

Happy Spring! I hope everyone weathered the long, cold, and abundant snow of Winter. And I hope the many signs of Spring are creating an excitement for a fresh and positive new start to the year.

Since the January Winter Meeting:

Omicron. After attending the final planned CDA Covid Update Meeting in mid November, observing an increase in plans for travel, and an attitude of optimism that the end of the pandemic was near... the COVID virus had other plans – a new variant, Omicron. In a matter of a few months, much has changed from a political, scientific, and societal perspective. Pandemic fatigue, if it was not already at its limit, it definitely is now. Optimistically, the hopeful forecast that with a high vaccination rate and high Omicron infectivity rate, the transition from the pandemic phase to the endemic phase is near. And, from a personal and dental practice standpoint, the development of a plan and strategy regarding the management of the current situation for the safety of the public and clinic staff will rely on the individual and professional judgement of each dental facility. Probably the most important aspect at this point in time will be screening to keep symptomatic staff and patients at home. And, the identification and application of best practices and lessons learned may for some carry forward permanently, and for others be gradually disregarded. The CDSS will continue to monitor the ever evolving circumstances of the pandemic, but with the government eliminating all mandate strategies, any further CDSS involvement should hopefully be doubtful.

CDSS Membership Survey. On November 26, 2021, a voluntary member survey was sent on behalf of the CDSS Council, for members to offer their opinion/insight on the College and the membership. Out of the 641 members surveyed, 136 participated (21%). Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents felt that “the CDSS met the regulatory requirements set out in our enabling legislation of the Dental Disciplines Act, 1997.” Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents felt that “the current CDSS serves you adequately from a membership/advocacy perspective.” The CDSS is first and foremost a regulatory body with a legislated mandate to protect and serve the public. The CDSS does also provide support and advocacy for the membership in the public interest as appropriate. The response of the membership acknowledges this understanding and indicates a satisfaction with the service provided by the CDSS to the public and the membership. However, the culture of the CDSS council over the past few years has been one of self improvement, and the Council and CDSS staff will identify and strategize any necessary improvements from the membership response comments. Again, I would like to extend my thanks to the CDSS management, staff, council members, and committee members for their efforts and good work. **The CDSS Vision: Enabling a Healthy Public by Regulating Healthy Members.**

CDSS Discipline Case. A discipline case, stemming from a public complaint in January 2018, recently returned a decision from the Saskatchewan Queen’s Bench Court of Appeals in regards to a CDSS Discipline Committee decision from November 2018. The numerous appeal challenges to the CDSS Discipline Committee decision were mainly with respect to the processes of the Professional Conduct and Discipline Committees. The ruling of the judge was in support of the CDSS Discipline Committee with the appellant’s “appeals on all grounds are dismissed.” Although a discipline case is always an unfortunate event for the public and the profession, the decisions rendered can provide important support and precedent to the processes and decisions of the regulatory committees.

The Professional Conduct Committee and Process. The main two functions of the CDSS are to register and license dentists, and to investigate complaints in order to protect the public and enforce the standard of care of the profession. The Professional Conduct Committee Process:

- a) Is in alignment with the Dental Discipline Act;
- b) Is continuously being improved by the Committee, the Director, the Registrar, and legal counsel;
- c) Is supported by legal decisions;
- d) Strives to be consistent, objective, and fair for both the complainant and member;
- e) Exhibits a record of appropriate decision making;
- f) Involves a group of dedicated, discriminating, compassionate, and principled people.

The CDSS is aiming to be more transparent with respect to the outcomes of complaints by providing statistics to the public and membership. The Professional Conduct and Continuing Education Committees are collaborating to develop a presentation for the membership to better understand the process.

Saskatchewan Government Ministry of Health. The CDSS met with the Minister of Health in December and February to discuss licensing requirement suggestions, public representation issues, and clarifications and suggestions regarding the proposed Dental Disciplines Act amendment.

CDSPI Malpractice Insurance. CDSPI negotiated with a new insurer to restore the malpractice plan to the equivalent of its pre-pandemic state. Obviously, the improvements come with an increased cost, but these improvements were important and necessary and welcome to satisfy the needs of all dentists.

CDSPI Legal Expense Insurance Replacement. Legal expense insurance provides coverage for legislated investigations, fitness to practice and licensing issues, professional misconduct investigations, billing investigations, and appeals. Sterlon, providing Canadian Legal Expense Insurance since 1993, are pleased to announce the development of Professional Legal Expense Insurance coverage for Dentists, designed specifically to replace the former CDSPI program. The BC Dental Association was the launch customer for the new program offered by Foster Park Broker's Inc., Langley, BC. The product is now available to dental associations in other provinces. The CDSS considers Legal Expense Insurance to be an important support for dentists.

CDA Awards. Congratulations to Dr. Bernie White for the CDA Distinguished Service Award recognizing outstanding contributions to the dental profession, the dental community, or the oral health of Canadians at large.

Nova Scotia Pediatric Dentist Professional Conduct Complaints and Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia Public Protection Concerns. A social media post questioning the standards of practice of a Nova Scotia pediatric dentist elicited an overwhelming public response resulting in a class action lawsuit against the pediatric dentist; a spotlight on the activity and possible lack of activity of the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia; and a media investigation into the behaviour and transparency of dental regulatory boards across Canada. The College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan was identified as one of the provinces with greater transparency. Nova Scotia has separate regulatory and advocacy entities, and Saskatchewan, at the moment, has a joint regulatory and advocacy entity. Regardless, the complaints and concerns remain the same. And in the end, although optics are important, it is the behaviour of the entity that matters most.

Is the CDSS main priority the protection of the public? From my perspective - YES. The Management and Staff, the Council Members, and the Committee Members of the CDSS continue to commit and focus on improvements to licensing requirements, public complaint process, standards, professional

quality assurance, governance, and public engagement in the public interest. Even the results of the CDSS Membership Survey indicate that the Dentist Registrants are understanding and supportive of the CDSS mandate to protect the public. Is the CDSS perfect? No. Is there room for improvement? Always. But that is one of the strengths of the CDSS, a culture and commitment to ongoing self improvement. Personally, I would like to extend a pat on the back to our Management and Staff. Their industry of regulation is a thankless job. Also, I am proud to be a part of a team of like-minded colleagues with a common goal to do the right thing with the best of intentions for the care of their patients and communities. Objectively, the behaviour of the CDSS suggests that serving and protecting the public is its main priority.

Again, now more than ever, “Successful change initiatives share two key characteristics: effective persuasion and a **clear understanding of organizational change as a long-term, multistep process rather than a singular event.**” In my opinion, the Council has been at its best when implementing change in manageable, incremental “bites”; and, Council has been stifled when attempting to implement change in a single, complete, and perfect decision or document.

For this Spring Council meeting, we again are using an agenda that has proven to be efficient, effective, and productive. I anticipate everyone is prepared to be a contributing participant. I expect everyone to be a good leader, honest, respectful, professional, and accepting of vigorous debate and consensus decision making.

To close, the CDSS continues to be in a good position. The Council continues to make progress and the membership continues to provide dentistry to our communities with a high standard of care, and making a difference in our patient’s lives.

I am happy to be through the darkest days of the year. For a pessimist who struggles to be an optimist, it is a time when negativity seems to come too easy and seems to be worse than it actually is; and it is a time when positivity seems like it can be more difficult to find and require more effort. Brighter days ahead, be positive!

Dean Zimmer