

President's Column

INCLUSIVITY: COUNT ME IN!



Dr. Tom Breneman

On a recent flight cruising along at 35,000 feet, it was comforting to know that the captain, crew and ground support were working together so that we would all reach our destination safely.

At a 1999 planning session, CDA's Executive Council crafted a vision statement for the Association. The Council realized that, to achieve this vision for 2010, CDA needed to be inclusive. Since dentistry is a unique body of knowledge, "inclusivity" means that we need to have an open dialogue, both within and beyond our profession.

I was recently privileged to attend the annual meeting of the Northwest Territories Dental Association in Yellowknife and enjoy the northern hospitality. At this meeting, participants set in motion the creation of a northern federation of dentists, to include all dentists in the Yukon, NWT and Nunavut. This federation could then be represented at the table under the proposed new governance model of CDA, and the concerns of

dentists and their patients north of 60 could be identified and resolved. This development has the potential to bring together at the same table for the very first time dentists from every region in Canada for a truly national perspective.

The proposed new governance model is crucial to our quest for inclusivity. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) would include a General Assembly on the first day, followed by a Strategic Forum on the second day.

The General Assembly would include the formal portion of the AGM. Participants would include voting members representing the corporate members of CDA, dental students, Canadian Forces Dental Service, specialty sections and academic dentistry. Non-voting members would include presidents and CEOs of the provincial dental associations and dental regulatory authorities, specialty sections, board members, the CDA president and CDA staff. Provisions will be made to allow for AGM participants to discuss specific issues during an interactive session.

The Strategic Forum is meant to define emerging issues that have the potential to impact on the oral health of Canadians. Besides the aforementioned, stakeholders would also include representatives from the Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry, Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC), Academy of General Dentistry, Canadian Association of Dental Research, Canadian Dental Service Plans Inc., Dentistry Canada Fund, Royal College of Dentists of Canada, Dental Industry Association of Canada and other groups.

The broader and more diverse the discussion, the better our knowledge base and the more successful we will be in identifying future trends and developing a strategy to ensure

continuing success, as we strive to achieve optimal oral health for all Canadians.

Another topic of interest to Executive Council is CDAC's ongoing evolution. Accreditation began under the auspices of CDA and has evolved to the point where CDAC is a functionally autonomous unit with its own director, bank account, budget and chair, under the broad umbrella of CDA. There has been some ongoing discussion in recent months to either make CDAC entirely independent or move it under a proposed newly developed body — the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities — or to maintain the commission broadly within CDA.

Since there is only one unique body of knowledge that is the *raison d'être* of any profession, your Executive Council has asked CDA staff to do an environmental scan, reporting on the manner in which other professions manage their accreditation processes.

It is only when our profession joins forces with allied groups that we can truly examine an issue objectively and respond to it proactively, instead of reactively. This also allows dentistry to respond with a single, clear and concise message that will have the greatest impact on the profession and on those whom we serve.

As an example of our joining forces with allied groups, CDA co-hosted an Oral Hygiene Shortage Forum on January 10 with the Association of Dental Surgeons of British Columbia. Executive Council approved the key messages emanating from this forum for consideration by the Board of Governors in March. More on this in a later edition of *JCDA*.

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