



Overview

The counselling profession is in a unique position to address the issues and challenges associated with the statutory regulation of its members across the country. Counsellors* are currently regulated in only three jurisdictions in Canada, Quebec, Ontario and most recently Nova Scotia. However, for a variety of reasons there are developments that are moving the profession towards statutory regulation in many other provinces. Since the regulation of professions is a provincial responsibility there is likely to be diversity with respect to various components of regulatory legislation as it develops. Without a national dialogue and inter-provincial consultations we can anticipate some significant differences with respect to such core features as professional title, scope of practice, controlled or restricted acts, entry requirements, code of ethics, and professional standards of practice.

The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) supports the establishment of statutory regulation for the counselling profession. It is also interested in an orderly development of regulatory regimes across the country consistent with established professional attributes and practices and in a manner to secure occupational mobility for its members.

Therefore, in June 2008, CCPA submitted a proposal to Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) to obtain funding support to host a National Symposium on Inter-Provincial Mobility within the Counselling Profession. CCPA believed that this National Symposium was very timely. It is particularly so in light of the recent announcements by the provincial premiers and territorial leaders following the meetings of the Council of the Federation held in Quebec City, July, 2008. At this meeting it was announced that significant amendments are planned for Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade. These changes, expected for 2009, are intended to further secure occupational mobility.

The National Symposium occurred on November 12 and 13, 2008 in Ottawa. The key objectives of the Symposium Project were:

- to follow-up and continue the dialogue that began in November 2005 in Vancouver when the first symposium was held.
- to surface and discuss issues generated by the new environment of inter-jurisdictional labour mobility;
- to develop an action plan related to inter-jurisdictional mobility for the counselling profession; and
- to identify a core group of stakeholders to take accountability for the action plan.



The symposium participants consisted of:

- Two (2) participants from each of:
 - The Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in British Columbia (7 associations represented)
 - The Ontario Coalition of Mental Health Professionals (17 associations represented)
 - The Nova Scotia Association of Counselling Therapists
 - The New Brunswick Professional Counselling Association
 - The Prince Edward Island Counselling Association
 - l'Ordre des conseillers d'orientation du Québec
- The CCPA Board of Directors
- AIT representatives
- HRSDC representatives
- A representative from the provincial government of Saskatchewan
- Dr. Rick Morris, from the Ontario College of Psychologists

As a preliminary exercise, participants were provided the opportunity to orally respond to the following focusing question:

As we think about the changes to the Agreement on Internal Trade announced by the Premiers in July 2008, and the potential effects of these changes on interjurisdictional mobility and regulation of the counselling profession in Canada, what are some of the issues, challenges, questions and opportunities that come to mind??

Subsequent to verbally identifying any such issue, challenge, question or opportunity, the participant then provided a very brief written summary of his/her point. Thirty-six issues, challenges, questions and opportunities were identified during this initial exercise and equally distributed amongst three time periods. During each subsequent time slot, participants self-selected into groups, to discuss one of the topics of interest to them.

Each of these conversation groups submitted additional information (related to achievements and overcoming barriers as well as key messages) in the areas chosen for discussion.

Participants also took part in an interview exercise where they developed success indicators and responded to the following interview questions:

1. As we contemplate inter-jurisdictional mobility, what are some practical assumptions we can make about the regulatory environments in which we currently assume that??



2. What are some major cultural shifts that will need to happen for the counselling profession to fully maximize opportunities provided by inter-jurisdictional mobility? What do we need to do more of? Less of?
3. What are the areas in which we, the counselling profession, must excel if we are to fully embrace interjurisdictional mobility? Please complete the sentence ?We had better be really great at??
4. What are some actions/activities that should now be contemplated to encourage buy-in and support for interjurisdictional mobility across the Canadian counselling community?

As a final exercise, participants were provided the opportunity to reflect on the symposium. *What was the significance of this two-day event for you?*

Following are some of the comments that were made:

We shifted into action.

It is tremendous to have the support from such an august body of people who have either been through the experience or looking at the experience and actually feel as if we are in your thoughts in a way that is supportive and helpful. It is also incredibly wonderful to see such political savvy and thoughtfulness in concert with such deep sharing. I have been really moved by moments these past two days.

I was surprised by how much fun I had. I expected just a lot of boring work and I was laughing a lot. I was particularly pleased with meeting people whose faces now will stay with me with the names that I have seen and it is so nice to have a cross Canada feeling here.

I was anticipating that there would be a tension around competing interests, as it were, and this effort to get everyone on one page. In the end, it actually started almost the first morning with the presentation it seemed like no, no we can have multiple perspectives and still go forward together. That was quite encouraging. It took the pressure off.

One of the most gratifying things was that we actually managed to get from coast to coast to coast in one room and that we were enriched by our differences and it deepened the conversation; rather than building a chasm it actually built bridges. I think we are in a far better place to go forward with actions that are inclusive and embracing of those differences because we got everyone here; so, kudos to those people who got all of us here in one place at one time.

I was excited by the richness of the experience of the people I met for two days and I was also very much impressed by the warmth I felt towards me, as a newcomer, and I was really touched by that. Thank you.

What I am excited about is some hopefulness. I feel like there is some momentum to move something forward here. That feels exciting to me because I didn't have that, I didn't think that was possible to have before coming here. That was made largely by the ways that everybody in this room worked, the facilitation that we were provided, so thank you.



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I am really excited about the wealth of expertise that is in the room and how solution focused people are and it is not about the barriers and roadblocks that we have. It is identifying that this may be an issue and someone else may have a solution already to it, or a different lens to look through for that issue. I find that very exciting. I think it is very exciting the direction we are heading in and the wealth of expertise that is here and that is behind us and couldn't be in the room today.

One of the key outcomes of the Symposium was to identify a core group of stakeholders (6-10) who will act as stewards of the profession to develop an action plan related to the inter-provincial mobility impediments identified. This group met for the first time in December 2008 and will carry this important work forward.

The final report from the Symposium is posted on the CCPA website for members to review.

Stay tuned as this important work moves forward.

*At this time, a range of terms are being used in the various jurisdictions across Canada to describe practitioners of counselling/psychotherapy. For simplicity sake, in this article, we will use the term "counselling" and "counsellors"