

NOTES

BY KATHIE LYNAS

Renewed optimism in Manitoba about regulatory change to expand scope of practice



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— Shawn Bugden, President,
Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association (MPhA)



Pharmacy regulators and pharmacists in Manitoba are hoping they're nearing the end of a lengthy and sometimes bumpy journey towards a significant expansion of pharmacist authority in the province.

If all goes well, revised regulations giving force to legislation passed in 2006 will be approved by Manitoba pharmacists before summer, says Shawn Bugden, president of the regulatory body, the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association (MPhA).

“I think everyone is frustrated at how long it's taking,” says Mr. Bugden. “We have been working hard with our partners in government to craft and revise the regulations document and that has taken a long time.”

When the revisions to the Pharmaceutical Act passed in December 2006, the proposed new scope of pharmacy practice made Manitoba one of the leaders in the country. Pharmacists were

to be given the authority to immunize, order lab tests, independently prescribe continued care prescriptions, and to prescribe medical devices and a list of medications for some minor ailments.

After passage, the next step was to draft a Regulations Policy Document to put before the members, as Manitoba is the one Canadian province that requires pharmacists to vote on regulations. The membership rejected the first version in March 2008; after revisions were made, members voted 84% in favour in November 2010.

The final stage of regulation development, in concert with government, proved more complicated than anticipated. More than a year later, the MPhA had organized special meetings of members beginning February 21, 2012, to present and explain the final regulations. However, there have been changes since the 2010 membership vote.

“It is now clear that the regulations

in their final legal form will require a ratification vote by the membership,” says Mr. Bugden, noting that while many of the revisions are “subtle,” others are substantial enough to require another vote on the package.

The Manitoba Society of Pharmacists (MSP) has expressed frustration over the lengthy process over the past 15 months but is pleased with the latest developments.

“I would like to say we are positive and more optimistic than we have been in a while. And we are prepared to put our best effort into seeing the regulations move forward,” says Mel Baxter, president of MSP's board of directors and a community pharmacy manager in Morris. “But this includes keeping in mind that there was a reason for the regulations being rejected in 2007 and we need to see and analyze the latest revisions before taking a position on whether the membership will support them.” ■