SUMMARY of the Decision of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (the Committee)
(Information is available about the complaints process here and about the Committee here)

Dr. Michael Frederick Hart (CPSO# 94570)
(the Respondent)

INTRODUCTION

The College received information raising concerns about the Respondent's social media posts on Twitter and Instagram about COVID-19, including concerns that the Respondent is spreading misinformation and fostering vaccine hesitancy. Subsequently, the Committee approved the Registrar's appointment of investigators to conduct a broad review of the Respondent's practice.

COMMITTEE'S DECISION

The Committee considered this matter at its meeting of January 23, 2023. The Committee required the Respondent to appear before a Panel of the Committee to be cautioned with respect to: 1) use of social media, disruptive behaviour, and publishing information without critical appraisal or adequate cautions to the public about reliability of such information; and 2) following infection prevention and control (IPAC) guidelines in his medical practice. The Committee also agreed to accept an undertaking from the Respondent.

COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS

As part of this investigation, the Committee retained an independent Assessor who specializes in public health and preventive medicine. The Assessor opined that the Respondent's Twitter posts and podcasts substantially meet the standard of practice with respect to compliance with the CPSO's policies on social media activity. However, the Assessor also outlined a number of deficits of professionalism. These deficits included: multiple statements that would reasonably considered disrespectful, insulting, or demeaning directed at other named physicians; no evidence in support of assertions related to disagreement with other physicians (that they had lied, knowingly deceived, or otherwise misrepresented facts about COVID-19 and the policy actions taken in response to the pandemic)—indicating moderate deficits in knowledge of and judgement in relation to the CPSO's policies on physician behaviour and communication to the community at large; little to no critical appraisal of published studies cited in tweets or attempt to ensure this information is of reasonably high quality an updated when new information becomes available.

The Committee also obtained expert reports on vaccinations and therapeutics in COVID-19, and conducted an unannounced inspect of the Respondent's practice which

revealed deficits in infection prevention and control measures. The Respondent addressed the Assessor's opinion and other information in further submissions to the College.

The Committee remained concerned that the Respondent had significant issues impacting his ability to practise in a manner consistent with the expectations the College has of its members, especially given that Respondent's use of social media and clinical practice had previously been investigated.

The Committee noted the wide variety of concerns about the Respondent, from unprofessionalism in use of social media, to disseminating misinformation widely, to shortcomings in infection prevention and control, and failure to abide by a government mandate for masking in the healthcare setting. The Committee determined that it would be appropriate to caution the Respondent on this basis, in addition to accepting an undertaking from the Respondent.