

Professional Notice

To: Pharmacy Practitioners
From: Beverley Zwicker, CEO and Registrar
Date: June 30, 2023
Re: Pharmacy Workforce Challenges

Dear Pharmacy Practitioners,

The NSCP has been deeply concerned about the provincial pharmacy workforce shortage and the significant recruitment challenges being faced across the province. We have been actively working over the past several months to increase the number of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in the province.

Nova Scotia currently has hundreds of pharmacist and pharmacy technician vacancies, and we are not alone across the country. Current shortages have serious implications for the public's access to care, including limiting the rate of expansion of critically needed pharmacy primary care delivery models and reduced community pharmacy opening hours. We also know that it is creating significant additional strain to your daily practice.

We all have a role to play in finding solutions.

The NSCP is establishing innovative solutions to address pharmacy workforce challenges in Nova Scotia. We are doing this so that the public can realize the full benefit of the profession in achieving optimal health outcomes. To date, this work has included:

- **Making regulatory changes to reopen a bridging program pathway for pharmacy assistants to train to become a pharmacy technician.** We have also been working to accelerate the launch of an online bridging program for fall 2023. More details on this, including how to register, will be shared as they are available.
- **Streamlining licensing pathways for individuals from eligible international jurisdictions using the authority provided in the April 2023 *Patient Access to Care Act*.** We are currently identifying international jurisdictions where a pharmacist or pharmacy technician licence can be deemed equivalent to a Canadian licence. This will be a first-of-its-kind approach to licensing internationally trained pharmacy professionals in Canada, increasing our ability to recruit individuals while still maintaining necessary safeguards.
- **Developing a sophisticated international recruitment campaign** to capitalize on the unique practice and lifestyle opportunities that Nova Scotia has to offer for pharmacists looking to work to full scope and in new practice settings. We are working with our pharmacy and government counterparts to ensure a coordinated effort to recruitment.
- **Working with system partners to establish a comprehensive pharmacy workforce strategy.** The NSCP is working with the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Advanced Education, and education providers to address the many and varied inflow and outflow factors needed to shore up and stabilize the pharmacy workforce in the long-term.

- **Amending the *Standards of Practice: Centralized Prescription Processing*** to enable pharmacies to collaborate with each other across the province to make better use of centralized prescription processing opportunities. Adoption of technologies and improved workflows that support improved efficiencies in the dispensing process will free up and enable pharmacy practitioners to reallocate more time to providing critically needed patient care.
- **Advancing our prominent strategic initiative to establish safe and appropriate staffing levels for community pharmacies.** In the coming months you will see public and practitioner quality of care surveys and a practitioner wellbeing survey that will be informing this model. We encourage you to participate in these opportunities and be a part of this important, innovative work we are doing in Nova Scotia.

We recognize that there are no simple solutions to our current workforce challenges. But we also know that there are new ways of doing things that will allow us to navigate through this in a way that will both improve practitioner wellbeing and lead to improved patient care.

We all have a role to play:

- Encourage your colleagues to consider coming to Nova Scotia to support innovative primary care delivery models that are repositioning pharmacists to bring the full scope of their expertise to patients.
- Make use of every opportunity to use the full scope of your authorized practice to provide care to Nova Scotians. This will vary depending on the current readiness of your pharmacy to redesign its workflow and reassign duties across the team. Even small changes, when made by everyone, creates noticeable change.
- Help us to find solutions by participating in a survey or a working group when requested.

We look forward to sharing more with you as our work progresses.

Sincerely,

Beverley Zwicker