Consultation Plan and Solidarity Motion: Signing Open Letter by No One Is Illegal
April 16, 2020

Background

We are in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. On April 14, 2020, local organization No One Is Illegal – Halifax/K’jipuktuk published a press release titled “Nova Scotians call for immediate healthcare access for migrants” (Appendix A). In the press release, the organization included a link to an open letter titled “Nova Scotia: COVID-19 pandemic highlights urgent need to ensure full healthcare access to those uninsured” (Appendix B) and encouraged “health care professionals and concerned community members” to sign on. As of April 16, the letter has been signed by 226 organizations and individuals, including many Dalhousie students, faculty and community members, the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, the Halifax Refugee Clinic, and NSPIRG.

The press release and open letter were brought to the attention of the executive on Tuesday, April 14, and executives agreed that the spirit of this letter was in line with the Union’s general principles of equity and advocacy efforts to support international students.

Motion to Be Served to Council

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting the well-being of not only DSU members but also the population of Nova Scotia as a whole; and

WHEREAS some temporary foreign workers, some international students, some asylum seekers and undocumented residents of the province are not covered under provincial health care (MSI); and

WHEREAS the Dalhousie Students Union aims “[t]o encourage in the students of the University an awareness of their responsibilities in the local, provincial, national and international community” (Bylaw 3.1.a); and

WHEREAS international students and the DSU have already been advocating for better health coverage under MSI for international students; and

WHEREAS on April 4, 2020, local community organization No One Is Illegal – Halifax/K’jipuktuk (NOII) published an open letter to Premier McNeil and Minister Delorey calling on all levels of governments, health institutions, and public health leaders to work together to
1. Ensure COVID-19 assessment centres have an explicit policy to be free and accessible to all, regardless of immigration status;
2. Recognize that existing health care pathways such as community clinics and hospitals must be free and accessible to all people, regardless of immigration status, and work to remove barriers such as registration fees and bills, and implement appropriate staff training;
3. Develop a clear and explicit public messaging campaign to inform people that assessment and care is available to all residents, without charge, at COVID-19 centres and beyond;
4. Ensure MSI (Nova Scotia healthcare) coverage for all residents of NS, including access to care for COVID-19; and

WHEREAS NOII has asked for Nova Scotia residents and organizations to sign on to the letter; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the DSU stand in solidarity with migrants without access to healthcare and sign on to the open letter “Nova Scotia: COVID-19 pandemic highlights urgent need to ensure full healthcare access to those uninsured,” written by No One Is Illega – Halifax/K’jipuktuk; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT individual DSU councillors, offices, and societies be encouraged to sign on to the letter and/or pass similar motions of solidarity and support; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the DSU share the open letter on social media and encourage members to sign on as well; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the DSU affirm its support for fairness and adequate healthcare for international students and all other migrants who currently lack access to MSI.

Consultation Plan

The following is a plan for how stakeholders will be consulted on signing this open letter, in accordance with the Consultation Policy. All quotes are excerpts drawn from said policy.

Relevance To Consultation Policy

“1.1 Prior to the submission of a proposal to Council, consultation will be undertaken in respect to:

[...]

1.1.4 When there is a desire for the DSU to state support or disapproval in respect to a specific situation.”
The desire for the DSU to sign this open letter falls under 1.1.4, as it is a desire for the DSU to state support for healthcare for migrants.

**Strict Time Constraint**

“1.2.6 Where a proposal is under a strict time constraint and a full consultation process cannot happen before a decision is needed, the Councillor or Executive Officer will email any Council Representatives and Societies which would be considered a stakeholder. This e-mail shall:

1.2.6.1 Contain a full explanation of what is being proposed with any supporting information providing context;
1.2.6.2 Be sent no later than 24hrs prior to its submission to Council for debate;
1.2.6.3 State what steps will be taken to more thoroughly consult with the stakeholder after the submission of the proposal;
1.2.6.4 Provide the date, time and location of the Council meeting at which it is to be debated.”

This proposal meets the requirements for “strict time constraint” as the COVID-19 situation is developing daily, and Council’s last meeting of the academic year is on April 22. The open letter emphasizes that government must “act now to ensure care for everyone.”

As such, the first step will be to circulate this document, along with the original press release and open letter, to Councillors via email. Because this issue will be of interest and importance to all students, the email will be circulated to all councillors. All councillors will be encouraged to provide input into the proposal, and to circulate to their constituents for review and feedback.

**Plan for Further Consultation Prior to and Following Council Decision**

In accordance with the consultation policy cited above, this plan shall be included in the email specified under 1.2.6.

The policy outlines the following steps for consultation:

1.2.1 Determine what stakeholder the proposal is in respect to, either in representing their voice and/or the impacts it could have on them.

So far, the following stakeholders have been identified:
- International Students
- Students in the Faculty of Health
- Students in the Faculty of Medicine

Councillors are invited to suggest further stakeholders.
1.2.2 Provide the identified stakeholder an opportunity to give thoughtful consideration to pertinent issues, consult their members and tender their opinions and advice.
1.2.2.3 The stakeholder must be provided with the same information from which the proposal is being derived so as to foster informed comments.
1.2.3 When determining whether to move forward in taking the proposal to Council, opinions and advice from the consulted stakeholder shall be taken into consideration.
1.2.4 Proposals taken to Council shall note which stakeholder has been consulted with and their support or disapproval of the proposal.

Concurrent with the email to Council regarding this proposal, an email will be sent to bodies representing the stakeholders listed above, including but not limited to: the International Students Community Representative on DSU Council, The Dalhousie International Student Association, the Faculty of Health Representative on DSU Council, and student associations and societies associated with the faculties of health & medicine, and/or their departments. These representatives and associations will be asked to provide input into the proposal and will also be asked to circulate to their constituents/members for review and feedback. All stakeholders will be provided with all information available.

Given the issues outlines under “strict time constraint,” the proposal will be brought to Council for debate on April 22nd. However, if significant negative feedback on the proposal is received from Councillors or stakeholders prior to said council meeting, a motion shall be put forward for the proposal motion to be struck from the agenda.

All support and/or disapproval received up to the meeting of Council will be reported to Council during motivation for the motion.

3.2 In attempting to identify which consultation tools to use and how to apply them, the Councillor or Executive Officer should discuss options with the Communications and Outreach Coordinator.

The executive will consult with the Communications and Outreach Coordinator about options for further consultation.
APPENDIX A: Press Release: Nova Scotians call for immediate healthcare access for migrants

NO ONE IS ILLEGAL - HALIFAX/K’JIPUKTUKN' TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2020-READING TIME: 2 MINUTES

Halifax, NS (April 14, 2020) – In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 200 health care workers, community members, and organizations in Nova Scotia are urging provincial officials to ensure access to healthcare for migrants who do not currently have health coverage. The open letter, addressed to Premier Stephen McNeil and Minister of Health and Wellness Randy Delorey, was initiated by the migrant rights group No One is Illegal – Halifax/K’jipuktuk (NOII-Hfx).

Nova Scotians denied access to insured health services include undocumented residents, some temporary foreign workers, some international students and some asylum seekers.

“We need COVID-19 assessment centres and related care to be explicitly accessible to all people, regardless of immigration status,” reads an excerpt from the open letter. “Beyond this, we must recognize that people experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 will seek care through community clinics and hospitals, and therefore these sites must also be free and accessible to all.” The open letter, with the full list of demands, can be viewed online here.

Ontario became the first province to announce that it would temporarily expand health insurance coverage to include all migrants in response to COVID-19. The governments of Quebec and British Columbia followed suit.

“In order to fight this pandemic we need to ensure everyone in Nova Scotia has the health care they need, regardless of migration status” said health care activist and NOII-Hfx member Chris Parsons. “We need to eliminate all barriers to people accessing care, and that’s even more important in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Health care professionals and concerned community members are encouraged to sign on to the open letter.

NOII-Hfx has also recently released a community advisory with information and resources for migrants needing support in the context of COVID-19.

NOII-Hfx calls for permanent residency status for all, including access to all public services such as health care.

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Media Contact

No One is Illegal - Halifax/K’jipuktuk

NOII.Hfx@gmail.com

APPENDIX B: Nova Scotia: COVID-19 pandemic highlights urgent need to ensure full healthcare access to those uninsured

Dear Friends,

As you are all aware, COVID-19 is a pandemic that has become a public health emergency in Canada. Now more than ever, we need all levels of government to ensure health care access is available to all. No One is Illegal (NOII) - Halifax/K'jipuktuk is a collective that advocates and fights for the rights, dignity, and respect of migrants and refugees, as well as all those living with precarious immigration status. We ask that you support the following open letter, addressed to Premier Stephen McNeil and provincial Health Minister Randy Delorey, and copied to Halifax Mayor Mike Savage and Nova Scotia’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr Robert Strang.

This letter may be posted publicly and released to the media with signatories. It may also be published, or posted online.

It is open for signatures from Nova Scotia residents, health care workers and organizations (particularly those in the health sector) in Nova Scotia.

If you have any questions, please contact us at noii.hfx@gmail.com

Thank you!

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April 4, 2020

Dear Premier McNeil and Minister Delorey,

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 is now a pandemic, and a public health emergency in Canada. Uninsured individuals in Canada are often denied access to care and can face insurmountable debt. We are deeply concerned about these pre-existing barriers to health care for uninsured individuals in Canada, and the potential public health implications in the context of a pandemic. As a group of health care providers, health organizations and community members, we call on all levels of government, health institutions, and public health leaders to act now to ensure care for everyone.

The uninsured include some temporary foreign workers, some international students, some asylum seekers and undocumented residents. We need COVID-19 assessment centres and related care to be explicitly accessible to all people, regardless of immigration status. Beyond this, we must recognize that people experiencing
symptoms associated with COVID-19 will seek care through community clinics and hospitals, and therefore these sites must also be free and accessible to all.

We demand that all levels of government, health institutions, and public health leaders work together to immediately:
1. Ensure COVID-19 assessment centres have an explicit policy to be free and accessible to all, regardless of immigration status;
2. Recognize that existing health care pathways such as community clinics and hospitals must be free and accessible to all people, regardless of immigration status, and work to remove barriers such as registration fees and bills, and implement appropriate staff training;
3. Develop a clear and explicit public messaging campaign to inform people that assessment and care is available to all residents, without charge, at COVID-19 centres and beyond;
4. Ensure MSI (Nova Scotia healthcare) coverage for all residents of NS, including access to care for COVID-19.

Source: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe7-gMxk4K1Bqi6N6XugQ8mhYCkMxYWvhBOOSXl7K6gMOyGoA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe7-gMxk4K1Bqi6N6XugQ8mhYCkMxYWvhBOOSXl7K6gMOyGoA/viewform)