The Legislative Assembly of Ontario resumed yesterday. As expected, Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act and Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act were both reported to the Legislative Assembly and ordered for second reading.

Useful consolidated versions of both bills, containing the amendments approved by the Standing Committee on Justice and Social Policy and Standing Committee on General Government, respectively, are available on the Legislative Assembly website as follows:

Bill 8: 

Bill 31:

When a bill is ordered for second reading, it is debated in principle before the House, but no amendments to the text are made at this time. After debate concludes, the bill may be given Second Reading, and, if consent is unanimous, be ordered for Third Reading. If consent is not unanimous, it may be referred to a Committee for further consideration and amendment.

Despite concerns expressed by numerous stakeholders, the government has not yet committed to additional committee hearings on Bill 8. The Ontario Hospital Association, among others, is calling for additional public hearings to consider the amendments made to the bill. In our view, there continue to be fundamental flaws with this draft legislation, even as amended. While on the surface, the changes appear favourable, the government retains its sweeping powers, without any greater accountability.

We encourage the health industry to continue to advocate for workable solutions and would be pleased to assist in this regard.

We previously provided our comments on some of the amendments to Bill 31 in our Communiqué dated February 17, 2004 entitled “Bill 31 – Health Privacy Update.” Undoubtedly more information will be forthcoming on this draft legislation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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Our National Health Industry Practice Group is dedicated to providing comprehensive and integrated legal services to health industry clients. For more information about our group, visit our website at www.millerthomson.com or contact one of our regional contacts listed below.

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