



94,704!

ONLY 1,361 SIGNATURES SHY OF BECOMING THE SECOND LARGEST FEDERAL PETITION IN CANADIAN HISTORY!

PETITION UPDATE *MARCH 22, 2016

The Clerk of Petitions in Ottawa provided NHPPA with details on Canada's largest federal petitions. On paper, the largest federal petition on record was submitted to Diefenbaker to support the creation of Canada's Bill of Rights in 1949. It had 625,510 names signed to it. At 92,572 signatures, the largest petition in the last 7 years submitted on February 19, 2007, was a series of petitions against cruelty to animals. At 96,065 signatures, the largest petition in the last 15 years submitted on April 27, 1999, was a series of petitions against Child Pornography. All of these petitions created a significant debate in the House of Commons and drew attention to important issues that needed changes in how authorities were dealing with the problem.

Smaller petitions than the ones mentioned above have changed legislation! Since the NHPPA operates with minimum expenditures, the petition signatures collected would not have been possible without concentrated public effort. The totals represent your grass roots commitment to spreading the word. At this time, the Charter of Health Freedom petition is still the third largest federal petition that Canada has seen in the past 15 years. Moving the Charter of Health Freedom's petition numbers from our last count on March 25, 2015 of 93,759 to 96,066, will make it the largest petition in the last 25 years!

SOURCING THE NUMBERS

When we asked the Clerk of Petitions for the numbers regarding federal paper petitions presented in the House of Commons he gave us the figures he could find. He made it clear that the records he had were precise but that his office could only access petitions that went back 25 years. This means we cannot be certain that when we have collected 96,066 that the Charter of Health Freedom will be second only to the Bill of Rights...but we will definitely have the most signatures on any single petition in 25 years. This is also more signatures than over 90 percent of sitting MPs have ever seen, since very few MPs have been in Parliament since 1999.

To get there we only need 2,307 more signatures! Each signature represents individuals deeply concerned about Health Canada's Natural Health Product (NHP) Regulations that continue to threaten our access to natural health products and practices. This petition draws Parliament's focus to consider what is at stake without the Charter of Health Freedom—the loss of our personal fundamental freedoms and the right to decide how to treat ourselves—by allowing the NHP Regulations to continue unimpeded.

To significantly increase the numbers of this petition, now that people are beginning to listen, we will be running a series of campaigns within the industry and to the public to increase both number of signatures and, by extension, people's awareness of the extent of the problem. During this time, we will also be seeking an MP who is interested in challenging the status quo and championing the freedom for those who want to live naturally—and help move Parliament to give natural health products and practices their own reasonable legal framework as outlined in the Charter of Health Freedom.

WHY IS THIS PETITION IMPORTANT?

When groups from across Canada came together to have input on the Charter of Health Freedom in 2008, the goal was to come up with legislation that would prevent any government from restricting our access to natural health products, practices and low risk medical devices. The most pressing risk at the time appeared to be the implementation of the *Natural Health Product Regulations*. Little did anyone appreciate what was coming. No one could have predicted that the Charter would become more necessary as the years went by.

There is no question that the NHP Regulations have:

- Caused many NHPs to disappear;
- Caused many NHPs to become less effective by, for example causing manufacturers to reduce the amount of therapeutic ingredients;
- Stifled innovation of novel multi-ingredient products;
- Caused many small- and medium-sized high-quality firms to close, as they could not afford the costs of compliance;
- Restricted choice by causing many US and European companies to stop selling into Canada;
- Restricted access by driving up the price of NHPs, meaning that persons with low income cannot access them,
- Removed and restricted longstanding practices and treatments of alternative and traditional practitioners, and;
- Could force cost recovery measures by imposed fees driving even more NHP producers out of the market and increasing prices of NHPs making them even more unaffordable.

There is also no question that the NHP Regulations have had a significant negative impact on health.

This was all predictable when the Charter was drafted. What was not predictable was how effective the government would be in taking away our right to exercise personal health choices in the Courts. Most NHPs are not illegal to possess, so most of us who manage to access ones no longer sold in stores are not charged if we possess them (unlike for, say, cannabis). However, when we can no longer access them, it has become almost impossible to get a Court to agree that you have the right to your choice of treatments.

We could not have anticipated that the Charter of Health Freedom would become even more vital now than when it was first drafted. Because it sets out fundamental health rights that Courts have recently denied us, it is more necessary than ever. The government presumes that you are not capable of making your own health decisions. The Courts are siding with the government. Unless we can move forward with a solution like the Charter, the following generations will not even appreciate what we lost: control over our own bodies.

We are also facing other risks that would be prevented by the Charter. There has been much talk about Canada and the European Union reaching a comprehensive trade agreement. However, the text of the agreement has not been finalized. The terms that are being worked on are secret. The government will not share them. If, however, it covers NHPs, a risk is that the much more restrictive European Regulations will apply. This would further restrict our access to NHPs, a restriction the Charter of Health Freedom would prevent.

Another risk we see down the road is cost recovery. Health Canada is supposed to recover the cost of regulating NHPs from the NHP industry through fees for product and site licences. To date no fees are being imposed upon the NHP industry. When they are imposed, we expect that more marginal NHP providers will be pushed out of business. We predict that the prices of NHPs will increase further, making them even more unaffordable for low income Canadians.

The Charter of Health Freedom was drafted to prevent the overregulation of NHPs while at the same time actually give the government more powers to deal with those very few products that do pose a risk.

WHY SHOULD EVERY CANADIAN SIGN THE CHARTER OF HEALTH FREEDOM PETITION?

If you think the current state of our natural health industry Regulations is wrong, and you think it takes away people's freedoms, we ask you to sign the petition. The dismantling of the industry is the inevitable result of the NHP Regulations as they are currently written.

The Charter of Health Freedom is a proposed legislation that gives NHPs and practices their own Act. It's an independent law. A law that creates a new Ministry of Wellness that has its own sets of rules from which appropriate Regulations stem. It is a third category, apart from the Drug category where NHPs are currently regulated.

The Charter of Health Freedom could stop the regulatory crisis. It could end the criminalization of our natural health industry. It is the only real solution in Canada to the legislative crisis in existence today.

GETTING THE PETITION TO OTTAWA

MPs know that real signatures mean engagement. We are ready to speak with any MP who understands what is at stake, politically and legally. Not all MPs are going to be able to see the implications of the current regulatory scheme for the NHPs industry, practices, practitioners and the public. We need to identify the MP with the commitment and vision for Canadians' rights to present our petition to Parliament. Make this the year you have a conversation about health freedom with your MP. If they listen, let us know. We are building a shortlist of MPs. Email info@nhppa.org if you would like to set up a conversation between your MP and Shawn Buckley on the process and possible outcomes of asking for significant regulatory reform.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Help us raise the record breaking unique signatures we need to support making this Charter law.

Download and print the petition from NHPPA's Petition Station Support Action Kit at www.nhppa.org

Collect a minimum of 25 signatures.

Mail completed petition sheets to the address at the foot of each petition page.

Keep up-to-date with the Charter's petition numbers by subscribing to NHPPA!

THANK YOU!

Everything you do makes a difference. Your voice is powerful, it changes our petition count and together with tens of thousands of others it can restore our individual right to think for ourselves.