



# A WORD FROM THE REGISTRAR PROFESSIONAL REGULATION – THE PRIVILEGE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY

Those of us who are fortunate enough to belong to professions that have been granted the legislative authority to self-regulate, must make time to understand the privilege of self-regulation and, as vitally, the responsibility that comes with self-regulation. To do less is to fall short of all that's required of the regulated professional. It's fair to say that being a regulated professional necessitates the development of a deep understanding of what self-regulation entails and an ongoing commitment to rise to the challenge demanded of this level of professionalism. No one said it was easy, but the common sentiment is that it's well worth it. When self-regulation works, everyone wins, most particularly the public who enjoy the services, skills and treatment of highly trained professionals with a high degree of accountability. This is no more true than among regulated healthcare professionals. I have outlined some critical information about self-regulation below that I believe all members will benefit from understanding.

First, consider the significance of the provincial government bestowing on a profession the honour to uphold among its own membership the highest standards of professional practice and, in so doing, ensure the protection of the public against rogue actors. Doesn't sound that significant to you? Consider the relatively limited number of regulated professionals in Ontario amid the many numbered professions vying to become self-regulated. There are 26 healthcare regulators in the province against a backdrop of many, many others who work within healthcare but who do not enjoy self-regulation. Think self-regulation is a right rather than a privilege that can't be revoked and lost forever? Think again. Just as legislation grants self-regulation, so too can legislation take it away. It's actually surprisingly simple. Add some division and in-fighting to the mix of self-interested members disregarding the overarching responsibility owed to the public, and you have a lethal dose of poison-threatening self-regulation.

Second, it would be a mistake to believe that there are no detractors or criticisms of self-regulation; to the contrary, there are at least a few. Those who criticize self-regulation imagine the worst, with some calling for an end to self-regulation. They imagine a regulatory body governed by those professionals with self-interest and self-promotion as their only motivation regardless of the risk to the public. They envision a group of professionals who take all the privilege of self-regulation – the exclusivity of practice where only members of the regulatory body may practice in the profession, the monopoly created by such exclusion and greater respect bestowed upon the profession – and take all steps to maximize the privileges while whittling away at the responsibility. Rest assured, if such self-interest were ever to become the mainstay of any regulated profession, self-regulation, its privileges and its responsibilities will be extinguished. It's happened before. In Ontario. Within the past decade. It can happen again.



Third, self-regulation requires resources, and in the spirit of self-regulation, the profession provides the necessary resources through annual fees. Such fees fund all aspects of self-regulation. By mathematical certainty, the smaller the profession, the larger the annual fees needed to cover the costs of self-regulation. Council – a body of professional members and public members – are tasked with governing the regulator of the profession. Notably, all Council members, including professional members, must always and only consider the best interests of the regulator in fulfilling its mandate of public protection when engaging in the business of Council. If you think it sounds like a difficult task, that of bringing the lens of professional know-how and practice to the decisions of Council without allowing one's self-interest to weigh in the balance, then you are beginning to get a sense of the challenging work our Council members engage in. In many respects, the work of Council is a thankless task, yet I am routinely impressed by the dedication and selflessness demonstrated by our professional and public members. The same holds true for the tireless efforts of our committee members.

Fourth, self-regulation requires the regulator to know and understand the nature of the services and treatment that its members are providing to the public. A Regulator often also seeks to understand demographic information about the profession it governs. This is usually done by an annual survey of the membership. This is foundational information for a regulator to acquire to ensure its quality assurance program is developed to address best practices in the type of work members are providing. You will recall that you were recently asked to complete such a survey, and I thank you for fulfilling your professional responsibilities in so doing. We have taken your completed surveys and feedback to ensure we continue to do better.

If you're reading this and understand the true privilege of self-regulation, you may be inspired to take steps to ensure that privilege is protected by fulfilling your responsibilities as a self-regulated professional. You may want to know what you, as a regulated professional, can do to support self-regulation and the work of your regulator. If that's the case, and I hope it is, I'm pleased to share the following tips:

- 1) **Always comport yourself in a manner that reflects well on the profession.** Communicate with everyone – patients, staff, colleagues, and your regulator - in a professional manner. Communicating in a rude or disrespectful manner is not professional and does not meet the standard expected of a regulated healthcare professional. Never communicate with your regulator in a less-than-professional manner.
- 2) **Be responsible for your social media posts and presence.** Understand the expectations of your regulator when it comes to social media posts, particularly those that clearly identify you as a regulated professional. Your responsibilities in this respect include: only posting factually accurate information after you have ensured your information is accurate; posting in a manner that does not bring the profession into disrepute; and not posting misinformation or baseless conclusions to unduly criticize colleagues or the regulator.



- 3) **Understand the role of the regulator.** Our job as a regulator is to do everything we can to help members be the best chiropodists and podiatrists they can be. We strive to help members avoid unnecessary complaints by providing quality assurance, standards and guidelines, as well as practice advice. At the same time, we must meet all of our legislative obligations to the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, of which there are many. If you do not understand why we do the things we do, by all means – ask. But if you haven't asked, please refrain from drawing your own conclusions or engaging in negative commentary.
  
- 4) **Be Responsive and respectful of your regulator.** Your regulator is here to do the hard work of regulating the profession. We have expertise in professional regulation that allows us to fulfill the College's obligations and to regulate effectively. Responding promptly and respectfully to inquiries or requests for information from your regulator is a reasonable expectation that is required of professional members.

It is my sincere hope that the profession we regulate has a well-developed sense of both the privilege and responsibility of professional self-regulation. As I noted above, self-regulation, when it works well, works well for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who took time on their Saturday morning to join us for our Townhall meeting on December 10, 2022. We have received very positive feedback about the event and look forward to another Townhall in 2023.

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