



Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns
144 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 3M2

Dear Ontario College of Pharmacists,

November 8th, 2020

I am writing this letter on behalf of 3000 members of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns to express our concern regarding the recent cancellation of the pharmacy licensing board exam scheduled for November 8th, 2020 in Toronto, ON and the significant reduction in capacity in Ottawa, ON.

It is unacceptable that the exam candidates were informed less than 48 hours in advance of their exam. It was evident that the COVID-19 numbers were increasing in Southern Ontario, and the exam candidates could have been notified in a reasonable time frame to allow them to take a break from studying, avoid them from taking time off work, and in some cases – travelling to Toronto/Ottawa. Students have been studying for this exam since they signed up in May, and the paucity of communication between decision makers and exam candidates is a disservice to student wellness. This is now the second time the exam has been rescheduled, and with the influenza season approaching and COVID-19 numbers still increasing, it is hard to imagine that another sitting will be made available in the near future.

A contingency plan outlining the steps PEBC and the Ontario College of Pharmacists would take if a cancellation was to occur also should have been provided to the exam candidates. The planning of these exams has lacked transparency.

I am also disappointed to hear that no efforts of a contingency plan have been communicated to students. This needs to be done. Some suggestions that have been brought forward include virtual OSCEs/ remote MCQs, adding additional sites that abide by the health authority's mandate, providing full provisional licensing to exam candidates after they complete 'x' amount of hours as pharmacy interns. Pharmacists have proven essential during these difficult times, and exam candidates need the opportunity to either write their exam in a different capacity in a timely manner or receive temporary licenses, which has been done successfully by the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba for recent graduates.

This issue affects the mental, physical, psychological and financial wellbeing of hundreds of recent graduates in Ontario. The decisions and actions that are made today have the potential to prevent a backlog in the system and allow the graduating class of 2021 to write their exams and become licensed on-time. This issue needs to be dealt with immediately.

As the National pharmacy students' association, CAPSI is willing to provide assistance to resolve this issue in an efficient manner. Please contact Morgan Patrick, the National President with your request at pres@capsi.ca

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Patrick'.

Morgan Patrick

National President
Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI)
University of Alberta, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, PharmD Candidate, Class of 2021
pres@capsi.ca

November 11, 2020

Sent via email: pres@capsi.ca

Ms. Morgan Patrick
National President
Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI)
Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
2-35, Medical Sciences Building, University of Alberta
8613 - 114 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H7

Dear Morgan,

Re: Postponement of PEBC qualifying exam

Thank you for your letter. The College shares your frustration and disappointment with the cancellation of the Toronto OSCE exam, and the reduction in capacity for the Ottawa exam.

As you correctly pointed out, the decision that led to the cancellation of the Toronto OSCE exam was made by Toronto Public Health. The PEBC, supported by the College, the OPA and the University of Toronto worked tirelessly until late Friday to try to find alternate solutions, engaging the office of the Minister of Health, the office of the Minister of Colleges and Universities, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and officials within Ontario Public Health and Toronto Public Health. Further clarity on the efforts to have the exams proceed as scheduled last week can be found in the [open letter](#) shared with pharmacy interns, 2020 pharmacy graduates and the entire profession of pharmacy.

While the PEBC announcement to candidates about the changes to the exam in Toronto and Ottawa could have been sent a few days earlier, all of the above noted stakeholders agreed to explore all possible avenues before determining there were no other options.

Although the administration or scheduling of the exam is not within the College's scope, and while we have no regulatory influence over decisions made by public health authorities designed to protect lives, as a regulator we do have a role to communicate with all involved — including government and public health officials — about the importance of having these exams proceed given the pandemic and the health crisis we currently face. We continue to share our position that alternative solutions must be explored that would enable this to happen in a way that protects the health and wellbeing of all involved.

You reference some suggestions that have been brought forward to help ensure future exams can proceed as scheduled. The format of the OSCE exam, as well as the selection of exam sites, is the responsibility of the PEBC. With respect to provisional licensing, that is not something the College

has the ability to grant under current legislation. The College is, however, investigating the possibility of emergency registration with the Ministry of Health.

It should be noted that, prior to passing the OSCE exam, graduates can be registered as pharmacy interns and can engage in full scope of practice under the supervision of a practicing pharmacist who in community pharmacies is physically present.

We remain committed to doing everything within the College's mandate to remove any barriers to registration as a pharmacist, and we continue to work with the above noted stakeholders to help identify alternate solutions that will allow these issues to be resolved.

Regards,

Susan James, BSc.OT, MPA, FFIP
Director, Quality
Ontario College of Pharmacists