

Although this new common foundations Act was slated to be introduced in the spring 2023 sitting of the House of Assembly, government pushed this to the fall sitting in favour of the new [Patient Access to Care Act \(PACA\)](#) which was introduced on March 21 and received royal assent, becoming law, on March 30.

PACA includes measures to further streamline and expedite the registration and licensing process for members of all health professions currently licensed in other Canadian jurisdictions. Further, it prohibits Nova Scotia health regulators from charging initial application fees for such health professionals entering Nova Scotia. (A funding agreement is being developed wherein government will reimburse Nova Scotia health regulators for lost revenue.) This Act also grants government the power to determine to which international jurisdictions the same measures must apply.

As the Regulations pursuant to this Act are being developed, we have been assured by government and trust that professional standards will not be lowered in the interest of increasing numbers of healthcare workers. As well, we trust that health regulators will retain the ability to ensure that only individuals who can practice competently, safely, and ethically are licensed in Nova Scotia.

## **REGISTRANTS WITH BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

### Background

At the September 2007 meeting of the PDBNS Board, a motion was passed to “adopt the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) process that provides PDBNS licensees access to the Colleges Ad Hoc Committee on Bloodborne Pathogens”.

Through this process, a medical or dental licensee who self-identified as having a bloodborne pathogen (e.g., HIV, Hepatitis C) would receive expert advice from an arm’s-length committee regarding their medical/dental practice in the interest of furthering the safety and well-being of Nova Scotians. The committee would also monitor the progression of the licensee’s illness and provide an annual written report to the appropriate regulatory authority (CPSNS or PDBNS).

The CPSNS has since disbanded the Ad Hoc Committee on Bloodborne Pathogens. It is the current view of the CPSNS that hepatitis and HIV among physicians (including surgeons) carry no greater risk to patients than other factors (e.g., mental health issues). This is in light of the fact that these bloodborne diseases are well-managed with contemporary treatments. Individuals with HIV, for example, who are adherent to prescribed antiretroviral therapy tend to have an undetectable viral load.

As such, the CPSNS no longer has a separate stream for such registrants. The CPSNS does deem it prudent to obtain a fitness to practise attestation from the licensee’s treating physician and to have a requirement that this be provided periodically.

## Motion

At the November 2022 meeting of the PDBNS Board the following motion was passed:

*“That prospective or current licensees who self-identify as having a bloodborne pathogen be required to have their treating physician submit a fitness to practise attestation at the time of initial application and at annual license renewal.”*

This would be the same process required for any physical or mental health condition which, if left untreated, may impair a registrant’s ability to practise competently and/or could negatively impact the safety of patients and/or staff.

## **EDIAA**

At its May 2023 meeting, the PDBNS Board approved an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism (EDIAA) Policy [accessible at this link](#). This is an internal document to guide PDBNS staff as well as members of the Board and its Committees.

## **DHW HEALTH WORKFORCE PLANNING**

All Nova Scotia health regulators are required to submit registrants’ anonymized data to the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) each year immediately following license renewal. The report based on the November 30, 2022 PDBNS data for dentists can be accessed [at this link](#).

DHW’s report for RDAs following the April 2023 license renewal is expected to be finalized in the near future and will be shared in due course.

## **FUNCTIONAL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND REAPPOINTMENTS**

Since the October 2022 Board Business publication, the Board made the following appointments and reappointments:

### **Complaints Committee**

- Dr. Clare Champoux was appointed Chair of the Complaints Committee effective January 1, 2023.

### **Discipline Committee**

- Ms. Karen Fitzner was appointed as a public member on the Discipline Committee for a three-year term effective June 1, 2023.