

# Edmonton Health Food Store Collective

## Frequently Asked Questions

- Your suggestion that the "big drug companies" are somehow controlling Health Canada sounds like another far-fetched conspiracy theory. Aren't you being a little paranoid?

That the pharmaceutical industry exerts influence on regulating bodies around the world is not conspiracy theory, it is more accurately an economic fact. The pharmaceutical lobby spends over USD \$100 million per year on political lobbying and campaign contributions throughout North America. And, when you consider the evidence brought forward by "whistle blowers" that are senior officials from within Health Canada, even the most skeptical Canadians will admit such influence exists.

- A number of national industry organizations have been fighting the new NHP regulations for years. Why are you suddenly leading the charge?

As is often the case with industry, we don't always agree about what steps should be taken to remedy a situation and we have yet to properly alert the public as to what is going on. This is our intention - thus allowing the public to have their say before they lose substantial access to Natural Health Products that they may simply assume will be there.

- Aren't the new regulations simply intended to prevent your industry from making exaggerated health benefit claims?

Yes, and that makes good sense. But the fact is that since 2004, when Health Canada classified Natural Health Products as Drugs, each product has been forced to make a claim and then to prove that claim with inappropriately onerous "Standards of Evidence."

Health Canada admitted repeatedly from the beginning that many products would not be able to meet these standards. The regulations have already reduced consumers choice by approximately 1/3, and another 1/3 reduction is projected after the regulations come into full force in 2010.

So, we are not just talking about getting rid of the bad apples, were talking about getting rid of two-thirds of the entire industry.

- Isn't Health Canada just trying to protect the public interest?

Perhaps, but that doesn't mean their actions or regulatory approach are appropriate. If Canadians lose access to two-thirds of NHPs, many of which have been sold here for decades with no problem, then that is not appropriate.

- Is Health Canada really going to prevent Canadians from buying basic vitamin products like Vitamin C and Vitamin E?

I can't speak to the future, but individual vitamins are not in danger now. The products at risk are those sold in specialty compounds that contain synergistic mixtures of ingredients. This is despite the fact that most of these ingredients have been approved by Health Canada when sold individually.

Products with multiple ingredients are the largest sector of products in the natural health industry, and represents most of what is sold in Health Food Stores.

- The new NHP regulations were introduced back in 2004. What took you so long to launch your awareness campaign?

We have been trying to alert people in the industry for years and only recently has it been widely acknowledged that there is a crisis. Only now are our concerns starting to be heard. When we say "If something isn't done soon these products will be gone" the message is pretty clear.

- Health Canada says the new regulations will increase consumer confidence. Isn't that a good thing?

Not if they can no longer get the products they're looking for. If the regulations proceed unchecked there won't be many products left to have confidence in.

- Health Canada says the new regulations will actually increase consumer access to natural health products. Can you explain that?

After 2004, many of the Natural Health Products that Health Canada had previously disallowed for sale became available.

Single amino acids and melatonin for example. But the question is if they were safe enough after 2004, why were they banned in the first place.

- What do you want Health Canada to do?

Two things:

One: suspend the enforcement of the regulations pending a review by the federal "Standing Committee on Health" to make sure that Health Canada is doing is what was really intended.

Two: create a third category of products that clearly distinguishes them from both food AND drugs – which is what the industry was originally promised by Health Canada officials.

As it is now, Natural Health Products are considered a subclass of drugs and that's what is causing the problem.

- What alternatives have you proposed?

One: a truly separate category for natural health products (as mentioned above)

Two: That the government pass into law the Charter of Health Freedom which would protect Canadians Charter Rights to use whatever they feel is necessary to support their health and to prevent a "Nanny State" from dictating what we can and cannot use.

- What can people do to support your cause?

Become informed about what is going on by visiting [NHPPA.org](http://NHPPA.org), or the Canadian Health Food Association's new website at [www.saveournaturalhealthproducts.ca](http://www.saveournaturalhealthproducts.ca)

The can also voice their concerns to their MPs by phone, fax, letters, and e-mail. Let them know they feel strongly about what's going on.

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