



College of Audiologists and
Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
Ordre des audiologistes et
des orthophonistes de l'Ontario

CASLPO · OAEO

CASLPO Presentation to Standing Committee on Bill 87, the *Protecting Patients Act*

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

2:00pm

Committee Room 1, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto

Presenters:

Brian O'Riordan, Registrar

Carol Bock, Deputy Registrar

Preeya Singh, Director, Professional Conduct

Good Afternoon,

I am Brian O’Riordan, Registrar of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO). I am joined today by Carol Bock, Deputy Registrar, and Preeya Singh, Director of Professional Conduct.

Thank you to all members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear today in order for us to submit our views on the very important piece of legislation before you, the *Protecting Patients Act 2017*. We will be confining our remarks to Schedule 4 of Bill 87, concerning the proposed amendments to the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*.

CASLPO licenses approximately 4000 registrants, with 3300 being Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and 700 being Audiologists. Some 97% of SLPs are women, as are 80% of Audiologists.

A Master’s degree, combined with a six-month mentorship component, is required for entry-to-practice. The professions became self-regulated in Ontario under the RHPA in 1993.

We are here today to voice our overall support for Schedule 4 of Bill 87 and to provide you with hopefully some interesting perspectives as the regulator of these two professions.

We absolutely support the zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients voiced by all three political parties. We also strongly support the submission made to you by the Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges of Ontario (FHRCO). Bill 87 will, we believe, enhance public protection and support strongly the zero tolerance concept.

Like many Colleges, we have in place a robust Sexual Abuse Prevention Program to regulate the members of the College. We also have a strong Position Statement on “Professional Relationships and Boundaries”. This year, in fact, members of the College were required especially to review the Position Statement as part of the

annual Quality Assurance process. Prevention measures are a key component of a College's role as a regulator.

Fortunately, we have very little front-line experience in receiving and processing sexual abuse complaints concerning the registrants of our College.

However, it is vitally important that the public knows where and how to make a complaint about a regulated health professional. That is why all Colleges, including ourselves, are devoting more and more effort and resources to Public Awareness Strategies and Transparency Initiatives. In fact, this is one of our College's three major current Strategic Plan goals.

Our College has revised its website to make information more accessible to the public. We have produced three public awareness videos and we have brochures available in both official languages and in a half dozen others. Our material is available in community settings, hospitals, clinics, and schools.

The patients cared for by Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists are among the most vulnerable members of society in Ontario. They are infants born with hearing loss. They are children, teens, and adults with autism, developmental delays and language, speech, and hearing impairments. They are people who have suffered a stroke, head injuries, and degenerative neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's and ALS.

These fundamental barriers to communication make these individuals the most vulnerable to abuse and the least able to report abuse. So, that is why at the College we have developed strategies to promote better access to information for these individuals. How does a person living with a communication or literacy barrier make a complaint? The College has developed resources that use simplified language, combined with pictures, to help people understand the role of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists and how to make a complaint. These documents have been reviewed by individuals experiencing communication barriers, so as to ensure the content is easy to understand. It is hoped that these initiatives will better

protect and inform Ontarians about the care they can expect to receive and what to do in the event they need to file a complaint about one of our members. All of these supports for our public are on the College website which uses the universal symbol for communication accessibility.

In conclusion, we support the approach to patient safety embodied in Bill 87, but do strongly commend to you the submission from the Federation, particularly the Appendix of proposed wording changes, and we urge you to keep in mind during your deliberations the many different communities of patients affected by the Bill.