



THE
COLLEGE
OF
PHYSICIANS
AND
SURGEONS
OF
ONTARIO

*Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health
Professionals for Ontarians Act*

Presentation to Social Policy Committee

Presented by:
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Speaking Notes for Dr. Preston Zuliani Presentation to Social Policy Committee on Bill 97

- Good afternoon. My name is Preston Zuliani. I am a family doctor practicing in St. Catharines and President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. With me today is Louise Verity, the College's Director of Policy and Communications.
- We are pleased to attend today to present on behalf of the College on Bill 97, *Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act*.
- At the outset, I would like to emphasize that the College is a body with a public interest focus. It's important to note that the College's mandate is not to train or supply doctors for the province, but to ensure that those who practice medicine in Ontario are competent. As the self-regulating body for the medical profession, the College ensures that all doctors who practice in Ontario meet standards for training and experience.
- While the College is committed to ensuring there are no unnecessary barriers to registration for those seeking to practice medicine, our first and foremost priority is to protect the public interest and ensure patient safety.
- In our presentation, we will first outline the College's interpretation of Bill 97, our concerns regarding its current wording and a proposed amendment which, we believe, reflects the intent of the legislation.
- We will also outline the progress the College has made in registering ever increasing numbers of doctors to serve the people of Ontario, including International Medical Graduates (IMGs), our work with other stakeholders to register even more doctors, some recent changes in our registration policies that will simplify registration of doctors trained outside in other Canadian provinces and the US as well as our ongoing efforts to facilitate the registration of more IMGs while preserving high professional standards.
- The College supports the registration of all qualified IMGs. However, we would like to emphasize that there are two components to Bill 97. The first is to increase the *number* of healthcare professionals. The second—and central to the mandate and role of regulatory Colleges—is to ensure that these healthcare professionals are *qualified*. The pursuit of one cannot come at the cost of the other. The College's first priority is—and must remain—the safety of the public. Ontarians want more doctors. They also want the comfort of knowing they are being cared for by qualified doctors that meet Ontario's standards of practice.
- We understand that the Bill was developed to convey the government's objective of increasing the access of Ontarians to qualified healthcare professionals. We support the spirit and intent behind the proposed legislation.

- However, the legal implications of the legislation on health colleges are of significant concern. It appears to impose a new *duty* on health colleges to ensure that the people of Ontario have access to adequate number of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals.
- As noted earlier, the College is not in the business of making or training doctors. We cannot simply “open up the tap” and increase the supply of doctors. When it comes to physicians, others like the government of Ontario, Medical Schools as well as other stakeholders all play a critical and arguably more central role to ensuring an adequate supply of physicians than the College.
- For instance, it is the medical schools that provide education to future doctors, set the curriculum, determine the number of students that will be admitted etc. The number of medical schools in Ontario depends to a large degree on provincial government funding. The availability of residency positions is determined by the medical schools, government funding (this is central) and the availability of hospital-based educators. The examinations to secure specialist titles are set by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The credentials evaluation and assessment of IMGs are undertaken by the Medical Council of Canada and the Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad (CEHPEA). These are just a few of the organizations that are involved in training doctors.
- It is inappropriate and impractical to impose a duty or an obligation on the health colleges to achieve outcomes that are outside their control.
- We believe that the government could achieve its objectives through a slightly different approach. We suggest that instead of imposing a new *duty* on health colleges, Bill 97 should amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA) to add an additional *object* for each college. Specifically, we recommend that instead of amending section 2 of Schedule 2 under the RHPA, the Bill should amend section 3 as follows:

3. The College has the following objects:

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12. To work in consultation with the Minister towards ensuring, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals.

- Increasing access to physicians has been a College priority for many years. For many years, the College has been a leader in working with our partners (Government of Ontario, medical schools, national education bodies) to find new ways of enhancing patient access to physicians. We have initiated a number of task forces, involving multiple stakeholders to look at ways of enhancing the

number of doctors without compromising standards. Many of our recommendations have been implemented and have resulted in an increase in the number of residency positions available and ever-greater numbers of IMGs being registered in Ontario. In fact, over the past ten years, we have consistently registered more new doctors every year and a growing proportion of these are IMGs. Let me provide you some examples from our 2007 Registration Report.

- Last year, the College issued 3,279 certificates of registration – our highest ever annual total surpassing the 2006 record total by 318 certificates (11%). Never before has the annual total exceeded 3,000.
 - For the fourth straight year, more certificates were issued to IMGs than to Ontario graduates.
 - Twenty-five percent (275) of the independent practice certificates issued went to IMGs. The number of independent practice certificates issued to IMGs was the highest in more than 20 years, and marked the seventh straight year of increasing issuance of these certificates to IMGs.
 - As a direct result of new College policies and programs developed in collaboration with many stakeholders and in some cases funded by government, 1,061 applicants have been issued a practice certificate who would not have qualified previously.
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- The College has been diligently seeking to—and succeeding in—registering more doctors for the people of Ontario. We are also continually seeking new ways to streamline our registration process to facilitate the registration of IMGs. As demonstrated by our most recent registration results, we have also had success in this area.
 - The College continues to look for additional ways to register even more doctors, including IMGs. However, we cannot do this alone. The training and registration of physicians and surgeons involves a variety of organizations. These include the government, medical schools, hospitals, credentials assessment organizations, the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and the Canadian Medical Protective Association, to name just a few. To increase Ontario's supply of doctors, all the agencies must pull together.
 - The College has taken a number of initiatives to work collaboratively with our partners. Amongst other things, the College has led a multi-stakeholder group called the Physician Resources Task Force (PRTF). The PRTF has been meeting over the summer months and our work has already borne fruit.
 - In September, the College approved four new pathways to registration. These new policies, which come into effect on December 1st, make it possible for

doctors fully licensed and practising in the United States or other parts of Canada to become registered in Ontario without further training or additional exams.

- Our colleagues at Health Force Ontario believe that these new policies will make it much easier for Ontario to attract physicians to our province, including Canadian-trained doctors currently working in the US.
- The College is also in the process of consulting on two additional routes to registration for IMGs trained outside Canada and the US.
- The first is designed to simplify registration requirements for physicians who have trained in specific programs in jurisdictions recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC). They include specific training programs in Australia, Hong Kong, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, South Africa and the UK.
- The second area under consultation is intended to simplify registration of physicians who have received their training outside Canada, the US and RCPSC-recognized systems. In broad terms, physicians in this group would be registered if they have successfully completed certain medical examinations and practiced independently for five or more continuous years in Canada.
- The College is consulting broadly on these proposals and will continue to work to refine our registration processes and as well as find additional ways of enhancing routes to licensure. Our consultation includes a number of stakeholder organizations, MPPs as well as provincial bodies like the Human Rights Commission and the Fairness Commissioner.
- Increasing the number of healthcare professionals is an important but long-term and complicated goal. As there are many professions working in the healthcare system and many players within each profession, the College renews its recommendation that the government establish an independent health human resources planning body. We feel this is particularly critical given the direction of the legislation.
- In closing, I'd like to reiterate the College's support for the goal of Bill 97—that of increasing the number of health professionals who are qualified to serve the people of Ontario. However, we believe that this goal could be better achieved by amending the Bill so that that it emphasizes working collaboratively with the Health Minister on this is an object of each health college under the Regulated Health Professions Act.
- The College has been and continues to stand ready to work with all of our partners to help ensure Ontarians have access to qualified regulated health professionals.

- Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Committee. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.