



Dr. Wayne Halstrom

“Individual efforts alone do not achieve results.”

To Whom Should We Pay Homage?

Each year as Thanksgiving comes around, we take time to review, reflect and pay tribute. This year my celebrations included a special recognition of the talented and dedicated dentists who have preceded me in the service of our profession.

We in dentistry can be thankful that the results of our labours afford us a comfortable lifestyle and personal satisfaction. Our profession can also be proud that Canadians currently enjoy one of the highest standards of oral health and oral health care in the world.

How did these phenomena occur? I believe we owe much of it to good collective management within the profession, the much-needed foundation that allows us to work toward the goal of optimal oral health for all Canadians, the mission statement of CDA.

In the 10 years that I have spent working in the service of organized dentistry, at both the provincial and national levels, I have yet to meet a committee volunteer, a member of the Board of Directors or an officer who is involved for personal aggrandizement. Such positions come with their fair share of demands, including constant emails, late-night phone calls and time spent away from family and the practice. These are people to whom we must pay homage.

Every level of organized dentistry operates to the best of its ability on long-term strategic plans and the knowledge-based decision-making process. If things do not always proceed as planned, you can be sure that due diligence and the best of intentions have guided the efforts of decision-makers.

One truism strikes me as particularly pertinent — individual efforts alone do not achieve results. It is the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between the national body and the provincial associations that has elevated dentistry to the position it holds in the community

today. For the past 104 years, these collective efforts have been a work in progress, always aiming to improve the oral health of the public while also achieving significant rewards for Canadian dentists.

During the past century, the profession has evolved to keep pace with the times and retain focus. However, at no time has there been a need to tear down the palace. There are some forces at work today that advocate the destruction of the system from which we have all benefited. My advice? Beware the false prophet, stay the course and make improvements within a tried, tested and true formula.

A great example of the national and provincial bodies working together to produce great results took place in August. Along with more than 1,000 fellow dentists, I headed east to St. John's to attend CDA's Annual Convention. Co-sponsored by CDA and the Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Association (NLDA), this meeting was a watershed occasion for the dentists of Canada.

If you were unable to attend, you really missed one! Newfoundland is a very special place — stark yet beautiful, hard but yielding, demanding yet kind to its citizens. Folks there are polite, considerate, always ready to help and imbued with an immense sense of humour. In other words, they are the consummate hosts.

The undertaking was enormous, accomplished with typical Newfoundland flourish. It had been over 30 years since the last national convention was held on the Rock. Given the outstanding accomplishment of this event, I am confident that we will not wait that long again before the dentists of Canada once again convene so close to the Grand Banks.

While in St. John's, it became clear to me that the gathering of colleagues from across the country to share learning and social time is an essential element of who we are as a profession. The convention organizing committee, along with the entire NLDA staff and elected officials, take their place among those to whom we should pay homage.

As you celebrated Thanksgiving, I hope you took a moment to acknowledge how lucky we truly are and to recognize the significant role that others before and among us play in our profession's collective success.

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