

TRANSPARENCY

A Pillar of Good Governance

As the regulatory body for the profession of pharmacy in Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists' (OCP) mandate — like all regulated healthcare professions under the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)* — is to protect the public by ensuring the safe and effective delivery of healthcare services. Maintaining public trust and confidence is critical to upholding this mandate, and transparency plays a key role.

Ensuring that Ontarians have access to information that is

relevant, timely, useful and accurate — information that evokes public confidence and enhances their ability to make informed healthcare decisions — is the objective of transparency.

Although it has always been understood that transparency is a pillar of good governance and therefore something that must be considered in all work that is done, in recent years the College has engaged in a number of specific initiatives designed, in part, to identify opportunities to enhance



transparency and ensure we are responsibly meeting the public's evolving expectations.

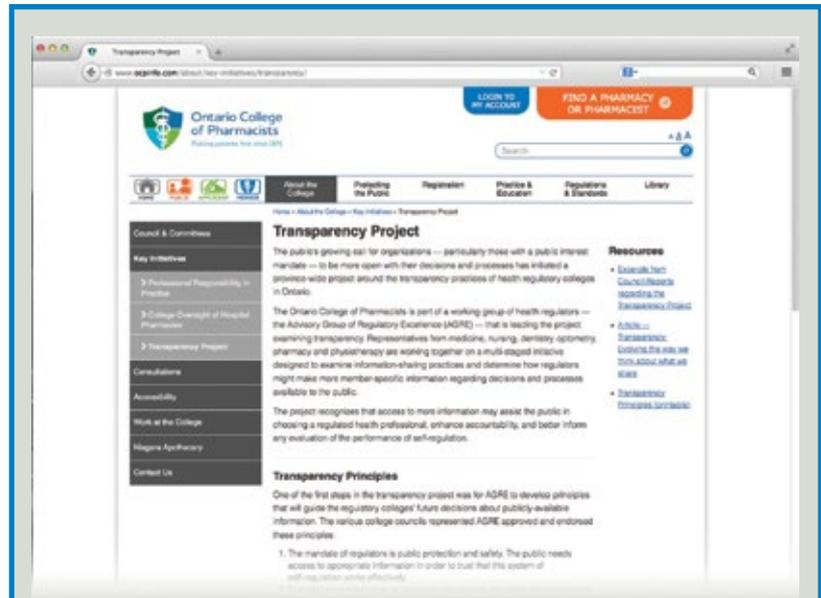
An overview of a few of these initiatives is provided here with more detail available on the [College website under Key Initiatives – Transparency](#).

AGRE — TRANSPARENCY PROJECT:

In 2012, the College – as a member of the Advisory Group of Regulatory Excellence (AGRE) – began work on a collaborative project focused exclusively on examining transparency. Along with representatives from medicine, nursing, dentistry, optometry and physiotherapy the College is working collaboratively on a multi-staged initiative designed to examine information-sharing practices and determine how regulators might make more member-specific information regarding decisions and processes available to the public.

Committed to a principled and consistent approach amongst regulatory health colleges, AGRE developed transparency principles (see right) — endorsed by each of the AGRE college councils — to provide a framework for decision-making. The principles were used to guide the development of a recommended two-phased approach (approved by OCP Council at their June 2014 meeting) for the implementation of changes for the disclosure of specific information regarding decisions and processes to the public.

Phase one focuses primarily on enhancing the consistency and clarity of existing information found on the public register, including notices of discipline committee hearings, criminal findings and bail conditions. The necessary amendments to



TRANSPARENCY PRINCIPLES

1. The mandate of regulators is public protection and safety. The public needs access to appropriate information in order to trust that this system of self-regulation works effectively.
2. Providing more information to the public has benefits, including improved patient choice and increased accountability for regulators.
3. Any information provided should enhance the public's ability to make decisions or hold the regulator accountable. This information needs to be relevant, credible and accurate.
4. In order for information to be helpful to the public, it must:
 - o be timely, easy to find and understand.
 - o include context and explanation.
5. Certain regulatory processes intended to improve competence may lead to better outcomes for the public if they happen confidentially.
6. Transparency discussions should balance the principles of public protection and accountability, with fairness and privacy.
7. The greater the potential risk to the public, the more important transparency becomes.
8. Information available from Colleges about members and processes should be similar.



“A more open and transparent approach to the public consultation process.”

College by-laws were approved by Council at the September 2014 meeting and subsequently posted for public consultation, which concluded on November 19. The final by-laws – which will consider the feedback received – will be brought to Council for approval at the December 2014 meeting. Once the by-laws are approved the appropriate changes will be made to the public register.

Phase two recommendations focus on the provision of information relating to outcomes of the College’s Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC), including oral cautions and education orders called SCERPs (specified continuing education and remediation programs). The necessary amendments to College by-laws will be brought to the December 2014 Council meeting

for approval. They will be posted for public consultation with the expectation that final by-laws – reflective of consultation feedback – be brought forward for approval at the March 2015 Council meeting.

COLLEGE WEBSITE:

In 2012 the College – with the understanding that transparency is an equal blend of disclosure and accessibility – undertook a comprehensive website re-design to enhance visitors’ ability to easily access and understand the information that research had identified as the most important for them.

The new website (www.ocpinfo.com), launched in January 2014, created a tailored experience for

each of the identified user groups – public, applicants and members – providing easier access to clear, concise and relevant information.

Among the new features was a more open and transparent approach to the public consultation process for new or proposed amendments to regulations, by-laws or policies. All comments are now posted as they are received on the [consultation page of the website](#) ensuring all points of view are publicly shared.

Although the new website has significantly enhanced transparency, the College recognizes that ongoing evaluation, research and enhancements of both content and navigation are necessary to keep pace with the evolving needs of users.

PUBLIC REGISTER:

Building on the principles that guided the website re-design – “user-identified” and “task-driven” – the College is now engaged in an initiative to enhance the public register. At the core of the re-design will be revisions to better assist the public with completing basic tasks – such as easily accessing information about pharmacies in their neighbourhood and the practitioners who work there. The new public register is expected to launch in the summer of 2015.

Meanwhile, using the [transparency principles](#) as a guide, the College will continue to identify and implement measures to enhance transparency and ensure the public has access to the information that they need – regarding pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacies and the regulatory process – in order to make informed choices about their healthcare. 