

December 12, 2006

PROMOTING GREATER PATIENT PROTECTION THROUGH AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACT

The McGuinty government is proposing a number of amendments to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*. The proposed amendments will simplify and improve the health regulatory colleges' complaints process, increase public access to information from the health colleges, and provide greater protection to patients seeking out treatments from health care providers not regulated under the act. The proposed amendments include:

Health Regulatory Colleges – Complaint and Reports Process

The proposed legislation changes will merge a number of functions of college committees in a single Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee. This will lead to a more efficient process by ensuring that patient concerns will now be considered quickly by a single committee. In the past, concerns from the public would be channeled to different committees depending on the nature of the concern.

Increased Access to Information

Proposed changes to improve public access to information include:

- Giving health colleges the freedom to confirm publicly whether a member is under investigation where the public may be at risk. Health colleges are currently not permitted to comment on investigations.
- Health colleges will now be required to provide greater public access to information regarding their members including practice information, practice restrictions and any disciplinary action taken against that member so that Ontarians can make informed choices when choosing their care providers.
- Information which is accessible by the public must be made available to any person during normal business hours and be posted on the College's website. As soon as a person makes an inquiry about a member, the college must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the person is provided with a list of all the information that is available to them.

Increased Protection

Proposed changes to improve public protection include:

- The government proposes that the "harm clause" in the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA) be expanded to protect patients from serious bodily harm which would include "psychological harm" when receiving health treatment or advice.
- A new Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee would have the authority to immediately order interim suspension of a regulated health professional after an investigation has been

completed if the committee believes the continued practice of the professional poses a serious public risk.

- Facility operators (e.g., hospitals, long-term care facilities,) would be required by law to report to health colleges any concerns about possible incapacity or incompetence of regulated health professionals (in addition to the existing requirement to report sexual abuse).

Supporting the Government's *HealthForceOntario* Human Resources Strategy

The HealthForceOntario human resources strategy is Ontario's plan to ensure that skilled health professionals are available now and in the future to provide needed services to Ontarians. The proposed legislation supports this strategy by enabling improved sharing of information between health colleges and government for health human resources planning. Under the new legislation, the government would be able to request information from colleges about the number of professionals entering a profession each year or about areas of the province in which there may be a shortage of professionals.

The proposed legislation is also in support of HealthForceOntario by encouraging and facilitating greater inter-professional collaboration among regulated health professions. (E.g. facilitating members of different health professions to work in practice teams so as to enhance the quality of care provided in Ontario's health facilities.)

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