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FOUR NEW REGULATED PROFESSIONS

Proposed Changes to the Regulated Health Professions Act

The McGuinty government has added four more regulated health professions under changes to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA). The changes support the government's *HealthForceOntario* human resources strategy and help ensure Ontarians access to safe, quality services provided by health professionals.

The changes to the RHPA are based on advice from the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC). This council's mandate is to provide independent policy advice to the Minister on matters related to the regulation of health professions in Ontario. Changes include:

- Regulating four more professions – naturopathy, homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy – through four new regulatory colleges;
- Enhancing services that optometrists and dental hygienists may provide so that patients have better access to services;
- Enabling pharmacists to provide more comprehensive care by regulating pharmacy technicians;
- Streamlining and increasing the transparency of the regulatory colleges' complaints and discipline processes.

Regulating Four Additional Health Professions

The professions of naturopathy, homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy each have their own profession-specific Act that creates a new College for each profession under the RHPA. Currently, naturopaths are regulated under the *Drugless Practitioners Act*, and homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy are unregulated.

The regulation of these health professions will provide assurances of high standards of care for Ontarians who choose these approaches to health care by:

- Requiring these practitioners to meet standards and qualifications and to be accountable to a regulatory college;
- Delivering to patients the same protections and assurances that they receive regarding the practice of other regulated health professionals.

Naturopathy

Naturopathy is a holistic approach to health care through the integrated use of therapies and substances that promote the individual's inherent self-healing process. It is the art and science of disease assessment, treatment and prevention using naturopathic techniques. Naturopaths treat the whole person by taking into account individual physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental and social factors.

Naturopathy encompasses physical assessments and an array of treatments and procedures. Some of

these include the use of natural medicinal preparations, lifestyle education and counselling, and manual and mechanotherapy (including moving the joints beyond the normal range of motion). Naturopaths regard nutrition, diet, lifestyle and the environment to be significant factors influencing health.

There are approximately 800 members currently registered in Ontario under the *Drugless Practitioners Act*.

Homeopathy

Homeopaths believe that human beings naturally function in a state of harmony between mind, body and spirit. This is called homeostasis. According to homeopaths, when injured, the organism will act to repair the damage. Attendant symptoms are indicative, not of ill-health, but of a process of self-correction or healing.

In their practice homeopaths use tiny amounts of plant, animal and mineral substances. The principle that a disease with a given set of symptoms can be cured by a substance which is known to produce a similar set of symptoms is called “The Law of Similars,” and is the foundation of homeopathy.

Kinesiology

Kinesiology is the assessment of movement and function, and the rehabilitation and management of disorders to maintain and enhance movement in the areas of recreation, work, and activities of daily living.

Kinesiologists apply their skills for both preventative and rehabilitative purposes. Currently, kinesiologists work in a variety of settings, often supporting other health professionals (e.g. physiotherapists) and therefore provide services to a large variety of client populations including pediatrics, geriatrics, injured workers, motor vehicle accident clients and athletes.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is often described as an intense client-therapist relationship which often involves the examination of deep emotional experiences, destructive behaviour patterns and serious mental health issues.

Psychotherapy may be conducted with individuals, groups, couples and families. There are different forms or methods of psychotherapy, including psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and experiential. They are all ways of helping people to overcome traumatic life events, serious emotional and relationship problems, or troublesome habits.

Expanding Health Care Services

The legislation will enhance the services optometrists, dental hygienists and pharmacists may provide, so that they can do more for their patients.

- Optometrists – The amendments will improve access to vision services reducing wait times for the treatment of certain eye conditions by permitting optometrists to prescribe selected drugs for certain conditions such as eye infections.
- Dental Hygienists – Dental hygienists, in appropriate circumstances, will be able to

independently provide scaling and root planing (teeth-cleaning), thereby safely expanding public access to important oral health services.

- Pharmacists – Regulating pharmacy technicians will allow them to compound and dispense drugs, enabling pharmacists to turn their attention to providing more comprehensive patient-centred health care services to patients, their families and other health care providers with regards to drug therapy/care.

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