VICTORIA – B.C.’s three nursing colleges will be able to form one organization, providing a single set of bylaws for consistent structures, processes and an improved patient experience, as a result of amendments introduced today by Health Minister Adrian Dix.

Amendments to the Health Professions Act set the stage for the provincial nursing colleges to amalgamate, providing greater consistency for the profession and one point of contact for patients and partners.

The amendments allow for any of B.C.’s health profession colleges to amalgamate. This was prompted by a request from the nursing colleges to help streamline regulation.

In recent years, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of BC (CRPNBC), College of Licensed Practical Nurses of BC (CLPNBC) and College of Registered Nurses of B.C. (CRNBC) have been working together on nursing regulations and standards, and have become more aligned in their efforts. This legislation lets them take the next step and amalgamate.

The Health Professions Act states that it is the duty of the college to protect and serve the public at all times. With this in mind, the legislation will also allow for the appointment of an administrator for a health profession college. This is a safeguard in the event that a college board is seen to be acting to protect the interest of the health profession instead of the patient.

Patient safety will also be further supported as amendments will ensure that infection control breaches can be reported to public health officials in a timely manner. For example, if poor sterilizing practices are observed, the amendments will ensure they can be reported immediately. Currently, while any breach can be reported, it must first go through college investigation processes instead of directly to public health officials in a timely manner.

There are approximately 55,000 nurses licensed in B.C. The CRPNBC regulates registered psychiatric nurses, the CLPNBC regulates licensed practical nurses and the CRNBC regulates registered nurses and nurse practitioners.

A single nursing regulator also exists in Ontario, the United Kingdom and Australia, with Nova Scotia exploring a similar approach.

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