

President's Column

REACHING OUT



Dr. Burton Conrod

As you may know, CDA is undergoing a review of our governance and committee structure. One reason is to improve our ability to build relationships with other organizations. To maintain CDA's position as the recognized leader in oral health in Canada, we must be aware of the initiatives of other stakeholders.

CDA needs to hold regular dialogue with the leadership of many groups through some form of general assembly. These groups include the dental regulatory authorities, the specialty sections, the Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry (ACFD), the National Dental Examining Board, the Canadian Association for Dental Research (CADR), the Academy of General Dentistry, the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association, the Canadian Dental Assistants Association, the Denturists Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Dental Technology, representatives of the dental benefits

industry and the Dental Industry Association of Canada. Being in regular contact with these groups, as well as with Health Canada, will allow us to take the pulse of oral health care. We must continually check the vital signs of the whole oral health care community to identify emerging issues that may be affecting some of these groups, and will surely affect our organization as well.

We need such an early-warning system and the opportunity to influence the thinking of these other organizations so that whenever possible, we present consistent messaging to the public.

I hope that as we reach out to these stakeholders in a broad consultative process and invite them to participate in our proposed new general assembly, they will seize the opportunity to be a part of a national strategic forum on oral health. This forum will give each provincial dental association and college a mechanism to keep up-to-date with developments in all sectors of the oral health field. All stakeholders will be active participants in the forum as opposed to observers and all available information will be considered before decisions are made by the general assembly or board of directors. Engaging in dialogue before deliberation will ensure that CDA makes knowledge-based decisions.

One example of the benefits of closer relationships with these stakeholder groups will be an improved ability for CDA to plan and carry out government relations activities. We need to know what other groups are telling government and hearing from government. Organizations like ACFD and CADR may benefit tremendously if CDA can refine its messages to promote their needs. CDA can contribute to improved oral health of Canadians by encouraging the appropriate environment and the

availability of resources to sustain dental education and research. Developing closer relationships with many of these organizations will assist CDA in its efforts to improve access to care and to advance the profession.

The proposed format of our general assembly, on which we are consulting widely, involves a 2-day meeting. All stakeholders will gather on day 1 to examine the dynamics of oral health care and explore issues and initiatives that might affect us in achieving CDA's mission. This strategic forum will provide valuable background information to CDA's board of directors and set the context for day 2. On day 2, voting members of the general assembly, comprised primarily of CDA's corporate members and representatives of groups such as the specialists, dental students and Canadian Forces Dental Service, will determine the general strategic direction CDA should take by approving any required changes to our vision, mission and constitution. They will also receive the financial statements, appoint the auditors, set membership fees and elect members of the board of directors. The other stakeholder groups in the general assembly may attend this part of the meeting as observers.

In the past, CDA's interaction with many stakeholder groups has been conducted on an ad hoc, and sometimes reactive, basis. Our new governance structure will ensure solid linkages to all these groups which will pay big dividends in building the knowledge base we need to deliver our strategic plan. The leadership of CDA recognizes the importance of meaningful 2-way communication with these organizations and we are reaching out to build relationships.

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