



## UPDATE on new Practical Nurse Exam

To: Ms. Martin

Health care continues to advance rapidly, and as a result, the competencies nurses need to apply are constantly evolving. In addition, the large and growing population in both Ontario and British Columbia is increasing the need for nurse resources. Each year in Ontario and British Columbia, about 7,000 people apply to write the regulatory exam needed to practise as Practical Nurses (PNs). As two of the country's largest regulators of PNs, we face similar challenges when assessing this large number of applicants to ensure they are ready to practise safely. Given the similarities in the issues we face, Ontario and B.C. have agreed to work together on developing a new exam and related processes that will allow us to continue to test effectively this large number of applicants for competencies they need to practise safely.

After a thorough review of possible vendors to assist us with this work, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and College of Licensed Practical Nurses of British Columbia (CLPNBC) will be seeking to proceed with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). NCSBN would bring expertise in exam development, security, technology, research and administration in a way that most closely aligns with our current needs, our plans for future growth and the potential enhancement in testing methodology and safety.

In addition, we will be collaborating with Canadian educators from French and English nursing programs and other stakeholders to ensure entry-to-practice competencies are updated. The collaborative work will ensure competencies covered by the new exam are reflected in what is being taught, and that academic institutions have the time they need to make any necessary changes to their curriculum.

Working with stakeholders and NCSBN, Ontario and British Columbia will develop our new exam based on current practice and the updated competencies needed by entry-level practical nurses working in Canada.

Benefits of these changes will include:

- **Staying current:** By assuring that the exam we use remains in line with the latest evidence and with current competencies needed by nurses today, we keep the public's interest and safety at the forefront.
- **Improved security:** Technology advancements continue to make it easier to proactively monitor and respond rapidly to breaches in exam security.
- **More accessible:** The current exam is made available four times per year. We will be looking to increase the number of times the new exam is available and will be exploring



increasing the number of times the applicant can write it. Our goal is that applicants will be able to start work sooner.

- **Faster feedback:** Exam writers will have their results sooner.
- **Availability of prep materials:** Study and exam practice materials will be developed and made available in English and French.
- **Increased stakeholder involvement:** Nurses in Canada will form the committees to work on the exam. French educators from Canada will be involved in the development and translation process, which will be rigorous and evidence-informed. We've been speaking with educators of practical nurse programs about our plans, and soliciting their early feedback on the timeline they'll need in order to incorporate any revised competencies and exam format into a new curriculum. We've also been engaging with other stakeholders and will continue to do so throughout the project.

As two of the country's largest regulators of PNs, Ontario and British Columbia must make technological improvements to our processes relating to public safety and security, such as developing a new, state-of-the-art PN entry exam. The two provinces have worked together on other initiatives designed to improve the challenges we share when dealing with large numbers of applicants and information.

Currently, all regulatory jurisdictions (with the exception of Quebec, which uses its own exam) use the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPNRE), an exam developed and administered by Yardstick Assessment Strategies Inc. (YAS). Ontario and British Columbia will continue to use the CPNRE administered by YAS until we and our stakeholders are ready to implement the new exam, which we anticipate to be at the start of 2022.

We will continue to update you throughout this initiative. Please contact me at any time if you have questions

Sincerely,

Janet Anderson, RN, BScN, Med  
Chief Quality Officer