

March 15, 2006

Barbara Sullivan, Chair
Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council
55 St. Clair Avenue West
Suite 806, Box 18
Toronto, ON
M4V 2Y7

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

I am responding to the request for input into the discussion on whether some or part of the work performed by Personal Support Workers warrants the development of a regulatory body.

I am a former Registered Nurse who worked in the Princess Margaret Hospital and Toronto Doctors' Hospital. I acquired quadriplegia in 1978 as a result of a spinal cord injury and have attendants meeting my personal needs. I received attendant services, for 15 years, through Supportive Housing and for the last 11 eleven years through the Direct Funding program. For 25 years I have been involved in the work to establish attendant services in Ontario, both in the development and management of Supportive Housing and the development of Direct Funding. I am a former president of the Center for Independent living in Toronto and former board member of the Hugh Macmillan Children's Rehabilitation Centre. I have also co-developed the Disability Studies component of the Physiotherapy program at the University of Toronto where I hold a status appointment.

There is a large and distinct segment of the population, myself included, who are getting on with our lives whilst coping with severe physical impairment. We work, raise families, go on holiday, laugh and cry as do our able-bodied counterparts. The attendant services, which we developed 30 years ago, enable us to manage our disability-related needs in a manner that makes 'normal' life possible. We call it maintaining our independence, having choice and control and being in charge of our lives. We are not sick, we know what we need. My attendants are highly qualified: they have a listening ear, they acknowledge my expertise, they have a pleasant attitude and respectful manner, they are trustworthy and reliable. These attributes are not gained by a having a PSW certificate or nursing training, as the sad litany of disciplinary actions taken by the CNO attests to. I find these attributes in my neighbor, the sales girl who helped me try on clothes, the daughter of the superintendent of my building and others whom I have met over the years and hired as attendants.

In the early years of developing attendant services many of us put career and pleasurable activity aside in order to participate with government in the countless meetings that it took to see this service conceived, developed, tested and expanded, Hence also our strong sense of ownership of the term 'attendant'.

My request to HPRAC is that it recommends to The Honorable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care that Attendant Services as originally conceived, as presently described in legislation and for the population originally be intended, be safeguarded from professionalism and restriction, and of being swept into the other 18 job titles as described in the Discussion Document.

Thank you for you time and attention.

Sincerely,

Hazel Self