

## College Fee Increase Communiqué

Despite steadily increasing financial demands and significant inflation, NSCDN fees have remained unchanged for six years. For the past two years, the NSCDN required cash from the contingency fund (reserve) to balance the annual budget and cover these increasing costs. The ongoing use of reserve funds to finance operating expenses or avoid annual fee increases is not a desired financial practice. The Board communicated an impending fee increase at the 2023 Annual General Meeting. At the September Board meeting, fees were discussed. The NSCDN board approved an increase in College fees to address this current and future need. The annual license fee will be \$600 for the 2024 license renewal, and fees for the 2025 and 2026 renewals will be \$620 and \$640, respectively. The same percentage increase will also be applied to other College fees. On December 1, 2023, the initial application fee will increase from \$85 to \$130, and the service fee for labour mobility verification requests will increase from \$25 to \$40. The Board will conduct a comprehensive review of registration fees every three years.

In keeping with best practice, a key financial goal of the College is to maintain a contingency fund equal to at least one year's operating costs. The funds may only be utilized with the Board's approval for:

- Unexpected legal fees, hearing-related costs or related unforeseen expenses associated with discipline, complaint, or inquiry issues.
- Other significant projects or capital expenditures that the Board deems to be of long-term strategic importance to the College. An example is an IT system overhaul.

The purpose of this communiqué is to be transparent, providing the reasons for the increase in fees.

## Fee Increase Q & A

### Why do dietitians pay an annual NSCDN licensure fee?

The NSCDN has a legislated regulatory mandate as defined in the *Dietitians Act*. Dietitians pay fees so that the NSCDN can fulfill its regulatory functions in the public interest, maintaining public confidence and safety while remaining financially sustainable. Self-regulating professions' primary source of revenue is license fees to cover the costs of a regulatory bodies' core functions: registration, professional conduct, continuing competency, and the setting of practice standards.

### When will dietitians pay the increased fee?

The renewal fee of \$600 will be applied to the 2024/25 fiscal year renewal application. Under the NSCDN, the annual renewal deadline will be February 28. All other College fees will increase on December 1, 2023.

### Why will fees increase?

NSCDN's expenses are directly related to supporting the legislated mandate specified in the *Dietitians Act*. Costs associated with this mandate include board governance (e.g., training, meetings), organizational and practice updates related to changes in legislation, the ongoing monitoring of regulatory requirements, and updates to practice standards. As a regulator, there are legal costs associated with registration inquiries, complaints, and legislative changes. Decisions must be made in a fair and

defensible manner that that can be upheld. The College is seeing increased complexity in registration applications, is reviewing capital projects, and has been impacted by inflation. As with any organization, the NSCDN has administrative expenses including an office lease, telecommunications, information technology (IT), finance (e.g., audit, bank charges, bookkeeper), and human resources (e.g., salaries, benefits, honoraria).

The 2023 proclamation of the *Dietitians Act* has impacted registration numbers in recent years, and income from renewal fees has subsequently decreased. The modernized legislation enables the profession to regulate not only the use of professional titles, but practice. Therefore, an active practice license came into effect which led to resignations from those not practising dietetics. Whereas an association’s fees and membership are voluntary, a college license is required to practice. Under the Nova Scotia Dietetic Association, some dietitians chose to maintain their license despite their employment status.

### **What does the NSCDN need to consider when setting fees?**

When drafting the annual budget, the Board sets the level of expenses required to fulfill its mandate, the revenue necessary to cover those expenses, and, by extension, the annual license fee. The NSCDN invests time and effort to optimize its resources. Services are shared among provincial regulators and Canadian dietetic regulators. There has been a significant increase in the use of virtual meetings which create financial efficiencies by reducing travel-related expenses.

### **How does the NSCDN licence fee compare with other health regulators?**

When considering a fee increase, the Board reviewed licensing fees of regulatory bodies in Nova Scotia comparable to the NSCDN and other dietetic regulatory bodies in Canada. The average fee was \$647.00 and \$528 respectively (Table 1). Although the regulatory bodies share the same mandate, they each have their own unique legislation. Various factors affect budgets and licensing fees, including the size of the profession, the requirements of the profession’s legislation, strategic priorities, and the nature and number of professional misconduct cases. It is very difficult to meaningfully compare fees due to these variables.

**Table 1: Comparable Licensure Fees**

<b>Nova Scotia regulatory bodies comparable to the NSCDN</b>	<b>Licensure fee</b>	<b>Dietetic regulatory bodies in Canada</b>	<b>Licensure fee</b>
Counselling Therapists	\$460	Saskatchewan	\$330
Social workers	\$470	Prince Edward Island	\$350
Physiotherapists	\$480	Newfoundland and Labrador	\$450
Dental hygienists	\$525	New Brunswick	\$452
Respiratory therapists	\$525	Manitoba	\$595
Occupational therapists	\$530	Alberta	\$599
Paramedics	\$535	British Columbia	\$630
Registered nurse	\$570	Ontario	\$654
Nurse practitioner	\$675	Quebec	\$694
Psychology	\$805	<b>Average</b>	<b>\$528</b>
Pharmacy Technician	\$853		
pharmacy	\$1,340		
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$647</b>		

### **What are the benefits of holding a license with the NSCDN?**

Registrants receive many benefits from paying an annual licensure fee and holding a licence, including the ability to:

- legally practice as a dietitian or nutritionist in Nova Scotia;
- use the protected titles and designations, including "Dietitian", "Registered Dietitian", "Nutritionist", and "R.D.";
- consult a practice consultant to support practice;
- access the NSCDN practice support tools (e.g., online learning log) and regulatory education (e.g., Jurisprudence eLearning Module) to support practice;
- contribute to decision-making on the NSCDN board or committees to influence dietetic regulation and uphold public protection in Nova Scotia;
- be authorized to prescribe nutrition-related drugs and agents;
- serve as a voting delegate and participate in the NSCDN annual meeting, Board elections, and other special events; and
- refer your clients to the online Dietitian Directory to verify credentials.

### **How can I view the financial records of the College?**

The annual audited financial statements are posted on the College website (under [Dietitians/Annual General Meeting](#)). A financial audit is completed annually by a chartered professional accountant and is a rigorous review of management and governance practices with the intent to detect any fraud or error.

If you have questions, please email the Chair of the Board, Carole Thompson, at [boardchair@nsdassoc.ca](mailto:boardchair@nsdassoc.ca).