

President's Column

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



Dr. Louis Dubé

The first meeting of the new CDA took place in Ottawa in September. A team of representatives was elected under a new electoral system. We can now state unequivocally that every province and territory is represented on CDA's Board of Directors. Before, the Association's executive was composed of 9 members, including the president, president-elect and vice-president. Members represented regions. Now we have one Board member per province and 3 open seats. Each member will bring to the table issues, concerns and ideas from a local, regional or national perspective. However, when decisions have to be made, it will be from a national perspective.

One of the new Board's most pressing tasks is to re-examine the

committee structure and synchronize input to the decision-making process. Over the years, we have felt that in some cases, our committee members or experts were "tagged" to a certain committee and could not be used to their full potential. Sometimes, in the past, committee members felt obliged to meet in order to fulfill their mandate, even if the agenda wasn't always a full one. In today's world, money and time are precious and must always be accounted for. There is no room for unnecessary expenses. The new format and structure will address this issue and participants will be able to work to their full potential in a cost-effective manner.

A knowledge-based decision-making process like the one CDA has been engaged in implies that a new way of doing business must be embraced. Standing committees will be developed and a pool of experts and advisors drawn up. When an issue comes up, the General Assembly will mandate the Board to set up a task force or working group tailored to the issue. The best experts are expected to come up with a solution. This means that merit will be the basis for selection. Once the group's mandate is fulfilled, the expert's names remain in a databank until a new mandate is given. This structure will permit the Association to respond rapidly and effectively to developing issues.

This structure must be organized, flexible and responsive. A knowledge-based decision-making process implies that 4 critical questions must be asked before any steps are taken: 1) Is this in our mandate? 2) Do our members need it? 3) What is already available out there on this issue? 4) What are the ethical aspects involved? All our decisions at CDA are based on these 4 questions, which help us respond and be accountable to our individual and corporate members.

Another important activity at our upcoming planning session in November will be to do an update for the Board members. Some were elected for the first time at the General Assembly and we need to have everybody on the same level of understanding, if we want decisions to be made in the knowledge-based process. Finally, the November session will be the meeting where CDA directors initiate the process of addressing the issues brought forward at last September's General Assembly and Strategic Forum (during which the topic of oral health promotion was discussed). The Strategic Forum brings together key stakeholders of dentistry to define emerging issues through formal presentations and roundtable discussions. The session's outcomes will shape the different task forces and working groups needed to find solutions to pressing issues and initiate the process for establishing next year's budget.

As you can see, your Association's Board and staff are very active these days. CDA is equipped, as never before, to deal with issues in a fashion that today's fast-paced world demands. CDA is more than ever involved and present in the national media to ensure that the point of view of the Canadian dentist is well known, in keeping with our vision to provide "leadership in oral health care for Canadians — ethical and contemporary, caring and responsive."

Dentistry is an ever-changing landscape. We cannot and should not stop changes from occurring. What we do need to do is work together to manage change. I am confident that our new approach will pay big dividends in the near future.

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