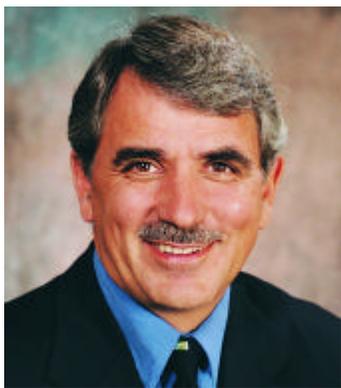


President's Column

NOT JUST ANOTHER STRATEGIC PLAN



Dr. John Diggins

For the past eight years I have attended the CDA executive council planning session. During this time, we have helped refine the vision for the future of CDA. In 1998, we engaged in a blue sky exercise to examine the forces and sources of change affecting the organization. This led to the creation of the new vision statement: *Leadership in oral health for Canadians — ethical and contemporary, caring and responsive.*

This was heady stuff — scary for some, eye opening for others. In my travels around the country over the past year, I sensed a feeling of excitement at the potential for renewal contained in this new vision statement. But I also knew that our work had just begun — we had been to the stratosphere, now we needed to have our feet planted firmly on terra firma.

At the November 1999 session, the executive council fleshed out a plan to complement the vision statement, and took it one step further by rethinking some of the components related to col-

laboration with outside groups. We tried to go beyond the scope of a normal strategic plan to define key result areas with associated activities and indicators.

In an effort to clearly define the role of CDA relative to provincial dental associations, we tried to decide what we could do best in the national interest of our profession, and what is done more effectively at the provincial level. We didn't get all the way with this exercise; that's why we are now consulting further with members about the validity of the activities we believe CDA should undertake on behalf of organized dentistry.

These tasks include: speaking on behalf of the profession to national level organizations; bringing the profession together to decide on standards that affect every dentist in the country; distributing knowledge to the profession and the public; protecting the viability of dental practice; responding to critical issues facing the Canadian dental profession; and communicating at the highest level about the primacy of the dentist in the delivery of oral health care.

Given that CDA is the national association of dentists, the organization must provide services to its members to help them be successful in a challenging environment. The executive council had to establish methods of measuring the performance of CDA so that members can decide if they are getting value for their dues. I want to set out these "key result areas" below.

1. CDA wants to contribute in a measurable way to the improvement of the oral health of Canadians. Activities could include: providing knowledge to the profession and public, monitoring oral health indicators, maintaining freedom of choice of dentist.
2. The organization wants to ensure that it is recognized by important stakeholders as being the national leader and advocate for oral health and oral health care. Activities could include: establishing national positions and guidelines on issues related to dentistry, and showing key groups

why the dentist is the primary oral health care provider of choice for Canadians.

3. CDA needs to achieve a sustainable and diverse revenue base and ensure solid support of all corporate members and Canadian dentists. We hope to achieve this by truly representing all dentists in Canada.
4. The organization will work to identify and eliminate threats to the economic viability of the dental practice environment. To accomplish this we would continue to promote independent practice, practice development skills and access to dental care.

This is all a work-in-progress. We continue to seek feedback from you about the proper future role for CDA. We need to hear from you directly and we want you to speak with your representatives who will be coming to the interim board of governors meeting in Ottawa in March.

During that meeting we will be devoting a half-day session to the proposed strategic plan and giving delegates an opportunity to state their opinions about the future direction of CDA.

The next relatively short period could see the landscape of organized dentistry in Canada change considerably. The development of the new vision statement and strategic plan has been a very creative process, one that has forced all of us who are committed to the profession to clearly define our hopes and aspirations for the future. These are certainly dynamic times we are living through at CDA, and I am excited to be part of it all. I am confident that with your active support and encouragement, we can create a new Association that is recognized by members and others to be efficient and effective.

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President of the Canadian Dental Association*