



Strategic Planning

Membership Survey

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

About NSCSW

The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers exists to serve and protect Nova Scotians by effectively regulating the profession of social work. The NSCSW establishes, maintains, and regulates standards of professional practice in order to ensure that Nova Scotians receive the services of skilled and competent social workers who are knowledgeable, ethical, qualified, and accountable to the people who receive social work services.

We believe that the people of Nova Scotia are entitled to receive the highest caliber of care from their social workers. To ensure this we provide membership services to support Registered Social Workers in maintaining the highest standards of professional competence, enabling participation in a broader provincial social work community to advocate for improvement to social policies, programs, and social justice.

Our Values

Our work is grounded in integrity and professionalism which calls on us to be:

Respectful

The College is respectful of the inherent dignity of every individual, and strives for cultural humility and social change.

Accessible

The NSCSW provides communication and services that are accessible province-wide for members, stakeholders, and the public.

Ethical

The NSCSW follows the established national code of ethics that adheres to the values of the social work profession.

Progressive

The NSCSW is proactive in reflecting the values of social work, and supports innovation through education, research, and transformative community engagement, for the sake of social justice.



SWOT Analysis

The Governance Review Committee was asked to construct a Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis of the NSCSW. **A SWOT analysis** is a process where the leadership team identifies the internal and external factors that will affect the organizations future performance. The organizations strengths and weaknesses are the internal factors. Opportunities and threats deal with factors external to the company--environmental factors. The committee identified the following.

Strengths

1. The NSCSW has a defined Structures with its legislation, regulation and bylaws and history of operating within those structures
2. The NSCSW has resources through its revenue which averages at about \$925,000 a year the College also has financial reserves. The College has also invested in newer capital assets and technology.
3. We have relationships with core stakeholders;
 - Members of NSCSW
 - Dalhousie School of Social Work
 - Université Sainte-Anne
 - Social work educators
 - Social work students
 - Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
 - Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness
 - Health and social services associations
 - Advocacy groups
 - Community groups – health care, mental health, poverty, immigration, disability
 - Professional associations
4. The NSCSW has a small and dedicated staff with passion and skills, that are able to get tasks done quickly and effectively and that are improving communications with Stakeholders.

Weaknesses

1. The Perception of the NSCSW has been either negative, or not well informed which has eroded credibility.
2. The NSCSW has not been able to speak for the profession in meaningful on the issues of the day.

3. The NSCSW has not been effective at engaging with membership or stakeholder which has challenged our ability to be a welcoming and/or inclusive staff for new ideas and energy.
4. We have had a lot of staff turnover in the past five years, which has created a loss of knowledge. In addition, our systems have bureaucratized in the past which has led to members and stakeholders having negative experiences with the organization.

Opportunities

1. Social justice is an issue that is in the limelight. We have an opportunity to capture member voice and experience and leverage it for social change that can help challenge the narrative of austerity.
2. There are other like-minded organizations as well as our partners who we can be working in collaboration with to achieve our mandate.
3. There is an opportunity to carve out a path and position on regulation trends around Labour mobility, interjurisdictional practice and the role of ASWB exam and Candidacy.
4. There is an opportunity to frame the important role of social work in our province particular as population continues to age.

Threats

1. The internal guidelines on self-regulation with the government which state that regulatory bodies cannot act as a professional association.
2. The internal instability within the Department of Community Services.
3. The devaluing of social work and care within our society.
4. More work still needs to be done in regards to our regulations.

Membership survey

Using the SWOT analysis a membership survey was designed to solicit member input on the direction the NSCSW should be taking, members were asked to identify and assess trends and perception and provide a baseline assessment of our current pillars for service delivery

Question 1: The College continues to increase engagement with the public and members to build a stronger social work community. How can the College seek new ideas and maintain energy to help engage with both the public and members?

Accessible Professional Development Opportunities:

Members reflected that they would like to see the College provide low cost, relevant educational sessions, particularly in the rural areas. While ensuring that opportunities include a diversity of community groups to cover all concern and ideas for change. Members also reflected that the recent ethics training is a great start "In the past year the College has been successful in hosting ""workshops"" that provide an opportunity for participants to engage with others on relevant topics. These events have been affordable and accessible.

Advocacy:

The College should be writing and sending out position papers on issues like Income assistance rates, traffic stops impacting people of colour, the importance of immigration, etc. Having a strong voice about current government practices that are not in the best interest of the people is important. For instance, poverty needs to be fully addressed looking at the causes that maintain the status quo. Members added to this by saying that we should be speaking out and support social justice issues in our community, instead being "neutral" and assisting in maintaining the oppression the people we work with face. We should be,

“use(ing) the College's power to put pressure on policy makers to engage in equitable redistribution of resources, lobby government, show-up and speak out.”

In addition, members stated that the NSCSW should become more of an advocate for social workers by attending some of their work places more often and listening to more of their stories and what they deal with on a daily basis in their jobs.

Members reflected that the College should be talking to and building stronger partnerships directly with grassroots and non-profit community organizations. Partner with community agencies around issues of shared concern (e.g., building safe injection sites in central areas for intravenous drug users). Talk with and participate in meaningful activism with groups lead by people with lived experience of poverty, mental health, addiction, trauma etc. "focus group community leaders from non-profit i.e. involved in Health coalition, home care workers that visit homes and see what also needs to be done, union leaders involved in work life issues, mental health workers. And social workers in various fields.

"The college should be working harder to make connections with local community and advocacy groups."

Communications Strategy:

Members suggested that we develop an engaging communication strategy that would involve continued polls, surveys and focus groups would be another whether they are on-line or face to face. Additionally, building a social media presence and general publicity through traditional media with stories about social work on the community. Building campaigns or certain

strategies for promoting social work across Nova Scotia using multiple mediums: social media, focus groups, follow-up and exit interviews from service users and social workers.

Members stated that we can ensure public awareness by using the media to tell our stories the College needs to have a stronger role in the media. The College has been silent for too long on many issues while other unions and licensing bodies step forward to give statements and interviews. This is particularly noticeable in the health sector.

The College needs to be present in the lives of some social workers and it needs to re-engage by demonstrating real interest in the work we do and the people that are depending on our work.

Some social workers are poorly represented they need a stronger and positive public profile. This public profile can be built through flyers and info sessions about what social workers do!

"We still our not getting the message of who we are and what we do!"

This public profile could be developed through a series of speaking engagements with groups like Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Ministerial Associations, AGMs of provincial and regional organizations to share our NSCSW views about our province and its future. The College could also increase efforts to host outside agencies and/ or to visit relevant hotbeds of social work employment and activity, such as the DCS Child Welfare branch, or community groups and non-profits. That way, organizations could learn more about the College, the College could learn more about them, and relationships could be established with open lines of communication.

Finally, people have seen that these electronic news letters and comments reflected that people felt they were to the members.

"I have found "the new beginning" refreshing. It feels more inviting and inclusive"

Community Presence:

Many members reflected that they felt the NSCSW is too Halifax Centric and that they need to take time to ensure that they are present in rural communities. Members felt it was important to Increase financial support for membership in regions meeting regularly.

In addition, members felt that we the NSCSW should be involved in community activism engaging through community events such as Pride, NSCSW should have a walking group in the Pride Parade (for example) to engage practising social workers in activism and to broaden communities understanding of the profession of social work.

Question 2: Labour mobility between provinces for Social Work Candidates (SWC) and Registered Social Workers (RSW) continues to be a struggle for social work regulators at a national level. Emerging trends in interjurisdictional practice and e-services continue to create barriers for effective regulation. How can the College address the issue of Labour mobility and interjurisdictional practice?

Assessment Tools:

Members reflected that we should create a tool to measure the necessary qualifications needed to practice social work in NS. The tool ought **not** focus solely on academic criteria, but a more well-rounded, holistic look at the desired skill set. To do this it was suggested that the NSCSW strike a committee of peers to review qualifications and if necessary, interview the applicant to determine suitability for practice in this jurisdiction. Then a social worker from any province might apply and if they meet the requirements can venture to practice in NS.

It was also suggested that regulators in Canada create a national competency assessment that is used by all social workers in every province/territory upon completion of a degree and renewed every 5 years with the goal of aligning core competency requirements in each province. Other ideas reflected on implement national licensure standards and supervision programs. Ensure standards come from viewpoint of support and growth for candidates as oppose to regulation or reaching ridged benchmarks.

Members did speech to the issue of the exam and the majority of those who spoke to the issue stated that they did not believe that this was the best approach. It was suggested that we have supervision and mentorship rather than a ridged national standardized test. At the other end of the it was also suggested that the only way currently is having a national exam. Other disciplines such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, pharmacy, nursing etc., have both a written exam as well as observed structure clinical evaluations.

Creating National Standards:

Members suggested that we work with a national body like the CASW to develop standards and the possibility of national regulatory body. Members suggested that through this national body we could work with our sister organizations to set the same/similar standards for all social workers practicing in our country to make it easier for social workers to work from province to province. Members also reflected that would useful to a develop criteria for **equivalency** for folks who may have been registered in other jurisdictions whose credentials do not quite line up with ours.

“I think it would be useful to allow people who are RSW in other provinces to use that title universally throughout Canada.”

A member reflected that that this issue shouldn't be a "race to the bottom" where the lowest common denominator in standards becomes the universal norm. The Colleges need to work together to develop and implement common entry criteria and standards of practice. It is

important that the schools of social work cooperate and encourage the development of curricula to address the needs of the public, their students and graduates, employers and the colleges.

It was clear that we need to work with other social work regulatory bodies too.

"The College could address this issue by working with other provincial colleges to establish common criteria for inter-provincial/inter-jurisdictional mobility as long as the social worker is a graduate of one of the accredited universities."

It was also suggested that we look to develop better technology for registration mobility.

Candidacy:

Members reflected on our Candidacy program stating in some cases that our Candidacy program should be in line with the other provinces or Candidacy should be the same nationwide. Comments reflected that some members valued our Candidacy process.

"I think it produces better trained social workers."

A review of the candidacy process is key to this as it impacts new social workers and experienced social workers who relocate between provinces to this one. The role of the College in NS should be about changing the candidacy - its cumbersome and has no real teeth. It was also suggested that previous work experience should be included in the Candidate's process.

There were also many comments that stated we should;

"Get rid of the social work Candidacy in Nova Scotia!"

I believe the structure for the social work candidate process in Nova Scotia is troublesome and actually deters social workers from this province. Eliminating the Candidacy period would alleviate some levels of complexity, I would expect. On this issue, it was stated that social workers should not be practicing in 1 province and then come to NS and have to complete a Candidacy requirement and that we should trust in another provinces requirement.

Question 3: There are new internal guidelines within the Nova Scotia government stating that Regulatory Bodies and Professional Associations should be distinct and separate organizations. How can the College best demonstrate the benefits of hybrid organizations towards protection of the public?

Demonstrate Accountability:

Members reflected that we need to ensure that we are demonstrating accountability as regulatory body. Members reflected that it is important that we demonstrate that our primary purpose as a College is as a Regulatory body to protect the public by ensuring that ethics and standards are adhered to. In addition to this, members stated that we should sustain separate regulatory components and should publicly campaign about the professional requirements and the education that social workers obtain.

It was also stated that that we highlight objectively why a distinct regulatory body is not as effective as the hybrid model. It might be helpful to invite provincial authorities into NSCSW to see our organizational structure and outcomes that demonstrate this.

“We have a long history of being a hybrid unit. Our history can hopefully tell its own story.”

We have demonstrated that the College can effectively manage protection of the public while also supporting members to excel as social workers. I think the increased training opportunities of late, which are supported and vetted by the College, show an ability to support members while increasing competencies of members. In addition, to manage this it was suggested that we should create a committee to ensure that our regulatory work is not halted by conflict of interest between the profession and its legislative/licensing body.

There were also concerns that as a small province-college-association, separating the two would be divisive. Working with both organizations, one can target both at the same time, minimize resources (human and otherwise), and may foster better understanding between the two groups. At the end of the day all I really care about is that the person I am seeing for consultation/care has a licence and is good at their job."

Demonstrate the Depth of Support that a Hybrid Model Brings:

It was suggested that perhaps concrete illustrations of the benefits of feedback opportunities (and common interests) between the professional association and the regulatory function could be documented as stories. For example, a profile of the way in which ethics education (informed by regulation) resulted in a social worker making a change in an organization or practice. These "cases" could be published in our newsletter and posted on social media. They could also be highlighted during social work month at various events.

We can start by not using the NS government as a model of practice. Regulation and support can be complementary. Our code of ethics should guide these two branches to avoid conflicts of interest.

Two distinct and yet cooperative departments when well-managed offer the benefit of being proactive and transparent in the exercise of their duties so long as the membership understand and uphold the dictates of their respective sectors.

It was stated that the NSCSW will have a higher engagement rate if the regulatory body and professional association are the same. RSW's have to engage with their regulatory body to become registered, and therefore will engage in other way because of this.

Separate

Many members did agree that separation might be a good option. For instances;

"I do see value in having the regulatory body exist at the national level (to increase portability of RSW title/practice) and maintaining the professional association within NS."

Members reflected that they did not think there were benefits of hybrid organizations. From a member's point of view, we pay fees to the College but they are not there to support us. From a public perspective, they would feel that the College supports their members.

"I agree with the guidelines. As a member, I feel there has been and imbalance weighing on regulation over professional support and development. It creates a wedge between the association and its members."

Others stated that a separation could be positive and develop increased involvement of members leading to a more engaged social work community. "

"It's a real problem in my view. Many social workers feel the association exists to serve them. Perhaps there is a need for both a regulatory body and a professional association as they can have conflicting interests."

Members reflected that social workers need more support from the College and that member could not see how this is going to happen when the mandate is mainly to protect the public. There are few benefits. We should have a separate professional association. The College has always tried to be both but has been primarily regulatory and has NOT served the membership well in other areas. This member stated that they would like a College that promotes the profession and the interests of its members and they didn't see that the College or the previous Association has done that sufficiently.

Question 4: There is a sense that social work as a profession continues to be devalued. However, there is an opportunity to highlight the important role of social work in our province. How can the College highlight the importance of social work in Nova Scotia?

Highlight Individual Achievement:

"Highlighting contributions through personal stories and vignettes from social workers in different areas of the province."

Members indicated that we should demonstrate how individual achievements that social workers bring and how it is different from OT's and nurses, among others. Another suggested that we should take a page from the proverbial book of the social media groups ""Humans of

New York" or "Halifolks," which promote relevance and create conversations by sharing personal stories and profiles of real residents. In our case, we could zoom in on the stories, experiences and activities of real members of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. "

"Notice social work successes, celebrate them, share them. Notice both individual and group achievements."

Members noted that stories can be very compelling - perhaps highlighting the diversity of work that is being completed by social workers in our province through publications (online or print). Featuring profiles/bios on the NSCSW social media/website, etc." Ad campaigns similar to that of the NSGEU in their recent attempts to show individuals working within their union are helpful in terms of humanizing workers

Media Presence:

Members reflected that we should be building a positive media presence, which portray the exceptional work that social workers do in a variety of health, human service and private settings. It was reflected that;

"We need to be visible in media to respond to key social issues."

Advocating for improved systems, for example. Members reflected that it can be a struggle to respond in a timely manner by an organization with limited staff and many volunteers - once some of the committees are more stable, it would be helpful to have a committee committed to preparing timely media releases. By becoming more active in the community and using the power that we have to make statements to media. The general public knows about the strong social justice imperative that social workers have and we need to do more to highlight this. Taking the lead on injustices to people from oppressive social policies.

Standing tall with other health professions

Other members reflected that this could be done through social media campaigns. Adding to this that it might be beneficial asking for customer/client/patient feedback and testimonies for these types of campaigns would also be helpful (albeit difficult). Increase publicity regarding the social work profession perhaps using social media.

"Social media campaign 12 months a year."

It was also suggested that we maintain a speaker's bureau/registry both for our profession internally as well as externally so when opportunities present to have a social worker on a panel, interviewed by the media, speak at conferences, etc. there is a quick list to draw from. NSCSW should be on speed dial at CBC when a social justice issue comes up.

It was suggested that we also need to target other professions to understand what we do. For example, a doctor told a client to stop seeing a MSW for therapy and go see a psychologist. We have a lot of marketing to do particularly in private practice. Advocating with insurance companies to cover MSW services is also required.

Regulation:

Many members felt that we should define or redefine our standards to ensure folks better understood our qualifications. Highlight the specialized education possessed by social workers and strict regulatory guidelines. Present social workers as professionals, and as humans. It was also stated that we could do this by showing that the College enforces standards and by facing the reality of the harms social work has done in Nova Scotia.

Additionally, it was stated that our scope of practice is ill-defined. It is not enough and very confusing to say “**we are social workers, we can do everything**” We are a values-based profession, but values are very broad which can be very positive, but again does not define the profession.

Another member reflected;

I think we should clarify the standards for "clinical social work", introducing a separate licensure and respective scope of practice.

This lack of distinction is devaluing the MSW as an advanced credential. This can be seen in the health system where MSW are being replaced with BSWs. In this case, the member stated that would support the use of an exam as part of a clinical licensing process.

Another member reflected that our new College must take a more proactive role in providing direction to the school of social work in identifying what the competencies are for us. Similar to this it was suggested that these social workers in Nova Scotia need to be taught public speaking, media, advocacy, and writing skills so they are better positioned to put themselves forward when opportunities present.

On the other side of this argument a member reflected that the College must first stop devaluing itself by eliminating the archaic hierarchy leadership model and adopting a relational model. We should not value based how much time they have in the profession or what university they attended, but on what specialized training they have done, and innovations they bring to the community. Stop using 'time in' as a measuring stick for leadership qualification or quality experience. A similar comment reflected that they think it's hard to show the importance of social work without giving into capitalist ideals by giving ourselves more important titles or professional competencies that end up creating more of a divide between us and those whom we serve.

Highlight the Role of Social Work:

Highlight the positive aspects of what social workers do, primarily. In addition, seek interviews with reporters and highlight the diversity of work being done. Seek feedback from service users that illustrates the value of the work. A member offered the suggestion that we have a speaker's bureau, go to hospitals, lawyer's offices, public schools and libraries. Highlight the knowledge base and skill set. A member added that Mental Health is a provincial issue and

crisis, PTSD requires professional intervention and advisers with experience which social workers provide. A member reflected that we should publish positive articles about social work in the media. Presentations about grassroots work done by social workers could be added to this.

Focus on the role of child protection.

In addition, a public ad that depicts our work and honors our principles - much like one displayed for teachers and nurses.

The concept of emotional labour or more feminine work is undervalued across the board in our society. The College could show its valuation of other emotional and undervalued work by championing others who are dealing with the same issue such as mothers on Income Assistance who would like to stay home with their children, health care workers and family members who are tasked with senior care. In addition to this comment, the College should involvement and visibility during appropriate community events and organizations through networking.

The College needs to be clear what social work is in terms the public can understand such that language is not a barrier. Define the goal of and the value of social work in the province. Past achievements, current roles. Strong strategic plan would help. I'm not sure it's devalued or just misunderstood.

Typically people think of SW as child protection workers or clinicians....but there are soooo many more options, we need to start highlighting the diversity in SW practice..

Question 5: Social justice is in the limelight, particularly in relation to the rise of nationalist populist movements that continue to focus on exclusion and austerity. How can we enhance the movement that works towards social justice?

Be Inclusive:

Members stated that we always need to look for ways to include; look for ways to have those with power say yes to those who do not. Create and open safe space for discussion on concerns. Foster create solutions and ways forward from member input. Members have stated

"Be more inclusive in language content."

Start with being more inclusive from within. One member stated that the negative attitudes from private practitioners and the NSCSW towards Child Protection Social Workers needs to be addressed before looking outside the organization. Another stated look within. What barriers is the College creating? For example, the 2-year mentorship program is an unnecessary employment barrier (confirmation bias research aside, Nova Scotia social work is known for being several years behind other Canadian jurisdiction which do not have the requirement themselves) which is exacerbated by various risk factors (eg. minority populations) faced by some entering the profession.

"Building compassion through listening to diversity and building empathy.

Issuing statements about the impacts of generational trauma, how symbols of oppression create a sense of exclusion and are a constant reminder that your agency and control are in the hands of the white majority.

College Should Mobilize:

The College could facilitate and coordinate opportunities for Social Workers to gather and mobilize. For instance, we should build our previous social justice committee with branches throughout province. In addition, developing specific and concrete social justice goals and action plans with membership and make these integral to the College's activities each year.

Members also reflected that we should work with other groups. A member reflected that we need to encourage advocacy efforts by members and more engagement in voluntary community boards and helping associations.

"Join forces with others like minded - collectivity builds the power and empowerment."

We need to be part of more advocacy groups in a meaningful way. We need to be doing research that demonstrates the importance that social justice has in our world- and the real situation that oppressed people face in Nova Scotia. This could look like direct engagement and partnership with government, community groups and / or non-profits are the best avenues to get to the bottom of local social justice issues, and begin grass-roots mobilization.

In addition, members reflected that the College is already taking good steps with the policy and advocacy committee as well as the social justice committee. Work still needs to be done there to engage the public more broadly, but they are in their fledgling stages so it makes sense to focus on engaging members and laying groundwork. In the medium to long term, these committees have enormous potential in enhancing the movement that works toward social justice, each in their own ways. A member reflected we need to continue to work on the social justice framework in a way that is accessible to members- ***"ie not having meetings during work time."*** A member reflected that more involvement for members to volunteer on maybe a smaller scale with social justice initiatives, getting ourselves more out there in the community as advocates, not just as individual social workers who belong to an association, but that the association as a whole is an advocate.

Members reflected that as a College we should first work on gaining more respect and influence from the social workers who pay dues. As we gain more respect from social workers in the community, you can then become more influential in the community overall and work from there on the social justice movement. Another member reflected that we should unify and build on members' trust and belief in the NSCSW as a strong and worthy body. With members' backing its regulatory body, it becomes stronger, and members feel valued and included. Self-worth and a sense of inclusion are the first steps to gaining buy-in. Buy-in is necessary for action.

Another member reflected that we should publicly be taking a stance/side against these nationalist movements as a profession! This can help us increase profile on justice issues such as media responses, articles and public forums. Continue to be voice of reason, challenging black and white viewpoints to illuminate the multitude of grey in the middle.

Members reflected that we should continuously work towards the reconciliation of the critical/anti-oppressive approach with clinical/evidence based practice. This has implications at macro and micro levels. Progressive social movements need to engage with reactionary elements where possible, or at least recognize the salient social issues (rapid social change, dislocation, income/wealth/mobility disparities) that fuel them, and seek to incorporate these concerns in progressive work.

Members reflected that we should be in the forefront of social justice discussions in the province. It would be ideal to have a paid position that focuses on social justice issues, with a committee of members to assist them in their work. Invitations to the larger member body to engage in social justice activities when specific issues arise would also be helpful. In reality, it can be difficult for us to speak up at times due to issues with being seen as speaking against our employer. So, it is helpful to have a greater body make these statements at times

“would help to encourage more social workers to seek public office at federal, provincial and municipal levels; on boards of directors...to seek leadership roles as employees and in governance in the voluntary sector. ”

Help advocate for front line staff to not be so over worked so they aren't just putting out fires! Speak out on behalf of the province's social workers in opposition to those actions that are exclusionary or socially unjust. Production of values-based information which highlights the core principles and rights that all people deserve. Utilizing this for messaging could be the most efficient way to get people thinking about this issue.

It was suggested that we get political. The NSCSW taking a more active role around election time. not promoting political parties, but putting out position papers and encouraging members to attend rallies in between elections. Writing opinion pieces in the media (non-striking newspapers only!)

Community Connection:

The NSCSW needs to get more involved in social justice movements. We need to be less stuffy and more relaxed and able to work within the messiness of social movements. But these movements are getting at what matters most & we should be connected and contributing to these efforts. In addition to this it was suggested that we stand with protesters.

Raise questions, be part of the positive voice, highlight and support communities that are being marginalized. Support communities in developing advocates - for example would it not be great to advocate with the Federation of Foster Families for an advocate from the AFNS Community for Black foster parents?? This could be a volunteer partnership with ABSW.

Strengthen the internal ties within the organization, a strong united front is needed to enhance the social justice movement. A member suggested that we need to be attentive to the issues on the ground, supporting grassroots movements already hard at work. A member reflected.

Given our limited resources of people and time, I think that participation in coalitions makes sense.

Participate in activism. It is rare that professional associates are seen at community events. CASW has taken great initiatives lately to make public statements to announce their stance on topics. This starts the conversation with RSW's and membership holders so that folks can think about the issue. Without clear leaderships, social workers are becoming silent and are unsure how to promote and work towards social justice.

We need to highlight what it is, and look at it beyond just a clinical intervention, one individual at a time... we need to see the opportunities and the voice we have to make a more global difference. "

Education on Social Justice:

A member suggested that we have a course on the TRC recommendations and how as social workers we can implement them. In addition, if we can again create public educational programs that can be delivered by membership in local groups as a guest speaker. If the information is there for members to draw upon. It was suggested that we need to continue to educate people. Many don't know how they are part of the problem but once educated many strive to change. Start at the individual level then progress

Increase public education and publicly challenge institutions that value austerity and exclusion in their practice and policies. We need to be more vocal and visible to the public and to sectors that employ social workers. We should be more than just a regulatory body which appears to be the main focus of the college. The college could create the next annual conference around this theme. There are several of us working as consultants, in policy institutes, advocacy organizations, etc. who could come and speak. You could also host a poster session or area where mezzo social work efforts could be displayed. Extend the invitation for booths to vendors who work alongside social workers or for social justice (Ecology Action Centre, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Family SOS). Have a proper conference and make it for all of Atlantic!"

By once again educating the public as well as other professions in how we make this a part of our mandate.

"Education regarding social justice efforts happening across the province.

A member reflected that often this is hard and that many members are juggling multiple roles as full time social workers, parents, spouses and perhaps caring for elderly parents. It can be difficult to find the time to become involved with social justice initiatives despite having a strong interest. The work place does not often allow or is able to allow time for this. Sometimes it is not

acceptable or is a conflict with our workplaces to be involved in social justice initiatives. Again, much of your membership work for government. We feel powerless, and overworked, and our ideas upon graduating with our BSW's of continuing to participate in social justice movements have been overwhelmed with the reality of day-to-day. You need to recognize this and embrace it. Another member stated that we should employ the principals of the strengths perspective and anti-oppressive social work and start where we are. Take a stand in supporting us in our daily work!

Alec has started some good dialogue re: the Ethics issues, which brings in social justice. We can build on this via our conferences and by offering the members chances to put forward their views on issues; e.g. get signatures on petitions. The College must advocate for these workers to supplement their more clinical practice with social justice issues. Our social workers are well educated in making the connection between individual suffering and the social context that it arises but there practice fields are not supporting this so much. Perhaps this can be addressed at the field level with students in a more explicit expectation that there more clinical work is supplemented by social justice advocacy. Or perhaps Hospital social workers and or Child Protection social workers, etc, can get together and work toward social justice issues that are affecting their clients.

"Social justice is a term still feared by many social workers. There needs to be more education and awareness around macro social work in NS. The college needs to play a role in first demonstrating the interconnectedness between micro, mezzo, and macro social work.

There seems to be a dichotomy between us and them. Shaking fingers never works. It seems to me that the biggest change in public perception that has occurred in the last 20 years has been toward the First Nations. We need to adapt that model.

Question 6: What is the biggest challenge the College faces in the future?

Engagement:

Members stated that the College needs to keep social workers interested in what is going on. Finding ways to engage with social workers lots of us work full time and go home at night and we are exhausted and burnt out. No energy to get involved in anything else then maintaining committed membership. The challenge to engage members to do the work that needs to be done with regard to social justice.

Many members reflected that they didn't know much about the College, but that they have continuously heard throughout my career that the College did nothing. I think that that might be changing but people said that for many years so that thought sticks with me. Another member reflected that rebuilding its reputation with its members as an association that listens and cares, and most importantly, is willing to adapt to changing societal, technological, personal needs, wants, inventions, etc. This was echoed that in the statement that

Revitalizing its relationship with its membership and creating a positive public image and relationship with the community that engenders the values of Social Work.

A member reflected that the foundational challenge that the College faces is the relationship with own members. A member reflected that the only focus is on private practitioners and metro social workers. Paying high dues for no benefit is frustrating and maddening. Members reflected to this point that they have a fee to pay at the end of the year, and that is the only time we hear from the College.

The College is supposed to be the voice for social workers, however, there is no advocating or promoting.

In addition to this a member reflected that is becoming very discouraging to pay the fee only to not be able to be a voting member due to rural setting. Also, discouraging that all is downloaded to the social workers (training, appreciation weeks, etc.). And often fees attached to training.

On the other side of that a member reflected that we still have much work to do regarding social worker's perception and understanding of licensure." Getting our membership to see the value in the College for each of them.

Finances:

Members also reflected that maintaining the mandatory fee imposed on social workers annually social workers is causing social workers to moving out of the province for employment. In addition, it was reflected that we have low membership rates. Another member reflected that we need to keep costs to members down

Leadership:

Members reflected that it has been a challenge to maintain a strong, cohesive, coordinated management team. Added to this was the need to have an Executive Director that can communicate appropriately to the public and membership and someone who presents as professional.

In addition, a member reflected that strengthening the work of the Board of Examiners and making sure that every lesson learned is automatically shared with members in enough detail to understand the professional standard, how it was or was not met and how to do a better job of meeting that standard. On that note, it was reflected that we need to tighten the time it takes to resolve complaints. Make the process as professional as possible.

Maintaining Relevance:

Members reflected that we needed to maintain relevance with our members. We should strive to become a true resource for its members and the public we serve and being valued by fellow health professions. A member reflected that they didn't think the College really gets what its own members think of them. A member stated despite my own attempts to be part of the

system, and make changes I still do not see any support or relevance from the College in my career. Two words that appeared were;

Validity

Credibility.

Having any impact with social workers. Most see the College as a money-making business, just collecting our (way) too high registration fees and offering NOTHING in return. A member reflected that they didn't see a whole lot of buy-in to the College other than that social workers have to pay into it in order to work as a social worker. There is not a strong allegiance to the College or a feel that we benefit from being a member. I have heard from other social workers who inquire about paying less fees because they will only be practicing for a few months or for a summer, etc. there is no wiggle room and no understanding, which seems to go against social work values.

I think it will be a challenge for the College in the future if they appear to be capitalist bureaucrats and not actually representative of the members or the values of social work.

Right Wing Agenda:

Members reflected that the right-wing agenda that Trump is expressing in the US that we see rising here is a real challenge. That keeping medicare, fighting racism and hate in society, and cuts to social programs. Providing a service in our many areas of work for all. The loss of our voices for fear of retaliation (by government). We are somewhat timid in confronting government about the oppressiveness and social control of people. A society that puts little value in those who are not of financial value, our role will be significantly challenged.

A member reflected that they were becoming increasingly frustrated with the number of students seeking placements due to universities accepting more and more distance Ed/online courses. I tend to find these students are not as prepared and capable to practise. I am concerned about the job market becoming saturated. Another member reflected that ensuring jobs that are traditionally staffed by social workers REMAIN staffed by social workers only. There has been a de-professionalization and chipping away at our traditional roles.

A member reflected that the he hybrid organization in the context of NS government statements on separation. How this comes together and is translated into public protection will be key.

Social Work Identity:

Members reflected that they did not believe we as a profession had clarity of who and what the profession is. This identity is challenged even more when feedback from NSHA about role of Social work in Mental health and Addictions that we are not working within our roles. Keeping up with increasing emphasis on manualized clinical care and reconciling this with traditional holistic and critical social work perspectives. It was reflected that we need to do a better job delineating our profession from others (OT, human service workers, Registered

Counselling Therapists). This was followed by there is a concern that other professions are creeping into social work turf. This includes counselors, nurses, OTs.

Changing credentials and approaches is another challenge. For instance Credential Creep.. I see it in the US now. Most social workers are MSW. On the other hand, when losing ground to 'human service technicians' and even software (eg. Therapy via online CBT modules), especially as cost cutting manualized clinical care continue to dominate.

A member asked the question how political are we willing to be, and what ethical imperative to we have to speak truth to power... even if social workers themselves are a mechanism of that power. Representing a profession with a historical social justice prerogative that is not shared by all the membership. Maintaining the focus of our expertise on what was once called 'man in society'. What we understand that is foreign to most of the other helping disciplines is the relationship between individuals and their psycho/social/biological/spiritual contexts. On this note, it was echoed by we are in danger of making our focus the individual (e.g... DSM5; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; Mindfulness in clinical work).

The biggest challenge that we need to work through is the role social justice will play- will it be token or real work?

Members reflected that we need to be able to celebrate and embrace the diversity of social work practice and think beyond clinical and child protection practice.

Members reflected that there is a push for better regulation, which could encompass an exam portion of the registration process. All professional associations will struggle with this because every RSW has a different education experience based on professor and University. The College will also struggle with marking these exams and creating a process for SW's that do not pass.

It has new members coming in with a vast array of experience that complement their Social Work profession, but can exceed the existing senior Social Work regime. Meaning that teh SWC is challenged by either the inability to match skills for supervision or territorialism, which stunts the growth of the profession.

Question 7: What changes, strategies, and/or shifts in direction can the College take to face these challenges?

Advocacy:

Members stated that we should be participating in social activism and public policy initiatives in the interest of public and vulnerable populations in particular (e.g., First Nations, welfare recipients, working poor, people of colour, intravenous drug users etc.). In addition, actively engaging with politicians, bureaucrats and fellow health professions e.g., nurses' union, teacher's union, college of physicians, First Nations organizations. If we want to be heard on issues, we need to develop solid partnerships that allow us to know what major players' main concerns are, know if we are viewed as being part of a solution or an impediment or irrelevant

and do something about that to turn it around in a way that is to be consistent with our vision, mission, values etc.

Another member stated that we needed to be better advocates and influence on social workers. Get rid of the candidacy program, take more of an interest in what social workers are doing in the province (particularly in child welfare where most social workers are hired). Advocacy and keeping connected with social workers in the field about shifts within MH and Addictions towards medical model and away from tier 2 and social determinants of health. Instead of challenging the veracity of different social work roles or turning a blind eye to social workers devaluing each other for their given professions, the college should work to emphasize the need for social workers in many capacities and demand a "seat at the table" for policy, legislature and inter-agency meetings. Individual social workers strive for social justice in our practices, but often do not have authority backing them up in their desire for change within their professional roles, maybe this can be changed.

We have a tremendous amount of BSW's in Nova Scotia. I think we have to work with Dal to expand the current distance MSW, and possible work with government to incorporate courses into the training of their social workers before the MSW becomes the overall standard.

A member reflected that could be a shift in the quality of work life for social workers if the College could work on improving the work life of social workers by addressing the continuous situation of too much work/high caseloads, and little funding given to agencies, organizations to improve the worker/client ratio, etc. Making systemic changes (to improve workplaces) would change society. Having time to truly connect with clients/patients is vital to being of service to our clients/patients.

There is a need to figure out and listen to what government is concerned about. What are the overall government priorities? (Ex: growing the economy? I believe social workers positively impact the economy but is there any research available about the impact of social work on economic growth? and can we articulate this to government?). It was suggested that NSCSW staff and leadership meet with employers. Emphasising our unique skill sets and benefits to clients/patients/community.

Continuous Engagement:

Members reflected that we need to keep asking for feedback. Be open on criticism and self-evaluation. Increase the visibility about of what the College can offer social workers and ways to be involved in creative ways. Planning meetings, stakeholder engagement, and research about processes in other provinces would greatly help this. Looking to your social workers in this province to determine how we can best meet the obligations of new social worker's development but create a better process for becoming a Registered Social Worker.

It was stated that we need to addressing apathy. To do this we need to engage the membership. Members do not feel they have a strong voice. Participation seems centralized to HRM and not easily accessible to those outside HRM and/or those whose workplace would not

support participation due to already busy daily schedules. In addition, it was stated that we need create

More opportunities for online feedback when members cannot or will not attend AGMs.

Include attendance in these online or in-person meeting as professional development hours for annual membership renewal. Continuing to reach out to members for input and engage the public through public presentations on topics that come to us as areas of concern.

It was clearly stated that

"Discover Nova Scotia and leave the city to explore the rural communities in the province where social workers are employed."

A member stated that we need more frequent, general, open conversations between members and the college (i.e. group discussions, open houses, informal committees). This included improved response times between NSCSW staff and those corresponding with them. A member stated that they think the NSCSW needs to show more flexibility and understanding when members come to them about problems rather than just sticking to "policy" and not bending them.

Another section of members stated that continued commitment to the Policy and Advocacy as well as Social Justice committees. A member stated that think they need to be more collaborative in the community, working with different organizations to support social workers who work within them.

In one members opinion, the changes in engagement and communication in the past year have been very helpful to create a more interested and energetic professional organization.

Another member reflected that ensuring that social workers who choose to return will not have to go through complex process. In addition, a member stated that they struggle with why we have to be registered with the College. As a professional, working as a child welfare social worker with the government of NS, I am bound by the legislation of the Children and Family Services Act. I don't understand why I also need to be registered with the College.

Develop a strategy that would be safe for social workers to bring forward their experiences of being shut down, excluded, ignored. Ask the public what they think our role could be. Keep putting the emphasis on the protection of the public. We are not protecting them as a paternalistic point of view but from a humanitarian point of view. Protecting the public is not just about having a right to make a complaint but is about protecting their rights too.

Fees

A member stated that they want the NSCSW Make the annual fee more affordable for all workers. Also move the location to a more affordable rent. Reduce annual rates and payment due dates.

Leadership:

Members reflected that we needed to use our collective voice to champion the change makers. Hire people who have lots of energy and passion to lead the way. In addition to this member stated that it was important that we have Gender balanced board especially considering the majority of RSWs are female. Ensure boards and committees have a range of representation from different fields and levels of social work.

One member suggested that we

create a clinical license that includes an exam in process, but is not simply a duplication of a psychology exam, but is representative of the profession and its critical/systemic/holistic analysis.

Develop and offer high quality professional development such as that offered by the Register Nurses Professional Development Centre.

A member suggested that we stay a regulatory body. Support the creation of a separate professional association. Ensuring transparency in all actions would help. It would also be important to continue to reach out to members with the message and open nature that includes members.

Question 8: Based on your experience, what is your perception of the College?

Sense Fresh Money Efforts Association Communications
Benefit School Think Limited Social Work
Necessary Evil Positive Social Media
Social Workers Population Support
Politically Professional Simply Experience
Disorganized Poor Forward Ethics Increasing Inclusive
Social Justice

Question 9: In your opinion, what is the public's perception of the College?

Understand Heard **Idea** Guess **Role** Presence
Public Knows Unknown **Exists** Profession
Think Doubt **Aware** Care **Perception** Hear
Little Negative **Believe the Public**

Question 10: In your opinion, what is the professional communities' (Doctors, Lawyers, Nurses, Teachers...) perception of the College?

NSCSW Limited **Questions** Idea **Aware** Unknown
Professions Important **Think** Unsure
College Regard **Professional** Entity
Social Workers Lawyers **Regulatory** Roll **Little**





