BEING EFFECTIVE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

Dr. John Diggens

Dentistry is such an engrossing profession it is easy to forget that decisions taken hundreds or thousands of miles away can have a profound effect on our professional lives. Such decisions can be taken by governments, business corporations or international organizations. The only way we can hope to influence these decisions is by speaking with one voice and by building long-term coalitions with like-minded associations.

CDA plays this role for Canadian dentistry on the national and international stages. I recently witnessed how effective our organization can be at the highest levels. In October, I was part of a small delegation to the annual meeting of the Fédération dentaire internationale (FDI) in Mexico City. And in November, I had the honour of representing CDA at hearings of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology and at hearings of the House of Commons Finance Committee.

In advance of the federal budget in February, the Commons Finance Committee has been hearing depositions from various groups across Canada. The main purpose of CDA’s presentation was to discuss issues that have a direct impact on our members, dentistry in general and the oral health of Canadians.

We made specific recommendations about funding tobacco control initiatives, creating more favourable conditions for adequate retirement income for Canadians, making tuition in professional schools more affordable, and creating a climate where more Canadians have dental plans through employment.

The final report of the Finance Committee incorporated key CDA recommendations. For example, the committee recommended that the government: combat youth smoking, raise RRSP limits in terms of maximum contributions and foreign content, and make every effort to enhance access to post-secondary education. This report represented an encouraging payoff for CDA’s efforts.

With the explosion of electronic commerce, the Internet and database marketing, one area of major concern to Canadians is the privacy of their health information. Can you imagine a health facility selling “confidential” information to database marketers? It couldn’t happen in Canada, you say.

Well, it is happening. In one recent case, a woman just diagnosed with cancer received a solicitation from a funeral home on returning home from hospital. In another case, a man who had consulted a sexual dysfunction clinic received mail advertising cures for impotence.

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