



Dr. Wayne Halstrom

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Your Profession Needs You

– Ask not what your Association can do for you; ask what you can do for your Association.

With apologies to the late John F. Kennedy, I paraphrase his words to emphasize that many circumstances in life are similar to the sentiments expressed in perhaps one of the most famous quotations in politics.

We all love our country and demonstrate this affection in various ways. Some serve the country in the military overseas while others choose to lend a hand closer to home. Regardless of the method, these actions all reflect the great, secure, kindly and benevolent society we are fortunate to live in. As dentists, we are also fortunate to practise in Canada and to benefit from the various organizations that foster, protect and secure the future of our profession.

The greatest protection that we can offer to our profession does not come in the form of dues. Rather, it is the involvement and participation of our members at every level that is so vital to our future. As individuals, we can do so much to support a profession that offers so much to us all. This support can be shown by performing such simple gestures as responding to questionnaires sent out by the various bodies charged with the administration of dentistry.

While some may be quick to criticize the organizations in our profession, these bodies can only succeed when they have information gleaned directly from their members. Without this type of first-hand guidance, the ability of the leadership to make informed decisions is hindered. For example, if the government implements a program that falls within the mandate of either CDA or the provincial bodies, the profession's response is far more effective when relevant and up-to-date information from our membership is readily available.

At the end of last year, CDA canvassed a randomly selected group of members, half of which received CDA's membership survey while the other half received a questionnaire about

pro bono dental care and community-based volunteer activities. These questionnaires are an ideal opportunity to have your views heard. CDA's membership survey, conducted every 2 years, seeks to determine what our members consider the most important issues facing the profession. The pro bono survey will provide a better understanding of the amount of charitable dental care services that take place across the country and will ultimately facilitate efforts to secure support for access to care initiatives from outside parties.

Taking the time to share your thoughts on such philanthropic endeavours brings to mind the topic of voluntary participation within the profession. All membership organizations, CDA included, require volunteers to participate on committees, to consult on special projects, to serve on boards. I can assure everyone who reads this missive that at no time in the past 10 years of my intense involvement with organized dentistry have I regretted one moment of the time spent performing my duties. I require no thanks, no awards, nor recognition. The knowledge that I have done my best to aid the profession to which I owe all of my success in life is more than enough reward.

I believe our profession is a living, breathing and demanding entity. It lives because the public we serve demands and deserves that as professionals, we perform to a high standard. It breathes because the profession needs to be vibrant, responsive and responsible. It demands because the profession requires help in funding, staffing as well as planning and directional issues.

Our Association exists solely because of the people who comprise the membership. We can only succeed by engaging the talented and skilled individuals who serve as respected professionals across this great country. If I can once again paraphrase a well-known American saying — CDA (not Uncle Sam) needs you! Your profession needs you.

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