

Protecting the Safety and Well-Being of Ontario Patients

Province to Conduct Review of Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991

NEWS

December 16, 2014

Ontario is appointing a task force to review and modernize legislation designed to prevent and deal with sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals.

The Minister's task force will review the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to ensure that existing legislative measures are appropriate and effective. The task force will be co-led by human rights lawyer, Marilou McPhedran and Former Chief Justice of Ontario, Roy McMurtry, along with educator and Registered Nurse, Sheila Macdonald as its third member.

Early next year, the task force will provide advice and recommendations on how to strengthen the legislation to reinforce the province's zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals.

Specifically, the task force will provide advice on:

- The current definition of sexual abuse contained in the legislation.
- The disciplinary orders that may be imposed by health regulatory colleges against their members who have been found to have sexually abused a patient.
- Support tools for patients who may have been sexually abused by a regulated health professional.
- Mandatory reporting requirements with respect to the sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals.
- Ways to further encourage and support patients who report incidents of sexual abuse to health regulatory colleges.
- Opportunities for public participation in college discipline processes and proceedings.

Protecting the safety and well-being of all Ontarians is part of the government's patient-centred approach to health care and is consistent with the fundamental duty of all health regulatory colleges in Ontario to serve and protect the public interest.

QUOTES

"I am extremely proud of the dedication, expertise and calibre of the professionals who work within Ontario's health care system. But my top priority as Minister is to protect the safety and well-being of Ontarians, which is why we have asked the task force to take a look at the existing legislation to help prevent and deal with cases of sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals."

- Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

QUICK FACTS

- Under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, the definition of "sexual abuse" includes physical sexual relations between a patient and a regulated health professional, as well as inappropriate touching and/or behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature that are not medically necessary.

- The legislation states that sexual abuse is an act of professional misconduct on the part of the professional. The legislation incorporates a “zero tolerance” approach for the sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals.
- The Legislature recently passed the *Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act, 2014*, which will facilitate the sharing of certain information by health regulatory colleges with hospitals, public health authorities and other prescribed entities. It will also enhance existing mandatory reporting requirements from hospitals, employers and others to health regulatory colleges.

LEARN MORE

[Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care](#)

[Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991](#)

[Taking Action Against Sexual Violence and Harassment](#)

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