

June 25th, 2021

Cosmetics Alliance Canada Welcomes Launch of Phase 1 of the Implementation of Health Canada's Self-Care Framework (Labelling of Natural Health Products)

As outlined in Health Canada's Forward Regulatory Plan, Health Canada has now initiated Phase 1 of the implementation of the Self-Care Framework with the "pre-publication" in Canada Gazette Part 1 of the proposed changes to the labelling regulations for natural health products.

The Self-Care Framework represents the first systemic modernization of the regulation of non-prescription drugs, natural health products, and cosmetics in nearly 75 years. It is intended to regulate products based upon their "risk/safety" profile rather than their regulatory classification.

Under the current outdated model, individual products within the same product category such as toothpaste, mouthwash, shampoo, sunscreen, or even lipstick/lip balm, can be regulated either as a cosmetic, natural health product, or drug depending on claims and the molecular origin of the active ingredient(s). This results in significantly different regulatory requirements, including labelling, as well as Health Canada's enforcement tools such as recall powers and penalty provisions. The status quo has proven to be indefensible from a public policy perspective, confusing to consumers and health care providers, challenging for both regulators and industry, and in need of reform.

Although the unavoidable demands of the pandemic on both Health Canada and stakeholders have delayed completion of the Framework, Cosmetics Alliance Canada is pleased that the process has now resumed and we thank Health Minister Patti Hajdu and the staff at Health Canada for their extensive work, ongoing engagement with stakeholders, and commitment to this major and much needed modernization initiative.

As to NHP labelling in Phase 1, we understand that this is being proposed to meet the government's commitment to improved labelling for health products and to ensure the alignment of labelling requirements within the Self-Care Framework. It is a fundamental principle of the Self-Care Framework that "like" products from a risk/safety perspective be treated the same and regulated commensurate with the safety/risk profile of the product. This will not happen if self-care products within a given category – such as within the categories of toothpaste, shampoo, sunscreen, and lipstick/lip balm - are subject to different labelling rules.

Cosmetics Alliance believes that there were many lessons learned through the modernization of labelling requirements for non-prescription drugs that can be readily applied to NHP labelling. This includes the innovative application of digital labels to accommodate new requirements while avoiding increased packaging and the associated environmental consequences. We anticipate that the work to be undertaken will inform the overall labelling requirements for the Framework including further regulatory amendments for other self-care products if they are required to ensure necessary alignments. We also expect that sufficient time for implementation will be provided to accommodate label changes within the normal life cycle of a product's label.



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Cosmetics Alliance has already been working through our technical committees in preparation for this important consultation and stand ready to fully participate in the process – including providing technical advice and ensuring that the proposals meet the objectives of the Self-Care Framework.

By way of background, the policy initiative to modernize and improve the labeling of health products - including the use of Plain Language Labelling – was initiated by the previous Harper Government with significant support across party lines and has continued under the Trudeau administration. Additionally, what is now known as the Self-Care Framework began with a “Notice to Stakeholders” issued in June 2014, by then Health Minister Rona Ambrose, beginning a consultation on how low-risk consumer health products - such as cosmetics, natural health products, and non-prescription drugs - are regulated. This initiative was reviewed and adopted by the incoming Liberal Health Minister who established a dedicated team within Health Canada to undertake this project and authorized one of the most extensive and thorough consultation processes of any such modernization.

The result of these broadly supported initiatives has been the Self-Care Framework, and Cosmetics Alliance believes that it is time to get on with finishing this important work.

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