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THE INDEPENDENT / ACTON FREE PRESS

New bills regulate health professions

Last week I outlined the Regulated Health Professions Act and related individual acts introduced by Health Minister Evelyn Gigantes in the Legislature on April 2. Some of you may have questions about the new bills so I will attempt to provide you with more details about the omnibus RHPA and its 21 separate Health Profession Acts.

The need to replace the existing patchwork legislation was identified some time ago and in 1982 Toronto lawyer Alan Schwartz was commissioned to carry out the Health Professions Legislative Review. The Review's mandate was to make recommendations to the Minister of Health on which health professions should be regulated and to update and reform the Health Disciplines Act and related legislation. One of the Review's guiding principles was that the public must be permitted to exercise freedom of choice of health care providers within a range of safe options.

There had been considerable pressure to change the regulatory framework both from members of the public who lacked confidence in the complaints and disciplinary processes and from regulated and unregulated professions who realized the system was unworkable. There was also a need to give midwives the unequivocal right to practice and to establish standards for midwifery and the six other unregulated professions.

Queen's Park Report

by MPP
NOEL DUIGNAN



The legislative package introduced by the Minister has been based upon the Review (although some changes have been made) and strives to find a balance between professional independence and public accountability.

Twenty-five health professions will be self-regulating and governed by the Regulated Health Professions Act. The professions include seven groups that are not currently regulated: audiologists, dietitians, medical laboratory technologists, midwives, occupational therapists, respiratory therapists, and speech language pathologists. For the first time, the public will have the same rights and remedies in relation to all 25 professions. Patients will have access to the Health Professions Board if they are not satisfied with a particular college's investigation of their complaint against a member.

Procedures or acts that can be harmful if not properly carried out are listed as "controlled acts" and one or more profes-

sions are designated as entitled to perform them. Under existing legislation, some professions, such as medicine, are given exclusive rights over a whole range of activities including many that are unlikely to cause harm. The Regulated Health Professions Act lists the 13 categories of controlled acts; the related individual bills outline a profession's scope of practice, its authorized controlled acts, and the composition of its council and committees.

Some occupations will have new official names: denture therapists become denturists; dental technicians become dental technologists; nursing assistants become practical nurses; and radiological technicians become medical radiation technologists. A Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council will be created to give policy advice to the Minister to balance the competing claims of various professions and to provide a vehicle for consideration of regulation of additional professions.

If second reading takes place before the end of the spring session the bills will be referred to legislative committee during the summer to allow consumers and practitioners an opportunity to comment on the legislation. If you want a copy of Better Protection and More Choice in Health Care, a guide to the Regulated Health Professions Act, please call my Milton office at 878-1729.

Favorable memo for RSI plan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
 tion that, since environmental damage and "significant external effects" are being mitigated, there would be no socio-economic impact on the community. While noting that "a number of the items (it previously identified) were not addressed" by RSI, the Ministry acknowledged potential "positive

impacts: the creation of 171 new jobs and 13 new firms.

Graziani indicated the "new firms" would be primarily businesses like gas stations or shops opening to accommodate landfill workers and haulers.

"New jobs — but at what price?" Halsall asked, reiterating her concern about water contamination.

Halsall noted that conditions attached by the Ministry address relatively minor issues. Nowhere does the memorandum discuss the suitability of landfilling on the Niagara Escarpment, a practice fraught with problems in Dundas and St. Catharines, as witnesses told a hearing this past week.

"This minor tinkering is just cosmetics," she commented, calling the need for widespread opposition



BARBARA HALSALL

to the proposal "more urgent now." Ruth Grier will soon announce a 30-day period for public comment, and then either approve RSI's plan or, more likely, schedule a formal hearing. Graziani expects the hearing to begin before the end of the year.

Seed sale

Dominion Seed House in Georgetown is helping out the Canadian Cancer Society by offering 10 per cent of the proceeds from sales next Saturday (April 27) to the Cancer

Society as a donation. Wednesday's issue of *The Georgetown Independent* stated that the sale date was Wednesday, April 27. The date, April 27, was correct but it is in fact a Saturday. We regret any inconvenience.

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