporate plan, prepared after consultation with the membership and other relative stakeholders, this documented purpose will engage the membership and result in a clear future direction.

6.1.5 Full disclosure

In order for Council to make informed decisions it must have access to all information required to make the decision. Thus, Council must receive sufficient reports, quality advice, regular updates on issues, and properly prepared reports to enable it to make informed decisions. The Board of Examiners deals with very sensitive and confidential information, which must not be disclosed in a manner that invades private information.

6.1.6 Sense of integration

The Association has become a multi-faceted organization that deals with many issues and “businesses”. In order for the Council to maintain stability, all aspects

of the Association must be operating from the same page. There must be a coherent sense of the issues facing the entire operation, so that efficient use is made of human and financial resources.

6.1.7 Sound relationship between Council and Senior Administrator

The relationship between Council, its committees and the Executive Director is critical to how well the entire system operates. There must be a reciprocal trust, respect and confidence level among these key people in order for the governance structure to work effectively. There must be a willingness to implement decisions, a desire to assist the decision-making body, as well as recognition by the governing body of the professionalism of administration to do its job.

6.1.8 Independence of the Council

The Council receives input from a wide variety of sources (committees, administration, public, membership, and governments). It must recognize that it has the responsibility and role of making the final decisions. At the end of the day, the membership holds the Council accountable, so it is necessary to have policies, by-laws and resolutions of Council to ensure that the Association is governed appropriately. Council, at times, must use alternate sources of independent advice such as specialists in certain areas, such as the auditor, legal, accounting, human resources, and other services.

6.1.9 Orientation and succession planning

Council and Board members should receive a thorough briefing from its senior staff and any other resource relative to its mandate and role. Similarly, Council should be aware of its need for planned continuance. Succession plans should be in place as required in the event of the departure of its key officers and staff.

6.1.10 Continuous performance assessment

Any organization should have in place a process to evaluate the performance of programs and the efficiency of service delivery, in order to make the necessary improvements. A regular, formal process to check its “health” would be

beneficial for the Association. Monitoring its performance and continued viability is a key tool in the Association's accountability to itself and to the public.

6.2 Key attributes of an effective administration structure

The key components of an organizational framework are found on Appendix 10.1. The organizational framework on that chart will form the basis of recommendations to the Association on governance and administration systems. One can see from this chart the clear responsibilities of each structure within the Association and the manner in which both structures (governance and administrative) interact to effectively ensure the success of the Association. As well, one can see the importance of the shared vision and teamwork required so that the Association is functional in all areas.

Council delegates the level of responsibility and role to staff in some measure. What measure that is depends on the capability and quantity of staff resources. What is clear, however, is that staff should be given the responsibility to provide quality information on which Council bases its decisions.

In order for staff to accomplish that, several management processes must be in place in the Association:

- Management control processes
- Financial management processes
- Human resource management processes
- Leadership and accountability processes
- Administrative procedures
- Management information systems
- Strategic or business planning processes

In designing the most appropriate structure for the Association, these processes should be in place, or will be in place, so that Council will be assured that the operation and

management of the Association is effective and provides the level of services and public protection that legislation and Council have identified.

The final decision on any structure for the Association should take into consideration the future of the Association, not only the present staff and Council complement. The structure should champion the goal of the Association as stated in its vision, mission and values statements.

It is a common belief that professional management practices and systems can operate much like the private sector in many ways. The Council can act as a Board of Directors, giving direction in the form of by-laws and policies, to management, who in turn look after the day-to-day affairs of the Association, on behalf of Council.

In return for this delegation of responsibility and authority, management is to provide information to Council to demonstrate its accountability to the Council and to the public.

Just as a Board of Directors and staff of a private sector business strive to attain the same goals, Council and staff of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers strive to attain the same goals, although the drive for profitability mandate is replaced by human and public service.

Organizational relationships are vital for efficient delivery of services to the membership. There must be an effective relationship among members of Council, between Council and management, between management and staff, and among staff. All of these people are vital to the success of the Association. Trust, motivation, and communication are all criteria that will enhance the service to members of the Association.

6.3. Review of similar Canadian organizations

6.3.1 Other Canadian Provinces

We reviewed the structures in Provinces where there are multiple regulatory bodies and professional associations, and in Provinces where one organization represents both the social work profession and carries out the regulatory system.

British Columbia:

In British Columbia, the British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW) is the regulatory body for the profession. It is responsible for the registration process, standards of practice and complaints handling, in order to provide public protection to those who require the services of the profession. The Board consists of 10 -12 members appointed by the Provincial Government, 10 of whom are registered social workers and two are members of the public.

Membership in the College, which is mandatory (with a few exceptions) to practice social work in the Province, is approximately 2,300. The mandate of the College is to protect the public through a strict registration, complaints handling and the development of standards of practice.

Board work is normally carried out by committees who make recommendations to the Board. Some of the committees are registration, inquiry (complaints), quality assurance (standards of practice), finance and legislation.

The College is staffed by a Registrar, an Office Manager, and two part-time professionals, who assist as required.

The British Columbia Association of Social Workers, on the other hand, is a voluntary organization that supports and promotes the profession of social work, and advocates for social justice. Membership is approximately 1,150 (approximately one-half of the College membership, which is mandatory). The association is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of five Executive members, two members at large, nine regional branch members and a representative of the Canadian Association of

Social Workers. The Board meets three times per year and two-three web based conferences are held.

The association facilitates a liability insurance program for members, communicates with the membership, issues a newsletter, and facilitates mentorship among its members. The Association is staffed by an Executive Director and one administration support person. As a professional association, it is distinct from the BCCSW's regulatory role, although the two organizations share common fundamental interests.

Newfoundland:

The Newfoundland Association of Social Workers is responsible for both the regulatory and professional body for registered social work in Newfoundland. The Strategic Plan clearly states that regulation for the purpose of public safety is the priority of the Association.

The Board of Directors governs the Association within the legislation and regulations. The regulatory system is handled through Committees of the Board (Committee of Examiners, Complaints Committee, and Discipline Committee). The Committee of Examiners is appointed from among Registered Social Workers. An additional member is appointed by the Provincial Government.

The Association, which has approximately 1,300 members, is staffed by a full-time Executive Director/Registrar, a part-time (3 days/week) Assistant Registrar, a Social Work Consultant (approximately 30 hours/week) and a full-time Administrative Assistant. Some temporary administrative assistance is employed on an as-needed basis. Legal, information, communication, accounting, and applied research services are contracted as required.

Alberta:

In the Province of Alberta, The Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW) serves as the regulatory body for the profession of Social Work in the Province. Clearly, its

mandates include protecting the public interest, providing direction for registration and regulation, and maintaining the standards of practice and code of ethics for the membership.

ACSW also represents the social work profession in Alberta. It supports membership activities that contribute to its legal obligations, sponsors conferences and communicates with the membership. In addition, to complement its legal obligations, it advocates for policies, programs and services that serve the public interest.

The governing structure is a Council consisting of ten elected registered social workers, four government appointees, the Chair of the Aboriginal Social Work Committee, and the Chairs of the regulatory Committees. Regional coordinators, selected in each region of the Province are not members of the Council, but coordinate regional activities among the membership.

There are approximately 5,900 members of the College, which is staffed by an Executive Director/Registrar and 10 staff members.

6.3.2 Professional Associations in Nova Scotia

There are numerous associations in Nova Scotia that represent professionals. We have chosen to comment on two professional organizations as comparators to the NSASW.

Psychologists of Nova Scotia

This profession has two distinct organizations:

The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS) is a voluntary professional association to represent the profession of psychologists in Nova Scotia. Its web site cites the organization as “a profession, as a science, and as a means of promoting human welfare”. Approximately 80% of registered psychologists are members of APNS. APNS fosters professional development through continuing education,

professional guidelines and communication with its members. APNS is the advocate for psychology in Nova Scotia and regularly communicates with the Government of Nova Scotia regarding matters of the profession. It monitors contemporary social issues and speaks out about in the interest of the public good. A liability insurance program is available to members of the association.

The association is governed by an Executive of seven members, whose role it is to look after the affairs of the association through an Office Manager. Key committees of APNS are Advocacy, Post Trauma Services, and Continuing Education.

The Nova Scotia Board of Examiners of Psychologists (NSBEP), formed in 1980 by legislation, after much campaigning by the APNS, is responsible to ensure public protection through a defined system of the registration and regulation of psychologists in Nova Scotia. All psychologists who practice in Nova Scotia must become a member of NSBEP.

The Board of Examiners consists of seven members, five of whom are registered psychologists and two members from the public appointed by the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Board is responsible, in administering the Psychologists Act, for the registration, re-registration, standards of practice, complaints and discipline handling of members of the Association. The Board must appoint a Registrar to manage the affairs of the Board. Current membership of the NSBEP is approximately 500.

Association of Physiotherapists in Nova Scotia

This profession has two distinct organizations in Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists (NSCP) is responsible for the protection of the public interest in the delivery of Physiotherapist services in Nova Scotia. It is mandatory that all practicing physiotherapists in Nova Scotia become members of

the College. The College is responsible for registration, setting standards of practice, education requirements for entrance and the handling of complaints.

The Board of the College is responsible to direct the affairs of the College within the legislation and regulations. The Board consists of eight members, two of whom are non-college members appointed by the Province of Nova Scotia, and five chosen by the Board who are registered physiotherapists.

The Nova Scotia Association of Physiotherapists is the voice and advocate for the profession in Nova Scotia. It works with members, government, and other stakeholders to improve the practice in the Province. It provides services to its members.

The Association is governed by a Board of Directors, which is supported by an Executive Committee, other committees. A part-time Executive Director provides resources to the Board.

7 Observations and conclusions

The following are the observations and conclusions reached as a result of the research, data gathering, personal and telephone interviews, and review of legislative requirements carried out during this assignment:

1. Associations of Social Workers are regulated to protect the public interest, to ensure that services are provided in an ethical and competent manner.
2. There are different models of self regulation and governance among social worker associations in Canada.
3. The governance and regulatory regimes of Associations of Social Workers are similar to other professional associations.
4. Where there is more than a single association in Canadian Provinces, the association that does not regulate the profession has significantly less

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- membership, and hence, financial capacity than the regulatory organization. (Example – Ontario mandatory regulation association has 11,500 members; volunteer professional association has 3,700 members)
5. From the organizations’ perspective, each system of governance and regulation meets the expectations of the public, governments, and memberships, with few exceptions.
 6. The number of complaints received by Social Worker associations is increasing and requires more resources to process in an efficient manner.
 7. Provincial Governments in Canada have made appointments to regulatory organizations in the interest of public protection.
 8. The size of governance organizations (Councils, Boards, Committees) varies across Canada, ranging from approximately 10 members to 27 members.
 9. Larger associations have professional managers to coordinate the day to day activities of the associations, and to carry out research and social advocacy issues.
 10. NSASW mirrors the legislation under which it was established.
 11. NSASW governance Council and Board of Examiners require improved relationship to enable the association to be more effective.
 12. Staff roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of NSASW require improvement to be more efficient in the future.
 13. NSASW Council and Board require the development of specific future goals and objectives against which the success of NSASW and performance of staff can be measured.

8 Recommendations

The following recommendations will result in improved effectiveness of the NSASW and lead to improved efficiencies in the organization:

8.1 Governance structure

It is recommended that the current governance structure remain in place, that is, the Council and Board of Examiners model. This system is effective in assuring the public interest, while at the same time representing the interest of the profession. There are a number of improvements that can be made to the structure as noted in the following recommendations.

A consistent response from the survey of Executive Committee members is the large size of the Council. It is recommended that the Council membership of 30 be reduced to 15 members. The current structure does not result in efficient decision making, is unwieldy in numbers, and the system of co-members from regions does not assist in efficient decision making. It is recommended that the membership on Council consist of the Immediate Past President, President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair of the Board of Examiners, one faculty and one student representative each from the Dalhousie School of Social Work and from the Universite Sainte Anne social work program, the representative of the Canadian Association of Social Workers, one representative of the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers, and three elected representative of the general membership, one of whom shall be an Aboriginal social worker who does not concurrently fill any of the other positions on Council.

It is recommended that the responsibilities of the Finance Committee and Personnel Committee be given to The Executive Committee. This Committee will be better informed by the Executive Director on all administrative issues impacting on the Association.

The key to the success of this governance model is the recognition and support by the Council of the important regulatory role of the Board of Examiners, and the recognition and support by the Board of the role of the Council in managing the association. It is recommended that the recent successful attempts to improve this relationship be continued through the Liaison Committee, whose Terms of Reference should be

formalized in the By Laws of the Association. It is recommended that the Council and Board should jointly develop an acceptable regular accountability reporting system that provides the necessary data to manage the Association activities and resources. This recognition of these joint roles should be better communicated and enforced at the staff level to ensure that the common goals of the Association can be accomplished. The recognition of these roles must also be reflected in the preparation of the annual financial plan and dues formulation by important input from both sections of the Association.

Implication of the recommendations:

The By Laws of the Association will require the appropriate amendments. This virtually replaces the eight regional representatives on Council with three representatives elected at large. It results in facilitating consistent communication with the region representatives by way of web-based communication, regular personal contact by the Executive Director, and the provision of funding to these regions to promote regional professional events. Regional issues will be addressed directly to the Council through the President for inclusion in any governance review of the issue.

The Council should convene at least three meetings per year (including the annual meeting in May) in a form that is cost effective and allows full discussion of association issues.

This will provide the foundation for the Executive Director and Executive Committee to coordinate the activities and strategic direction for the association on a day to day basis, on behalf of the Council. The Executive Committee reports directly to the Council and may only carry out its activities in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

8.2 Management practices

Modern information technology is not in place within the offices. Lacking these resources can hinder the association in dealing with financial reporting and control matters, information processes, membership resources, decision making processes, and research capacity on a global basis.

Other than the Executive Director, position descriptions have not been confirmed with staff which results in lack of accountability and efficient use of resources.

It is recommended that the role of the Executive Director, who reports directly to the Council, be more formally recognized as the day to day manager of the affairs of the Association in accordance with the by laws and policies of the Association. It is recommended that the Executive Director be held accountable to the duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Position Description through an effective regular reporting system to Council.

It is recommended that the new Executive Director undertake a review of the human resource issues identified and prepare a plan to immediately address them.

It is recommended that position descriptions should be formally approved and implemented and that the process of staff performance reviews be initiated immediately.

It is recommended that a review be undertaken of the Human Resource Policy Manual to ensure the consistency with current legislation, and with the human resource philosophy, and with current financial capacity of the Association.

The level of staff for the NSASW appears to be adequate, although at times, excessive. The major administrative tasks for the Association are the membership registration, re-

registration, special events, and administrative support to the Executive Director and Registrar. There is also administrative support to Council, Executive Committee, Committees of the Board, the Board of Examiners and its Committees. The annual renewal of membership requires significant staff resources at one particular time of the year. The Association may want to relieve this workload and implement quarterly renewals, thereby spreading a large task over four times in the year. Another measure that could be implemented to reduce probable overtime is to engage casual employees to assist current staff during that period of renewals.

In order to improve the efficiency and fiscal capacity of the Association, it is recommended that a strategy be developed for information technology (IT), to assist the Association in communication issues, research capacity, financial controls and accounting, data base issues, and other global issues. The strategy will not only identify the current status of IT within the offices, but will also develop a plan to acquire the necessary systems that will result in financial and other efficiencies within the Association.

9 Future planning

There are appropriate times when an organization has the opportunity to begin a process of identifying and taking control of its future. For the NSASW, it is the need to determine a future, the recent recruitment of an Executive Director, and the implementation of recommendations contained in this report that indicate the need for longer term business planning for the NSASW. Changes in government policy, the future requirement for the profession, the future of the need for professional social workers, and the financial capacity of NSASW may support the need for the Association to be pro active in planning for the future. It is recommended that the NSASW begin a process of identifying its future position, and specific actions to achieve that position.

Council and staff must be working towards the same goals and objectives. However, “if you do not know where you are going, how you get there does not matter.” These changes are sufficient for Council to consider undertaking a long range planning exercise for the Association.

10 Appendices

10.1 Organizational Framework Model

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

