

# President's Column

## IT HAS BEEN A PRIVILEGE TO SERVE YOU



*Dr. John Diggins*

**I**t is hard to believe it is already a year since I assumed my responsibilities as president of CDA. A number of past presidents told me at the beginning of my term that I would be surprised by how quickly the year would pass. How right they were!

As I began my presidency I was chair of two committees whose deliberations will have a major impact on the future of CDA: the search committee to hire a new executive director and the Tripartite Task Force (TTF). The latter group tackled the crucial issue of CDA membership and how every dentist in Canada could contribute to the costs of the national programs CDA provides for the entire profession.

The search committee consulted widely to determine the qualities our new executive director would need to guide CDA through its next stage of development. We found we needed someone who could lead change, understood the workings of an evolving

federation, and would make effective connections with decision makers within our profession and external to it. George Weber, the unanimous choice of the committee, has demonstrated excellence in all these areas.

I am very proud that a person of George's calibre has chosen to join our organization. I believe he has already had a very positive impact on both the staff and volunteers at CDA, and in the years to come he will be a major contributor to the efforts of Canadian organized dentistry. Having travelled to meetings with him across the country, I can testify that George is personable and approachable and he tackles issues with a great deal of energy and purpose.

That energy and skill will be harnessed to great effect as CDA implements the recommendations of the TTF and the new strategic plan approved by the board of governors at the March 2000 interim meeting. As relationships between the various organizations representing the interests of the dental profession evolve, we will be striving to meet our respective goals efficiently, with a minimum of overlap and redundancy. To ensure efficiency is attained in short order, we have commenced a review of the governance structure of CDA.

If we are to continue as a strong and vital organization, we must formalize a membership structure that will preserve CDA's ability to speak as the authoritative national voice of the Canadian dental profession. CDA speaks for every dentist in Canada, and we have been busy and successful doing just that.

Some of the issues we have been handling on your behalf include disposal of amalgam waste, dosage of fluoride supplements, the future of CDAnet, labour mobility for dentists, the level of tuition fees at Canadian dental schools, the development of clinical practice guidelines, and changes to CDSPI investment and insurance products. We have communicated with the public about dental unit waterlines, the value of oral health and the role of the dentist as the primary oral health care provider. We

continue to work with the federal government on issues like the privacy of health information, RRSP levels and practice goodwill valuations. Our work in all these areas has a major impact on the professional lives of every dentist in Canada.

I extend special thanks to my colleagues on management committee and executive council for their wisdom, guidance and dedication in dealing with complex issues during this past year. I also want to thank the numerous volunteers who serve on our committees. These are the people who work the issues and develop the motions for presentation to executive council and the board of governors. It is so important to recognize their generous efforts.

CDA is blessed with a loyal, dedicated staff under the leadership of George Weber and before him, Jardine Neilson. Jardine, who retired in December 1999 as executive director, has always been a great support to me in my years of involvement at CDA. We are served very well by our staff and I thank all of them.

This year has been personally fulfilling for me. I have had the opportunity to travel across this country and meet hundreds of colleagues who are working unselfishly for their profession in local component societies and provincial associations. What I will take most from this year is the memory of these wonderful people.

I extend my sincere best wishes to Dr. Burton Conrod as he assumes the office of president. With him and his management committee colleagues, Drs. George Sweetnam and Tom Breneman, CDA can look forward to strong leadership in the future.

Finally, to all the members of CDA, thank you for the opportunity to have served as your president. It has been a great experience.

*John Diggins, B.Sc., DMD, MSD  
President of the Canadian Dental Association*