



August 3, 2023

Health Canada
250 Lanark Avenue
Address Locator 2002B
Ottawa, Ontario

Re: Consultation on Proposed Fees for Natural Health Products (NHPs)

The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors (CAND) is participating in this Health Canada consultation to express concerns regarding the impact that Health Canada's *Proposed Fees for Natural Health Products* will have on the ability of Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) to treat patients. The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors is a strong supporter of the extension of Vanessa's Law to include NHPs, and our expressed concerns in this consultation are irrespective of CAND's support for that extension.

CAND has been fortunate to participate in numerous consultations with Health Canada, and over the past years has developed a strong collaborative partnership with the department. As you know, the [Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors](http://www.CAND.ca) (CAND) is a national non-profit professional association. Incorporated in 1955 the CAND's membership consists of over 3,000 Canadian naturopathic doctors and naturopathic medical students. Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) are primary care providers with a minimum of 7 years of post- secondary education. NDs focus on health promotion and disease prevention by treating the whole person and looking at the overall health of a patient rather than solely addressing symptoms. The philosophy of naturopathic medicine includes stimulating the healing power of the body and treating the underlying or root cause of disease.

Representatives of the CAND were integral in the development of the Office of Natural Health Products, which became the Natural Health Products Directorate, were members of the Directorates Expert and Management Advisory Committees and various working groups that assisted in the development of the Natural Health Product Regulations. The first Director General of the NHPD was a Naturopathic Doctor. The CAND is therefore well versed in the Standing Committee on Health's 53 Recommendations on Natural Health Products and the NHPRs.

NDs are leaders in natural health care with extensive knowledge and training in the use of all natural health products, including those regulated by the Natural Health Products Directorate. Access to all natural health products is critical to ensuring NDs can continue to treat patients safely and effectively.

It is the opinion of the CAND that the proposed fees for NHPs will have a significant and negative impact on everyone involved in the natural health product sector – including Naturopathic Doctors and other health care practitioners who use NHPs daily to treat patients



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safely and effectively. The Standing Committee on Health's 53 Recommendations made it clear that Natural Health Products were not drugs and therefore were not to be regulated as drugs but under appropriate regulations specific to NHPs. The NHPRs are and continue to be effective for regulating NHPs. As NHPs are not drugs and have a much lower risk profile it is inappropriate to propose fees for NHPs that follow the fee structure used for drugs and medical devices.

Naturopathic Doctors across Canada share a concern that the proposed fees will result in significant price increases and more products being taken off the market – products that many patients rely on daily to manage their health concerns. The proposed fees come at a time when due to the pandemic and its impact on supply chains, the costs of natural health products have already increased by up to 20 percent per product. The result of these supply issues has caused NHP manufacturers to remove products from the market. Health Canada's proposed fees will only exacerbate the existing problem of price and supply that naturopathic doctors and the natural health product sector have faced since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Naturopathic doctors rely on products manufactured by professional line companies who by their very nature are smaller in size with smaller, more practitioner focused product lines than publicly available retail lines. As such, the professional line companies will not be able to absorb the high fees proposed as they will have no choice but to increase the cost of products resulting in too high a cost to their clients – NDs and other health care professionals. In the alternative, they have stated they will have to eliminate products and/or close their doors. NDs have already been advised by some companies that as a result of the proposed fees some products will no longer be available once stock has been depleted. Unfortunately, we expect that this will become more commonplace in the future should the proposed fees be implemented.

Naturopathic patients across Canada pay out of pocket for NHPs, because neither the (provincial) publicly funded health care system nor third-party insurers cover them. While this is a separate issue, it is one that Health Canada should look at in the near future. The proposed fees will have the inadvertent result of pricing the products that patients rely on to manage their health out of their reach.

Naturopathic Doctors will be further affected by the proposed increased costs because NDs, as small business owners, may no longer be able to afford the increased costs to purchase products to have available in-clinic for patients. This is of particular concern for patients and NDs in rural areas where access to products is limited.

When patients choose to see a Naturopathic Doctor, they do so because they want to take an active role in their health care through the use of natural therapies and natural health products. The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors, its members and its affiliate ND

organizations support regulations that ensure NHPs that are recommended to patients are safe, effective and of high quality. However, the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors



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believes that if Health Canada's fees on NHPs are implemented as proposed, they will undermine the practice of naturopathic medicine.

This will happen by:

- Eliminating or limiting access to the NHPs that NDs use therapeutically, safely and effectively every day;
- Negatively impacting the naturopathic medical care NDs provide for hundreds of thousands of patients.

Canadians have the right to choose the type of health care they wish to receive. Naturopathic Doctors across the country serve Canadians who seek a more holistic approach to health promotion and disease prevention. Health Canada's *Proposed Fees for Natural Health Products* will result in Canadians being unable to properly access naturopathic health care, even if a patient has chosen to seek out naturopathic care. This could be viewed as an infringement on every Canadian's enshrined right to choose the type of health care they wish to receive.

The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors respectfully requests the Government of Canada, and Health Canada suspend any further consideration of the implementation of the proposed fees on Natural Health Products until the completion of the Self – Care Framework and the elimination by the NNHPD of its current backlog.

The CAND is happy to discuss its position on NHPs with Health Canada at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact Shawn O'Reilly, the Executive Director and Director of Government Relations at soreilly@cand.ca or by phone at 416-496-8633 ext. 325.

Best regards,

Shawn O'Reilly (she/her)
Executive Director, Director of Government Relations
The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors