

Save Our Natural Health Products Campaign



Why are natural health products at risk?

The availability of natural health products may be severely restricted in 2010 unless improvements are made to the current licensing process.

Why is the current licensing process not working?

The intent of the regulations, introduced in 2004, was to ensure Canadians have access and choice to a wide variety of high quality, safe and effective natural health products (NHPs). However, the licensing process has become bogged down with long delays in the approval process and a high rate of failure and withdrawal of applications.

Consider over 41,000 product license applications have been submitted to the Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD) of Health Canada since 2004. In five years, just under 40% of the NHP license applications submitted for approval have actually been licensed, which is alarming!

To date, only 16,000 applications have been approved with almost 40 per cent of applications having been refused or withdrawn. About 10,000 applications are still waiting for assessment.

What is the significance of the 2010 deadline?

All NHPs must currently hold a Natural Product Number (NPN) or Drug Identification Number (DIN) to be sold legally in Canada. NHPs that currently hold a DIN must be transferred to the NHPD and issued an NPN accordingly. That deadline is January 1, 2010. Health Canada recently clarified that March 31, 2010 is an *internal* target for processing the application backlog, that is, it is not set out in law or regulations. Health Canada has set a deadline for later in 2010 before compliance and enforcement will begin. Without a guarantee that Health Canada will be able to review applications in a timely way before the fall of 2010, companies are hard-pressed to be able to plan into the future.

What could happen in the fall of 2010?

Products without a Natural Product Number (NPN) *could* be removed from retail shelves. However, CHFA will continue to press Health Canada and Parliamentarians for a fair, reasonable and predictable regulatory environment for the sector.



Voice of the Natural Products Industry™



La voix de l'industrie des produits naturels

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Can an Inspector confiscate products from my home?

Health Canada inspectors cannot enter a private home and confiscate products. Inspectors would require a warrant issued by the Court or consent from the home owner. However, if a Health Canada inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that the home is being used as a place of business, the Act applies.

How are natural products regulated?

Natural Health Products are regulated under their own regulatory framework (the *Natural Health Product Regulations*) under the *Food and Drugs Act*. They are specifically exempt from the proposed *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*, also known as Bill C-6.

What are the concerns of CHFA members?

Members are frustrated with the current licensing regime that is inflexible and not consistent with a 1998 report from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, *Natural Health Products: A Shared Vision*, which listed 53 recommendations on the regulation of NHPs.

They are also concerned that the NHPD has allowed "pharmaceutical creep" to set in where the same standards for pharmaceutical products are now being applied to natural health products. The standards of evidence requested for products' efficacy is too rigid for an industry that produces low-risk products, which is inconsistent with the 53 recommendations referenced above.

What is the CHFA doing on behalf of its members?

CHFA has launched a new lobby campaign to address the issue head on. A website SaveOurNaturalHealthProducts.ca informs Canadians of the issues faced by the natural products sector and asks for support in making the issue known to their Members of Parliament.

Concerned Canadians can log on and can send a message to their Member of Parliament, the Prime Minister and Minister of Health in Ottawa. They complete a form and a printed postcard with a personal message will be sent on their behalf. We know individually written, hard copy letters and postcards (not e-mails) are the most effective way to communicate a powerful message to your elected officials.

For more information on this issue, visit www.saveournaturalhealthproducts.ca

