

Law Amendments

Bill 147 – An Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network

November 29, 2012

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide support for Bill 147 – an Act Respecting the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network.

My name is Susan Wedlake and I am the Registrar of the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.

I know that you have already heard from several of my colleagues with respect to their support for the Bill but I would like also take a few minutes to explain why the College of Pharmacists is a very strong supporter of the proposed legislation.

The Network of Regulated Health Professions has accomplished a great deal over the past few years with informal cooperation among the Network members, but it is clear that the current legislative framework, with its 22 separate statutes, has limitations to the amount of cooperation and collaboration that can occur.

This is because these statutes do not expressly authorize collaborative activity among the provincial regulatory bodies. This creates unnecessary barriers to the very collaboration that could improve regulation and public protection.

The proposed legislation will enhance the current regulatory system by enabling a variety of collaborative regulatory processes, in which each College is current engaged, but where statutory barriers to carrying them out in a collaborative fashion exist.

Examples of regulatory processes that will be enabled by the proposed legislation are as follows:

Bill 147 will enable the collaborative investigation of complaints.

Currently, the regulatory bodies are statutorily prohibited from sharing complaint investigation information with each other.

Consider the following: if a patient in a hospital receives the wrong drug and suffers negative consequences, he or she should be able to hold someone accountable. In many cases, because health care professionals practice in a collaborative fashion, it is difficult to know, before an investigation, which health care professional is actually responsible for the error. Did the physician prescribe the wrong drug, did the pharmacist dispense the wrong drug or did the nurse administer the wrong drug? Three different investigative processes

would be necessary to address one matter because, currently, the regulators have no authority to share information with each other.

The proposed legislation will authorize one joint investigation, which is a win-win-win for the health professionals involved, the regulatory bodies involved and, more importantly, the patient.

On a go-forward basis, inter-professional practice is dramatically increasing and therefore there will be more and more complaints involving more than one profession.

Another example of a process that will be enabled by Bill 147 involves scopes of practice.

With the proposed legislation, scopes of practice could be more effectively shared, interpreted or modified where appropriate in order to help address gaps in the healthcare system and respond to the needs of the public more quickly and efficiently.

The proposed statute would allow for the sharing of competencies where appropriate and recognize overlaps in scopes of practice.

Therefore, by enabling a process that would legally authorize healthcare professionals to practice at their full scopes, the result will be the proper “deployment” of all our Nova Scotia healthcare professionals and improved access to the healthcare system for the public.

The third example of a regulatory process that will be enabled by the proposed legislation is a joint registration review/appeals process.

The new *Fair Registration Practices Act* requires all regulators to have a formal registration appeals process including having an expert Appeals Committee, fully trained, in place.

With the proposed legislation, regulatory bodies could share one committee to conduct these reviews/appeals.

This would be a tremendous benefit with respect to time, cost and expertise. It would also provide enhanced objectivity and transparency for the appellant.

Another example of a collaborative review process that will be enabled by Bill 147 involves the availability of a standardized complaints resolutions committee that could review complaints dismissed by provincial regulatory bodies.

This, again, would provide greater objectivity and transparency and would create enhanced confidence of the public in the methods used by the regulators to deal with complaints made by the public about healthcare professionals.

Finally, another possible positive outcome of enabling enhanced collaboration through legislation is the creation of a joint audit committee that could be called upon at the request of a regulator, or several regulators, to engage in a quality assurance process review.

For example, the College of Physicians, the College of Registered Nurses and the College of Pharmacists could ask such a committee to review the practices of the various healthcare professionals at a methadone clinic to determine if quality improvements should be made.

This would be of benefit to the individual practitioners, the clinic as a whole and, most importantly, the public.

This same committee could also be used to conduct Quality Assurance reviews of the regulatory bodies themselves – providing objective input into the effectiveness of the regulation of the various health professions in Nova Scotia.

In conclusion, because the current regulatory framework involves separate statutes that do not permit collaboration among regulators, the consequence is unnecessary barriers to the very collaboration that could improve regulation and public protection.

The proposed legislation will enable collaboration and therefore will enhance the regulation of healthcare professionals in the interest of the public.

We think Nova Scotians deserve this.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide support for this Bill.

Presented by: Susan Wedlake

Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists