Modernizing the Veterinarians Act – Council Composition

What is the Concept?

The current Veterinarians Act states that the Council of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario shall be composed of:

- Between 9 and 15 licensed veterinarians; and
- Between 3 and 5 public interest representatives appointed by the Province of Ontario.

As a part of the College's legislative reform initiative, the College is reviewing the provisions in the Veterinarians Act related to Council composition. In the 2017 CVO Consultation Document, “Achieving a Modern Approach to the Regulation of Veterinary Medicine in Ontario”, the College identified key trends and issues that suggested a need to alter Council's composition. There has been an international trend of increasing the ratio of public voices at a regulator’s decision-making table and on panels of statutory committees. The College has also frequently encountered challenges in having sufficient public members available for panels and hearings, most specifically for Complaints Committee and Discipline Committee panels. To address these issues, the consultation document recommended enhancing public interest representation on the College Council.

Why is the College Considering Further Changes to this Concept?

While the 2017 consultation document contemplated licensing veterinarians and veterinary technicians under one piece of legislation, the composition of Council proposed at that time did not include veterinary technicians. If a new Act governing the profession expands the College's mandate to include the licensing of both veterinarians and veterinary technicians, the College's Council will need to reflect a balance of voices, inclusive of veterinary technicians, to ensure sound decision-making in the public interest.

The role of the College Council, as the regulatory governing body of both veterinary professionals in Ontario, will remain to ensure that veterinary medicine is regulated in the public interest. Council’s role will continue to be focused on setting high level policy and strategy with a view to assessing and mitigating risks in veterinary practice where appropriate. It is imperative that Council’s composition under a new Act ensures a well-blended variety of voices to allow it to effectively conduct its role while taking all relevant perspectives into consideration.

The veterinary profession and the delivery of its services is a system with two primary professionals requiring regulation to ensure public and animal protection. The voices of both public and professional members are important to the effective regulation of veterinary medicine and related services in the province. The proposed composition is designed to reflect a commitment to recognizing the importance of the voices of the public and of both professionals (veterinarians and veterinary technicians) to ensure Council’s ability to hold risk-focused conversations and make relevant and responsible decisions related to veterinary practice and the public protection.
It is important to remember that the College, through the Act, also has committees to assist in the execution of its role. Under a joint College, the composition of statutory committees would also need to reflect these same three groups of voices – veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and public representation.

What is Proposed?

It is proposed that the composition of the Council of the new regulatory body licensing both veterinarians and veterinary technicians be as follows:

- 10-12 veterinarians;
- 7-9 public appointments;
- 2-4 veterinary technicians;
- 1 academic appointment from the Ontario Veterinary College (veterinarian on faculty); and
- 1 academic appointment from a veterinary technician program (veterinary technician on faculty).

The College Council as previously will function as a whole, and all roles will be focused on the public interest. Public representatives will continue to be appointed by the provincial government. Representatives of the veterinary profession will continue to be elected by their peers.

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