

# Presidents Report

## Spring 2021

This has been a very exciting and interesting number of months since our last meeting. It has been over 1 year since the WHO announced the worldwide pandemic that has touched every aspect of our daily lives. COVID-19 has created chaos, uncertainty and ultimately adaptation of the delivery of dental treatment locally, provincially, and nationally since that time. Saskatchewan dentists have shown resiliency, adaptability and compassion while maintaining the utmost quality of care for our patient population. The CDSS has adopted a staged return to normalcy for the dental field which has outlined patient centered care in the safest possible conditions, while basing the guidelines on the most current data and protocols recommended by the CDA and other provincial and national regulators. The efforts of our local dentists provincewide has proven effective to minimize the possibility of COVID-19 transition in the dental office, using the current IPC protocols and recommendations for management of aerosol generating procedures.

In order for the dental profession in Saskatchewan to return back to a new normal, the CDSS been working with all stakeholders and the CMHO, the SHA and the Ministry of Health to ensure all regulations comply with provincial recommendations for public safety. Public health has set precedent with respect to the guidelines for close contact designation in the dental office. If a known or asymptomatic COVID-19 positive patient is treated in a dental office, the use of appropriate PPE and aerosol-controlled environments have been ideal when completing Aerosol Generating Procedures. As such, without proper measures, the risk of COVID-19 transmission to the dental practitioners, staff and patients could be higher than was previously known.

As a result of the increased local prevalence of COVID 19, phase 5 COVID-19 Guidelines for dental care in Saskatchewan were introduced in mid December 2020. In an attempt to maintain public and dental office safety, the document was designed to maintain the provision of elective care in dentistry across the province during this trying time. As with previous phases of pandemic planning, one would hope that the current situation is short lived. With vaccines, advances in medical therapies and the pending successes of temporary governmental regulations, brighter days are on the horizon. The CDSS is currently working with the MOH to roll back COVID-19 Guidelines commensurate with the Saskatchewan Governments Step 2 of the Re-open plan. The goal is to pair the reduction in mandatory Aerosol Controlled Environments and PPE requirements (reduction of N95 requirements to level 3 masks.) This would, in essence return the CDSS Dental Guidelines to Phase 2. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the CDSS has spearheaded all dental regulations along with NIRO and all the allied dental disciplines to ensure that the risk is mitigated in all dental settings.

Moving on from COVID-19, the CDSS would like to welcome Dr. Gerry Uswak as the incoming registrar. Dr. Uswak comes to us after a long career at the U of S College of Dentistry where he will still maintain an educational presence. Gerry brings extensive knowledge of organized dentistry on both a national and international level and has worked with many levels of government on dental and public health initiatives. The CDSS is very excited to have Gerry join the organization in the role of registrar.

Dr. Mitch Taillon has provided support to CDSS in the role of past registrar until his retirement at the end of April. We would like to thank Mitch for his time and dedication during his years with the CDSS and tenure as Registrar. Dr. Taillon's accomplishments have highlighted his strength and commitment to organized dentistry on a provincial, national, and international stage. Dr. Taillon was one of the few CDA presidents from Saskatchewan, which afforded the CDSS great understanding of membership services along with the regulatory obligations. Mitch has been instrumental in the re-organization of the CDSS management structure along with our Executive Director Jerod Orb. The CDSS is in a very good position as a result of the commitment of Dr. Taillon for the present and for years to come. We acknowledge Mitch for his achievements, thank him for his commitment to the CDSS, and wish him and his family well in all future endeavors.

Vaccinations have been quite a hot topic lately with much discussion on the timing of vaccinations for the Dental team. The MOH recently announced on April 20th that "once COVID-19 vaccine eligibility has been opened to all residents ages 40 and over, Saskatchewan will prioritize access to the COVID-19 vaccine through mass-vaccination settings to remaining prioritized first-responders (currently targeted with mobile vaccination units) along with additional front-line workers ages 16+, depending on vaccine product, including: Police officers, Firefighters, Front-line healthcare workers with direct patient contact employed by the SHA or private employers (including **dentists**, optometrists, chiropractors), Teachers and educational staff working directly with students, Correctional staff, and Border security officers. Dentists have been included in this cohort as the result of strategic efforts of our Executive Director and management in working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to ensure that Dentists, Allied Dental Staff, and Dental Students get vaccinated in a timely fashion once vaccine stocks allow. The CDSS has also offered the services of volunteer members to be vaccinators should the need arise. As many of you are aware, Manitoba is already utilizing their dental providers and vaccinators on the front line. As the Ministry rolls out their vaccine program, the CDSS will keep members updated on developments as they pertain to our members. To date, all dentists and allied dental staff and disciplines have had access to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccinations. The CDSS would like to acknowledge the MOH and the SHA for including our profession as a priority.

The CDSS has been advised by the Ministry of Health that may have a palate to open the Dental Disciplines Act (DDA) for the purpose of the removal of Section 25. This would allow the Dental Hygienists to practice with autonomy outside of Saskatchewan dental offices. As the intentions driving this initiative are not in the best public interest and would create significant

confusion with the public, the CDSS has reached out to many stakeholders to ensure appropriate evidence-based advice was provided to the Ministry. Ultimately if this is the wish of the MOH, there may be some difficult and untimely negotiations with all stakeholders that may have negative impacts on the cohesive dental delivery model in Saskatchewan. As this initiative is being driven by a minority of industry representatives and provincial associations, all stakeholders must better understand the proposed regulatory development plan similar to the CPSS and the CDSS to ensure parity in the delivery of professional services. The CDSS would like to thank the collaborative efforts of the CDSS leadership with the CDA, College of Dentistry and membership to aid the ministry in understanding the undesired effects of opening the DDA, especially during a pandemic. The CDSS has provided strong leadership and education to all members and worked collaboratively with all the allied dental organizations to ensure a safe and robust work environment for all employees in the dental industry. This has allowed dentists, hygienists, assistants, and all allied staff to provide continuity of dental care while focusing on public protection in Saskatchewan dental offices. Overall, the CDSS pledges to work with all stakeholders to ensure that appropriate information and intentions are driving any and all changes to the DDA in a positive manner.

The CDSS Government Relations Strategy is an area of great importance to the organization. The CDSS is working on overall government relations strategy to be implemented by the Executive Director. The strategy will be based on cooperation with the Executive and Legislative branches of the SK provincial Government including the SHA. There has been a meeting arranged with the Minister of Health – Honorable Paul Merriman this spring to continue to strengthen our collaborative relationships.

As the organization has grown and evolved from the early days, there has been much emphasis on the governance within the CDSS. Governance measures the Councillor's understanding of the distinction between governance and management, and the capacity to apply knowledge and experience to achievement of Council and CDSS goals. As such, the CDSS must remain humble and cognizant of the values, mission, and vision to maintain the privilege of self regulation in dentistry. As such, the CDSS is accountable to the profession to ensure that all decisions are made within the parameters of the organization as the primary determinant. The Code of Ethics, Councillor self evaluation and Councillor peer assessment are development tools that will help the organization to identify areas where council can improve performance and recognize and build on strengths. Constructive feedback is an important tool to assist Councillors to measure how well they are performing their duties and contributing to the work of Council as a whole. By using this feedback to focus on strengthening individual performance, Councillors can enhance the overall effectiveness of Council.

I would be remiss to not acknowledge to ongoing efforts of all members, volunteers, and staff who work endless hours, sometimes without recognition for all their contributions to the CDSS.

In closing, it has been a very busy time to navigate the local challenges in dentistry and I look forward to working with council, executive and management to ensure the future health of our profession in Saskatchewan.

Sincerely,

Dr. Craig Humber  
President CDSS 2021