

Veterinary Professionals Act: Modernizing veterinary law

February 03, 2025

On June 6, 2024, Bill 171, the Enhancing Professional Care for Animals Act, 2024, came into law in Ontario. This bill introduces the Veterinary Professionals Act, 2024, a law designed to replace and modernize Ontario's existing Veterinarians Act. The new act includes several provisions impacting the veterinary community, and while it is specific to Ontario, it may serve as a model for other provinces as they look to modernize their veterinary laws.

Non-veterinarian members

Historically, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) has adopted a conservative stance when it comes to non-veterinarians providing alternative therapies to animals. However, the CVO's rebranding to the College of Veterinary Professionals of Ontario reflects an acknowledgment that different forms of effective veterinary care can be provided by professionals other than veterinarians.

The Veterinary Professionals Act recognizes that therapies once considered alternative are now viewed by the public as mainstream and viable options for pet care. Section 9(5) of the Act allows non-veterinarians to perform certain authorized therapies on animals as laid out in Schedule 1 of the Act, including members of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario or the Ontario College of Pharmacists. These activities may include medical assessments and the prescription of drugs, based on the professional expertise of the member.

However, in an effort to protect the public and avoid confusion, the Veterinary Professionals Act includes safeguards. For example, while members of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario may use the title "doctor" when providing care to animals, they are prohibited from using the title "doctor" in written communications related to animal care unless they use their full title, "doctor of chiropractic" or "D.C."

New committees

Veterinarians in Ontario are likely familiar with the various committees that have been statutorily required by the CVO, including the Executive Committee, the Accreditation

Committee, the Registration Committee, the Complaints Committee, and the Discipline Committee.

The Veterinary Professionals Act introduces new committees that replace and supplement the previous ones and address new concerns arising as the profession grows. The new committees are:

1. Executive Committee
2. Accreditation Committee
3. Licensing Committee
4. Investigations and Resolutions Committee
5. Quality Assurance Committee
6. Discipline and Fitness to Practise Committee

Notably, the Licensing Committee replaces the Registration Committee, and the Investigations and Resolutions Committee replaces the Complaints Committee. The Quality Assurance Committee, previously a supplementary entity, is now a statutory requirement, emphasizing the importance of ongoing professional development and competence among veterinarians. This is further underscored by the introduction of the Discipline and Fitness to Practise Committee. These changes reflect both the need to modernize and update processes, as well recognizing that an aging workforce requires more comprehensive checks and balances in veterinary practice.

Offences

While the Veterinary Professionals Act is more inclusive to non-veterinarians, it also increases penalties for non-approved individuals attempting to practice veterinary medicine or carry out prescribed animal therapies. These offences are classified as either Type A or Type B under the Act.

- **Type A offences** occur when a non-veterinarian, outside the exceptions previously noted, carries out an authorized activity such as prescribing a drug or performing a medical assessment on an animal.
- **Type B offences** occur when a non-veterinarian uses a veterinary title, such as “veterinarian,” “veterinary surgeon,” or “doctor,” or fails to comply with the provisions set out in the Act. These offences are designed to create clear distinctions between veterinarians and non-veterinarians, enhancing quality assurance.

This new categorization contrasts with the Veterinarians Act, which did not distinguish offences. Penalties for a first offence under the Veterinary Professionals Act can include a fine of up to \$25,000, with subsequent offences resulting in fines of up to \$50,000. Additionally, repeated Type A offences may lead to imprisonment for up to 12 months.

Conclusion

The Veterinary Professionals Act marks a significant step forward in enhancing veterinary care for the public in Ontario, recognizing the essential role non-veterinarians may play in providing care. At the same time, the Act seeks to protect the public by introducing safeguards and increasing penalties for breaches, ensuring a balance

between inclusivity and accountability. These updates to veterinary law in Ontario include legal, regulatory and business considerations. For more information on compliance with any of the changes outlined in this article, please contact any of the individuals listed below.

By

[Jeffrey Pang](#)

Expertise

[Corporate Commercial, Vet Law](#)

BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 725 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2025 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.