

# President's Column

## YOUR CDA: ACCOUNTABLE AND UNIFIED



Dr. Jack Cottrell

The recent tsunami in South Asia was one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in recorded history. Its path of destruction underscored the fragility of human life. Out of that tragedy came an unprecedented outpouring of compassion and giving that demonstrates the awesome power and strength that can be achieved when people work together towards a common goal.

This event reflects the essence of my first message to you as CDA president: together we are stronger and wiser than the sum of our parts.

In Canada, we are bombarded at every turn by internal and external forces that challenge the fundamental values that the dental profession holds sacred. Economic pressures affecting our practice environment, government or third-party plan interference, corporatization of our models of care, access to care for groups such as

seniors, the underprivileged and First Nations — the list is endless.

Never has it been more important for the profession to remain disciplined and unified. Fragmentation within the profession only works to expose our vulnerability to these challenges. This is why we must build and nurture a sense of belonging within our Association, despite an increasingly diverse and dynamic membership base.

If a single dentist from a province with voluntary membership does not join CDA, the ripple effect is felt across the country. Perhaps it is time for all of us to begin thinking about how we can help the profession. My challenge to you — ask yourself, “What can I do personally to make CDA the best it can be?”

Individual associations do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they exist in an environment where events constantly impact on the needs of its members. CDA has shed its traditional model of governance, opting for a new system with fluidity and flexibility as its primary characteristics. The ability to effectively and efficiently deal with issues arising from such a rapidly changing environment creates opportunities for CDA members.

CDA's new Strategic Plan defines specific key result areas that focus our future actions. This is not a static process. It must be continually reviewed and updated as members' needs change. We must not only identify these needs, opportunities and threats but also document and act upon them.

Which brings us to the concept of accountability. Accountability entails more than simply monitoring. It is a process of ascertaining whether general or specific commitments have been fulfilled. True accountability exists when the party that has delegated responsibility to another party

is able to ask questions and receive satisfactory answers. This philosophy has guided the development of CDA's new Accountability Framework, approved at the latest Board of Directors meeting.

Quinn Mills, an award-winning professor at Harvard Business School, once said, “People really don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” His idea can be extended to include caring for our members — their needs and their aspirations. If a member, whether individual or corporate, understands that CDA will genuinely listen and act upon their ideas, we create a solid platform for involvement in the Association.

Over the next 12 months, I have committed to implement the final stages of CDA's governance change. Once realized, you will be able to see a revitalized purpose and clarity in our actions. The number of recent changes at CDA represents a fresh attitude that is reflected in the words, actions and commitment of CDA's Board of Directors and staff.

The presidency gives me an opportunity to share the concerns and experiences of members across the country. It also gives me the chance to share my vision of a caring, responsible and unified CDA. I want members to know they are joining a ‘values-first’ culture, that is centred around the principles of innovation, relevance, accountability and continuous learning. I will emphasize and reflect our genuine desire to earn your trust and confidence in CDA.

It is an exciting time to be a CDA member. As the saying goes, “You ain't seen nothing yet!”

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