

Modern Health Professions Legislation Proposed in Manitoba

The Manitoba government has begun consultation that will lead to a new legislative framework for Manitoba's 22 regulated health professions. The legislation, commonly referred to as "umbrella legislation," will bring all of the health professions under a common modern act with consistent processes and mechanisms aimed at shifting the focus from regulating people to regulating the profession. Key elements of the legislation are expected to include:

- Common structure, composition, governance and public representation provisions for regulatory bodies;
- Common complaints, discipline and appeals processes;
- Common public protection and accountability provisions; and
- Common bylaw making powers.

While the common framework applies to all professions, an individual set of regulations would be developed for each profession to address issues like scope of practice, title protection, and standards of practice within the given profession. The new approach should better accommodate overlapping scopes of practice, thereby supporting today's interdisciplinary health care delivery.

The government has committed to the principle of self – regulation and indicated that the regulatory bodies will continue to have the primary responsibility for regulating their respective professions and setting out the parameters for practice. Therefore, self – regulation in the public interest will remain the mandate of the health profession regulatory bodies.

Members of many of the regulated health professions in Manitoba will not notice significant changes to the way in which they are regulated when practicing their chosen professions in the province; the governing structures of these regulated health professions will not be effected much, as many have been granted the opportunity to function within a college structure already. The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association, however, has not. Despite repeated efforts, requests to repeal and renew the legislation governing MSHA have not been successful. Therefore, this undertaking by the Manitoba government to modernize the framework of all health professions legislation will also result in the first opportunity for audiologists and speech language pathologists to work in Manitoba under the governing structure of a college.

Government's motivation for taking this approach is to standardize health professions legislation within the province. This single – statute approach to health regulation has been carried out in a number of Canadian jurisdictions already. These include British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta. The government has indicated that B.C.'s framework is what will most likely be followed in Manitoba.

The proposed result of this initiative in Manitoba will be modern legislation and regulations governing health professions in the province, and an ability for government to adapt more quickly to society's rapidly changing healthcare environment when changes are necessary. Manitobans should benefit from an easier to understand common complaints and discipline framework, greater choice about accessing health care services, broader public accountability across the entire health – care provider spectrum, and a greater general understanding of how health professions are regulated.

MSHA is represented in this process. Working under the direction of the Legislative Unit of Manitoba Health, and in consultation with fellow regulated health professions in the province, the MSHA College Initiative Committee continues its quest for new legislation governing audiologists and speech language pathologists in Manitoba through the Health Professions Regulatory Reform Initiative.

Respectfully Submitted by Lori McKietiuik, Chairperson, College Initiative Committee, MSHA