

Dear Sir/Madam,

In the 1990's Canadians rebelled against attempts to regulate natural products (NHPs) under the same regulations as chemical drugs. The political pressure was so great that the Minister of Health (Allan Rock) asked the Standing Committee on Health to determine how NHPs should be regulated. After extensive consultations, the Committee came out with 53 recommendations. The Committee was clear that it was inappropriate to regulate NHPs under the same regulations as chemical drugs. Our current *Natural Health Product Regulations (NHP Regs)* are the result of these recommendations. Now, Health Canada is planning on once again regulating NHPs as chemical drugs, discarding the work of the Committee, expert panels used to guide Health Canada, and the citizens who participated.

Health Canada's current plan is to classify NHPs as "self-care products" and to regulate them with the same regulations as chemical over-the-counter drugs. Self-care products will be severely limited in the claims they can make and can only be used for conditions that would not require a visit to a doctor. In short, NHPs will be limited to minor conditions.

Under the text of our current *NHP Regs*, NHPs can be approved to treat serious health conditions. It is only Health Canada policy that has largely limited approved claims to structure function claims. When the *NHP Regs* are replaced with self-care product regulations, NHPs will forever be restricted to treating non-serious conditions. The only avenue left to get approval to treat serious conditions will be the Food and Drugs Regulations. Getting through the new drug approval process is so costly, that you will never see a product without current patent rights go through it for a serious condition. NHPs do not have patent rights, and consequently none have ever gone through the new drug process for a serious health condition. None ever will.

We are moving to a place where it will forever be illegal for natural products to be used to treat serious health conditions. It would be more honest if Parliament would amend the *Food and Drugs Act* to expressly prohibit the use of drugs without intellectual property rights for serious conditions.

Our current drug laws are written, and used, to severely restrict the sharing of truthful health information about NHPs. We are concerned that this censorship will increase with the restriction of allowable claims and with subjecting natural products to dramatically higher penalties.

I had done an *Access to Information Act* request to get all information Health Canada had concerning any deaths caused by NHPs in Canadian history. Health Canada could not point to a single death. Contrast this with the self-care product acetaminophen which causes roughly 33 deaths a year. Considering the very low risk NHPs have, why do they need to be further restricted?

Many Canadians are alive today only because of NHPs. Many more experience tremendous relief from serious conditions that they could not get from the drugs with patent rights. Further restricting access to NHPs, and further restricting truthful health information is not without its own risks.

There is also the concern about personal sovereignty. We all have our own health journey where we will suffer and die. The idea that we could not choose to use an NHP because our drug laws prohibit it, is not an idea held by most Canadians. Instead of censorship, many want open access to information about all drugs, including NHPs. Instead of paternalism, many want informed choice.

The enclosed document offers an analysis of the current issues. I would be honoured to speak with you, and where helpful, share more information with you.

Thank you for your attention.

Shawn Buckley, LL.B.
President, Natural Health Products Protection Association