



August 2, 2016

Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ontario

With this letter, the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC) would like to express our wholehearted support for the regulation of the genetic counselling profession in Ontario.

Technological advances in genomic medicine, increased public awareness, the emergence of direct-to-consumer testing and the ever increasing expansion of screening programs have resulted in increased demand for genetic counselling services. Genetic counsellors communicate extremely complex and sensitive information to a patient population that is often ill-equipped to determine whether the counselling they receive is accurate or appropriate. Regulation of our profession is necessary in order to protect the public from harm as well as to provide a more uniform access to care.

Genetic counsellors are highly trained allied healthcare professionals. The minimum requirement is a Master of Science degree in genetic counselling. These accredited training programs provide extensive didactic and practical teachings in genetic and medical knowledge, risk assessment and communication, psychological aspects of genetic counselling as well as ethical, legal, social and public health principles. The majority of Canadian genetic counsellors are certified by either the CAGC or the American Board of Genetic Counselors (ABGC).

Increasingly, genetic counsellors work with a variety of medical specialists (oncologists, neurologists, cardiologists). These genetic counsellors are providing much needed clinical genetics expertise and contribute to streamlined care for patients and their relatives by helping in the selection of appropriate testing option, communicating complex results and providing psychosocial counselling and support. In the current context of limited healthcare resources, genetic counsellors provide adequate and timely service which allows the geneticist or medical specialist to concentrate on cases requiring a diagnostic evaluation, which improves access to care.

The CAGC mission is to promote high standards of practice, encourage professional growth and increase public awareness of the genetic counselling profession in Canada. We are particularly concerned with issues pertaining to the regulation of our profession in Canada, especially in the context of the expansion of licensure of genetic counsellors in the United States, as well as regulation being implemented in Europe. We believe our knowledge-based and practice-based competency documents could easily be used to develop a scope of practice that would be required for regulation.

For all of the above reasons, we strongly believe that regulation of our profession is essential in protecting the public from harm and ensuring equitable access to care. We would like to thank you for your consideration of the regulation of genetic counsellors in Ontario.

Sincerely,

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