



Dr. Don Friedlander

CDA's New Membership Model

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At the Annual General Meeting in April, CDA Voting Members unanimously agreed in principle on a new membership and governance model for CDA. This new model signals a major shift for CDA, with the Association now focused on providing programs and services for its corporate members, namely the provincial dental associations (PDAs), to support them in serving individual dentists.

This new model will replace the traditional “hybrid” membership model that saw CDA trying to meet the increasingly broad needs of both PDAs and member dentists. Serving both groups sometimes led to confusion on how CDA could best serve the profession.

This confusion extended to membership rules in some provinces, such as Ontario, where dentists’ could voluntarily join either the provincial or national association. Such choice would be beneficial if the PDAs and CDA provided the same primary functions. However, I believe that our associations have a fundamentally different focus (provincial vs. national) and therefore a different market (individual dentists vs. corporate members).

In an attempt to address these issues, CDA and the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) created a joint working group in 2007, to explore the possibility of developing a new membership model that would integrate all ODA members into CDA. At the same time, CDA worked closely with the PDAs on a formalized process of clarifying roles and responsibilities. The result is the new corporate model of membership where CDA serves the Canadian dental profession through the PDAs.

Dentists will now be able to access CDA programs and services through their provincial group, while the PDAs provide annual funding to CDA for services required. The new fee structure will incorporate volume discounts,

where PDAs with more members will fund CDA based on a lower per capita rate. These PDAs, which can generally provide their members with a wider array of programs and services than smaller PDAs, agree to share the benefit of their programs and services among other corporate members, directly or through CDA.

CDA will retain its brand and work with the provinces to integrate programs and services, co-branding these when and where appropriate. With distinct roles and responsibilities established, duplication eliminated and efficiencies recognized, CDA will be able to reduce its budget.

For example, one of the identified efficiencies is a streamlining of governance. During the recent AGM it was agreed that the General Assembly will be reduced from 27 to 18 members and that the Board of Directors will be smaller. These efficiencies have allowed CDA to confirm ITRANS as a member benefit and to add a seat for Yukon/Northwest Territories/Nunavut on the Board of Directors.

CDA and the PDAs will now be true partners, increasing our ability to work together in a collaborative fashion to maximize services, increase service quality, reduce duplication and gain from economies of scale. I would also anticipate many program enhancements as cross-Canada, inter-provincial integration of programs and services occur. There will be an improved focus at CDA as we serve one constituency — the professional interest of the PDAs, and through them, their members and the profession. CDA will now represent the significant majority of the profession nationally, so there will be a strengthened credibility with external groups and a stronger mandate for CDA to represent the profession as the national voice of dentistry.

CDA's future with this new model is one of narrower focus, reprioritization, streamlined governance, efficiency, flexibility and nimbleness. So while we may be much smaller and leaner, our capacity to advance the profession will only increase. Final approval of the new model should occur at the end of 2009, with bylaw approval required the following year for implementation by the end of 2010. Welcome to the new CDA.

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Look for more details on CDA's new membership and governance model in the July-August JCDA.