



Royal College of
Dental Surgeons of Ontario

Ensuring Continued Trust

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

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TO: ALL RCDSO MEMBERS

Council Meeting of June 8, 2006

This publication is mailed within four working days of each Council meeting to all College members and key stakeholders. At the same time, it is posted on our Web site at www.rcdso.org. If you have questions about any of these items, please contact RCDSO Registrar Irwin Fefergrad by phone at 416-934-5625, toll-free at 1-800-565-4591, or by e-mail at ifefergrad@rcdso.org. We welcome your feedback.

Words of Appreciation from the Provincial Government

Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario and Assistant Deputy Minister in both the Ministries of Health and of Health Promotion, expressed her sincere appreciation to the College and its Council for its strong stance and accomplishments on a number of fronts.

She highlighted the College's work in areas such as access to oral health care, periodontal disease and systemic diseases, and privacy of patient information.

She also acknowledged our commitment to continuing education for dentists, and noted the significant contribution of College staff to assisting the government in its planning for a future pandemic outbreak.

Oath of Commitment

In response to members' requests, Council agreed that an Oath of Commitment, similar to the one used at the inaugural White Coat Ceremonies last year with the incoming first-year students at the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario, will be distributed to all College members. This Oath will be mailed out, with an explanatory memo, in the summer issue of *Dispatch* scheduled for mailing in mid-August. The Oath will be a standard size, suitable for framing in the office if dentists choose.

Practice Names

Council agreed, in principle, to revise the professional misconduct regulation to have practice names reflect only either the dentist's name or the geographical area. Practice names, already approved, will not be impacted.

In making its decision, Council considered a number of factors, including:

- There has never been a claim based on false representation come through PLP by a patient.

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- In the past six years, there has only been one complaint arising from advertising, and it was from a dentist, not a member of the public.
- Council wishes practice names to be consistent with the requirements of health profession requirements, where only the dentist's name can be used.

The implementation date will be decided by the Executive Committee, and membership will be given ample notice before this becomes effective.

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program

Four years of commitment and hard work have paid off in a successful agreement with Health Canada for it to access the College's processes by using the *Regulated Health Professions Act* to replace on-site dental audits by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. This was agreed to through discussions with the College, the Ontario Dental Association, the Canadian Dental Association, and Health Canada.

As dentists know, this is the same complaints process that is available to all under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* in Ontario. Under this statute, the College has an obligation to investigate every complaint.

The pilot project will run from May 1, 2006 to May 1, 2008.

Pandemic Planning

Dr. Donald E. Low, microbiologist-in-chief at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, made a special presentation to Council on assessing the threat of a pandemic influenza. Dr. Low was on the front lines of the SARS outbreak in 2003. He has a worldwide reputation as an authoritative voice on infectious diseases. Look for a feature in the upcoming issue of *Dispatch* on how to keep current with information on pandemic planning.

Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation (CDRAF)

Council agreed to the appointment of Dr. Cam Witmer as one of the three representatives to represent this College for the next three years at CDRAF board meetings. Dr. Witmer was instrumental in the founding of the CDRAF about two years ago. With much change around the CDRAF board table in the past year or so, Council felt it was important to ensure some historical continuity to support the development of CDRAF.

Audited Financial Statements

Council approved the RCDSO and the RCDSO Pension Plan audited financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2005. The auditors report will be contained in the abbreviated version of the 2005 annual report inserted in the summer issue of *Dispatch* targeted for mailing in mid-August.

New Appointment to Discipline Committee

Council has ratified the appointment of public member Ujjal Deol to the Discipline Committee.

New Elections Forms

The new Application and Eligibility Form for Non-Council Committee Appointment and the Election Self-Nomination and Eligibility Form were approved by Council. Both these forms will be included with the mailing of the next issue of *Dispatch*.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

From Your Council

June 8, 2006

ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8 AT ITS REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, COUNCIL VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOUR OF A PROPOSED ANNUAL FEE INCREASE OF \$300 FOR 2007, AND FROZE FEES FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

AT THE END OF THAT THREE-YEAR PERIOD, COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO A FORMAL REVIEW OF THE FEE STRUCTURE.

THE FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS MADE BY DR. CAM WITMER DURING THE COUNCIL MEETING.

This College is faced with a critical decision around our Professional Liability Program. While it is a strong program, we need to face the future together.

From time to time in an organization, there are special turning points. The decisions made are critical in determining its success. We believe we are now at one of those landmarks in our history.

This is not an easy decision to make. However, we believe that it is the right one for the College at this point in time.

A special working group composed of the Executive Committee, the Finance, Property and Administration Committee, and the Chair of the Professional Liability Committee considered all the options. They are recommending this fee increase for the next three years, with a formal review after the three-year period.

Even with this increase, you will still be paying the lowest fees - for both your registration fee and malpractice insurance - of just about any dental regulatory college in the country.

Together we have done something quite remarkable. We have looked down the road to try and anticipate our financial needs three to five years from today.

This is a dramatic shift from the usual year-to-year budgeting. Council has had this kind of long range fiscal planning as a goal for a number of years. At last, we have achieved it.

As mentioned in my President's Column in the last issue of *Dispatch*, our primary focus is to ensure the long-term financial liability of our Professional Liability Program (PLP).

There are clouds on the horizon that cause us great concern. The insurance industry is under significant pressures. We have seen the effects ripple right here to the College.

There has already been a huge surge in the PLP premium over the last four years. It now sits at \$1.8 million. That's an increase of over half a million dollars.

This is pushback from the insurance industry in response to a long list of catastrophic events, like September 11 and Katrina.

There is also a massive surge in medical malpractice litigation and class action suits in the US.

Some companies have gone under already. Just look at what happened with Reliance, who used to carry our malpractice coverage. It folded a couple of years ago, leaving us without an insurer.

Other insurance companies are withdrawing from the medical market entirely. A couple of years ago, when we went to the market for a new insurer, only two companies were interested in our business.

It is impossible for us to isolate PLP from these external influences any longer.

We have already seen the impact of the current environment on our colleagues at CDSPI who run a

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well-managed program. This year their fees for malpractice coverage went up by about \$600.

This means that dentists in eight other provinces in the country are now paying \$2200 per year, just for malpractice coverage. Then, on top of that, they pay an annual fee to their regulatory college.

Compare that to our situation here in Ontario. Our annual fee, including both registration and malpractice, currently sits at \$1460.

The College has received outside advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers and Marsh & McLennan Companies. They have made two significant recommendations.

Number One - We should strive to become self-insurers to protect ourselves against the external forces of the insurance market.

Number Two - We need to significantly increase the PLP/contingency fund reserves. The fund is now at \$19 million. Both these independent experts have told us that the availability of funds should be at least \$25 million. This is critically important. The reserve fund is PLP's safety net. It is the money reserved to cover possible projected claims in the future.

This is what is needed to ensure protection for the future.

If not prepared, these actuaries tell us we would likely face a very large premium increase, or even worse, the unavailability of insurance all together.

Obviously, we must do whatever it takes to avoid this kind of situation.

That is why we unanimously agree that this fee increase is the only realistic course of action. We must proactively take charge of the situation.

I believe this is reasonable price to pay:

- for the privilege of practising as a dentist in this province;
- for sleeping well at night knowing that our precious Professional Liability Program is secure;
- for knowing that the people of Ontario are protected too;
- and for the privilege of self-regulation.

Of course, the dues increase is necessary to do more than secure the future of our Professional Liability Program.

As many of you already know, there are a number of changes coming as a result of the review of the *Regulated Health Professions Act* by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC).

With HPRAC's emphasis on accountability, transparency and accountability, there are already new expenditures required in areas like public outreach and Web site enhancements.

Even without the HPRAC demands, we must take into account inevitable rising costs in other areas of our operating budget.

Responsible long-range planning means we must plan for the practical realities of running a business. We all know that on a regular seven- to ten-year cycle upgrades are needed in areas like building maintenance and mechanical equipment, and phone systems and computer equipment.

All this is in addition to our pressing need to ensure the long-term financial security of PLP.

We have looked at all the information available and possible options. The truth is that our options are limited. We have only one significant source of revenue. It is the registration fee paid each year by members.

We understand there may be some hesitation. This is only natural.

However, we believe that once everyone knows the facts and the reality of the situation facing us, a dues increase is the logical answer.

Council and staff together have done an excellent job in managing the College's resources. Members continuously tell us that they appreciate our good work.

This College is now a leader in self-regulation in the country. Our positive impact has rippled throughout Ontario and right across the country.

Every dentist in the province has benefited from our incredible successes. All of them have meant better service and value for dollar to our members, and in the end, enhanced protection to the public. We want to continue with that great track record of achievement.