

# Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in BC

## MAJOR EVENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS (1993 to 2012)

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*Current to: March 2, 2012*

### SUMMARY (The Highlights)

- 1997        The Health Professions Council concludes that counselling was a health profession that should be regulated in BC.
- 1998        The Task Group forms and proposes a model to regulate counseling under the *Health Professions Act*.
- 2001        The Ministry of Health Planning provides the Task Group with a confidential draft of the regulation to designate counselling therapy under the *Health Professions Act* and thus create the new College of Counselling Therapists of BC.
- 2001-07    The Task Group develops a comprehensive *Competency Profile for Counselling Therapists*, which is then validated across Canada and later becomes the foundation for Ontario's profile.
- 2007        Ontario passes legislation pursuant to the *Regulated Health Professions Act* to regulate psychotherapists and mental health practitioners, making it the second province after Quebec to regulate the counselling profession.
- 2008        Nova Scotia becomes the third province to regulate counselling therapy when its *Counselling Therapists Act* receives Royal Assent.
- 2009        Task Group submits an in-depth analysis of the legislative options available to the BC government to regulate counselling therapy.
- 2011        Task Group submits a 63-page report to the Ministry providing detailed information and analysis on the risks of harm associated with the unregulated practice of counselling therapy in BC.

### DATE        EVENT/ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 1993-95    **Individual counselling associations** submit separate applications to the Health Professions Council to create colleges to regulate their members under the Health Professions Act (HPA).
- Feb. 1997    The **Health Professions Council** issues its *Recommendations on the Designation of Counselling*, finding that counselling is a health profession and there is a public interested in regulating counselling, but did not recommend designation for other reasons.

DATE	EVENT/ACCOMPLISHMENT
Nov. 1998	The recently formed <b>Task Group</b> issues its <i>Joint Response to the Discussion Paper on the Regulation of Counsellors</i> , which explains why it is in the public interest to designate counselling under the HPA, proposes a two-tier registration model, describes the types of competencies that counsellors should possess, and introduces a competency-based screening process for initial registration.
Nov. 1999	Without consulting the Task Group or any counselling organization, a <b>Ministry for Children and Families</b> (MCF) working group proposes a comprehensive model for regulating social workers and other social service personnel, that it proposed would include counsellors. This results in protracted discussions between the Task Group and MCF over the next several years, which eventually results in the MCF agreeing that counsellors should not be part of their model (see Dec. 2003, below).
April 2001	<b>Ministry of Health Planning</b> officials provided the Task Group with a confidential draft of a regulation to designated counselling therapists under the HPA that includes a scope of practice definition for counselling therapy and an occupational title for the exclusive use of college registrants.
May 2001	The <b>Task Group</b> submits a detailed response to the Ministry's confidential draft regulation, adopting many of the Ministry's proposals and offering suggestions on new issues.
2001	The <b>Task Group</b> starts the process to identify the entry requirements for persons wanting to become members of the anticipated College of Counselling Therapists. The objective is to prepare a registration model that could be presented for consideration by the first board of the new College.
Feb. 2003	The <b>Task Group</b> issues a <i>Discussion Paper</i> summarizes the challenges the Group faces in trying to convince the MCF that it is in the public interest to designate counselling therapists under the HPA.
Dec. 2003	The <b>Task Group</b> received a copy of an October 27, 2003 letter from Chris Haynes (DM, MCFD) to Penny Ballem (DM, MHP) wherein Mr. Haynes advised that MCFD "has no objections to consideration of counsellors for regulation under the [HPA]."
2004-2008	The <b>Task Group</b> continues discussions with Ministry officials about moving forward with designation of counselling therapy under the HPA, as was originally proposed by the Ministry in April 2001.
April 2004	The <b>Task Group</b> affirms its commitment to a competency-based registration model, as first proposed in the 1998 <i>Joint Response</i> . The Group adopts in principle the use of a competency profile for counselling therapists to then inform the Group as to what type of registration model could be employed by the new College.
Sept. 2004	<b>Task Group</b> members agree to a single entry class of registration, with the option for specialization post-registration, and to develop a set of common general competencies for counselling therapists.

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Sept. 2005	The <b>Task Group</b> adopts a modified scope of practice for counseling therapists and approves a draft of the <i>Competency Profile</i> for subsequent validation.
Nov. 2005	The first <b>National Symposium on Counsellor Regulation</b> is held in Vancouver, involving representatives from every province in Canada, as well as BC and federal government officials. The representatives discuss strategies for regulating counselors across Canada.
April 2006	In Chapter 7 of its report, <i>Regulation of Health Professions in Ontario</i> , that province's <b>Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council</b> defines psychotherapy as being distinct from counselling, and recommends that psychotherapy become an "enforceable scope of practice" that would be performed only by registrants of a new College of Psychotherapists, as well as psychologists, physician psychotherapist, clinical social workers and nurse psychotherapists.
Nov. 2006	Counsellors in the provinces of <b>New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island</b> validate the <i>BC Competency Profile</i> .
Dec. 2006	A proposed <i>Psychotherapy Act</i> is introduced in the <b>Ontario Legislature</b> by way of Bill #171 (2006) to enact the <i>Health Systems Improvements Act, 2006</i> at Schedule Q. When proclaimed into force, Ontario's new <i>Psychotherapy Act</i> will establish the College of Psychotherapists of Ontario and provide the legislative foundation for regulating psychotherapists and mental health practitioners in Ontario.
April 2007	The <i>BC Competency Profile</i> is validated nationally by the membership of the then named <b>Canadian Counselling Association</b> .
May 2007	The <b>Task Group</b> publishes an updated version of the <i>Competency Profile for Counselling Therapists</i> .
Nov. 2008	<b>Nova Scotia</b> becomes the third province in Canada to establish legislation to regulate the practice of counselling therapy, with the Royal Assent of the <i>Counselling Therapists Act</i> .
Feb 11, 2009	The <b>Task Group</b> and the <b>CPCA</b> affirms/agrees to two foundation principles: (i) that admission to the College of Counselling Therapists must be competency-based, not credential-based, and (ii) to ensure an applicant to the College possesses the required competencies for safe, effective and ethical practice, an applicant must complete a competency assessment process under the authority of the College.
Feb 18, 2009	In response to a specific request from senior Ministry officials, the <b>Task Group</b> produces an <i>Options Paper</i> , which consolidates information from the Group's previous submission on the need for counsellor regulation, and sets out in greater detail the specific ways that counselling therapists could be regulated under the HPA.

DATE	EVENT/ACCOMPLISHMENT
Aug 2009	Following the passage of Ontario's <i>Psychotherapy Act, 2007</i> , the Ontario government announces the appointment of the <b>Transitional Council</b> to help set up the new College of Psychotherapists and Mental Health Therapists of Ontario, as well as the hiring of a new Registrar.
May 2011	<b>Task Group</b> representatives meet with senior Ministry officials, along with representatives of the CPCA, to discuss the designation of counselling therapy under the HPA. The Ministry requests that the Task Group and the CPCA prepare submissions to provide details on the risks of harm that may affect the public should counselling continue not to be regulated under the Act.
Oct. 2011	The <b>Task Group</b> produces a 63-page <i>Submission on Risks of Harm Associated with Counselling Therapy Practice</i> , which provides greater detail on risks than the list of risks set out in the 1998 <i>Joint Response</i> , and include information from four sources: (a) reported legal cases, (b) insurance claims, (c) public complaints filed with the BCACC, and (d) client reports of harm given to clinical counsellors. This Submission is presented to the Ministry officials with a request that designation proceed.
Jan. 2012	<b>Ontario's Transitional Council</b> of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists issues competency profiles for psychotherapists and mental health therapists, both of which appear to adopt the essential elements of <i>BC Competency Profile</i> . <sup>1</sup>

For a more detailed description of these events and copies of many of the above-noted documents, please visit the designation chronology page at the BCACC website:

<http://bc-counsellors.org/general/designation-of-counselling/application-chronology>

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<sup>1</sup> David Cane has been contracted to undertake an in-depth comparison of the BC and Ontario profiles to identify the exact nature of the similarities or differences.