

# President's Column

## GETTING RESULTS



Dr. Burton Conrod

CDA members share common values regarding the importance of good oral health and access to oral health care for all Canadians. That is why we have an association and why I am honoured to serve as president this year. Over the past 2 years, CDA has developed a new vision, mission statement and strategic plan to advance the dental profession and assist dentists in helping their patients achieve optimal oral health. Our strategic objectives commit the organization to contribute in a measurable fashion to the improvement of the oral health of Canadians and to ensure that CDA is recognized as the national leader and advocate for oral health. It is an ambitious plan that also requires your association to have the solid support of all Canadian dentists and to encourage an environment in which the profession can operate viable practices.

The CDA board of governors has enthusiastically approved the new plan

and tasked the staff and volunteers to get on with the business of helping dentists help their patients. It became very clear during the consultations held while the plan was being designed that CDA would require some new tools to achieve the results envisioned in the plan. Input from individual dentists, provincial dental associations and dental regulatory authorities indicated that CDA must have a governance structure that will make the most efficient use of our resources. In other words, we need a new infrastructure to achieve the outcomes the profession wants. This is an exciting opportunity to make CDA even stronger and thereby strengthen our profession.

The newly formed Steering Committee on Governance Review (SCGR) recently began the task of examining not only the composition, role and mandate of our board and committee structure, but also the way in which CDA is accountable to members and key stakeholders. CDA must represent all dentists when providing issues management, government relations and communications in national matters pertaining to oral health. Just as important will be the examination of relationships with other organizations, including health care provider groups and the government.

CDA will also engage in extensive consultations in devising a new governance structure. We want to make certain CDA is aware of dentists' views and is responsive to their needs. Preliminary consultations have indicated a new governance design must engender trust, inclusiveness and transparency, and ensure efficient implementation of board decisions. It will also be important to reduce the wait time between the genesis of an idea and delivery of a benefit of value to members. Hopefully we can improve upon a system that now often requires multiple approvals by specialized committees before an issue is finally decided at the board of governors. As your new president, I look forward to updating you on our progress in governance review in the coming

months, and I hope you will share your ideas and concerns with me.

The result of our consultation process may be an organizational governance framework that looks quite different from the present one or perhaps a refined version of our current structure. The bottom line will be getting results. For example, a new governance framework might include a core policy-making body which could act quickly, be forward-looking and focused on outcomes. This group would see the "big picture" for Canadian oral health care and always be asking what the future might hold for dentistry. This function would assist in ensuring leadership in oral health care for Canadians.

The policy group might be supported by a forum providing input from a broad base of key stakeholders. If this forum was conducted in a meaningful fashion, it could gain the support of all Canadian dentists for CDA. Turning policies into programs and benefits of value to members might be accomplished by a few standing committees and a flexible set of task groups that make efficient use of volunteer time and effort as well as the proven expertise of CDA staff. The services provided by the task groups would contribute to the improvement of the oral health of the public while maintaining a viable professional environment... This is only a small sample of the options the SCGR must consider.

"Beginning with the end in mind" is a popular technique recommended by association management consultants. This doesn't mean predetermining CDA's new governance structure with personal or political bias — it means staying focused on the goal of creating a governance structure that will allow CDA to get results. The results that the Canadian oral health care community has asked for.

*Burton Conrod, DDS  
President of the Canadian Dental Association*