



CDSBC

College of Dental Surgeons
of British Columbia

Open letter to Registrants from the College Board

The Board of the College of Dental Surgeons of British Columbia is aware of discussion in some segments of the profession about perceptions of the direction the College has taken. The Board supports and encourages healthy discussion of policy issues among the profession; however, **it is clear that serious misconceptions still exist, and that outright misinformation is being distributed by some registrants.** The Board wishes to provide some clarity.

The Board leads and directs policy

The first issue is governance. The Board operates as a cohesive unit, representing all regions of British Columbia, certified specialists and general dentists, certified dental assistants, the UBC Faculty of Dentistry, and appointed public members of various professional backgrounds. Each of these individuals has sworn or affirmed a solemn oath to serve and protect the public. Policy items that are developed and released are done at the Board's direction, and with the Board's approval, usually resulting from the Board's annual strategic planning process. No individual person has the authority to make any of these decisions on the Board's behalf – this includes the President and the Registrar. Despite this, there are allegations that certain individuals are acting against the public or the profession, or are incompetent. This is demonstrably untrue. While it is inevitable that some decisions of a regulator may be unpopular with those being regulated, all action taken by the Board has been just that – action taken by the Board – and in consideration of the College's mandate and each Board member's sworn duty to act in the public interest.

The Board consults and listens

The second issue is change. It is true that the College has changed in the last few years as compared to the way it operated in the 20th century. That is a good thing. Dentistry has been entrusted with the wonderful privilege of self-regulation. The price of that privilege is putting the public interest above individual interests or professional advocacy. This was not possible when the College was both the regulator and the professional association. If the College fails to demonstrate its commitment to the public interest, the privilege is jeopardized and subject to revocation. However, that commitment does not mean disregarding the challenges and realities of professional practice. In fact, the College has demonstrated that it actively supports a healthy, engaged profession. This is shown by the fact that new or revised professional standards are routinely put out for public consultation – there is no obligation to do so, and historically this was not done – and each response received is read and considered by the Board before approving any change. Sometimes the comments are very supportive.



At other times, your response to the consultation has been highly critical, such as with the first draft of the Boundaries document. The Board reviewed all of the comments received, and responded by substantially changing the document and consulting with the BCDA for its input on how the document could be improved. The revised document went out for consultation again – this time as a guideline and not as a standard. And as it did before, and as it presently does with all professional standards & guidelines, the Board will read and consider every response received before making a decision. Indeed, the development of policy items and engagement with the profession is the Board’s number 1 strategic priority and is the subject of a day-long workshop involving over 60 stakeholders on 20 February.

A record to be proud of

The result is an organization that, on all objective measures, is functioning very well. Over the past five years, the College has:

- **Restored a solid financial position** – a proper budget is prepared, and the previously depleted contingency fund has been replenished well ahead of schedule;
- **Established and implemented an appropriate governance framework**, which reflects best practices in good governance and ensures proper Board oversight;
- **Substantially eliminated the overwhelming backlog of complaints**. The average age of a complaint has been reduced by more than four months;
- **Modernized and streamlined the complaints resolution process**
The College was the subject of frequent, expensive, and unsuccessful (for the College) court proceedings in the 1990s resulting from a legally flawed or unfair complaints and discipline process. As a result of changes, these proceedings are much less common now and the College enjoys virtually a 100% success rate in proceedings before the independent Health Professions Review Board;
- Become a recognized **leader among regulators in investigating and prosecuting illegal practitioners** who threaten public safety and undermine confidence in the profession;
- Established representation on the executive of the BC Health Regulators group, fostering **collaboration and collegiality between all health regulators** in the province;
- Assumed a leadership role on national and international dental regulators, including the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation and the International Society of Dental Regulators;
- Fostered a **productive, respectful relationship with the Ministry of Health**. Today the College is seen by government as a responsible and respected regulator that delivers on its mandate;
- **Increased transparency through improved communications**, including a new website, registrant survey, and a town hall meeting on a topic you told us was important



(complaints and discipline processes) and which was webcast for the first time to encourage wide participation;

- Prioritized, and increased, **engagement with the profession**:
 - » Consultation on policy items well beyond legislative requirements
 - » Regular participation and lectures at educational institutions
 - » Increased resources for registrants, including online courses
 - » Delivery of courses around the province
 - » Presence at regional dental meetings

Commitment to continuous improvement

But we will not stop there. **The Board as the governing body and the College as an organization are committed to honest self-reflection, and continuous improvement.**

We recognize that some action taken will not be popular, and that we are not perfect. But it is untrue and destructive to say that the Board disregards the interests of the public or the profession, or performs incompetently.

The Board welcomes discussion of different perspectives but calls on all registrants to inform yourselves before making unfair and inaccurate statements based on rumours or self-interested agendas. We ask only that you contribute to a collegial, communicative, and allied profession, and to avoid the antagonistic and adversarial relationship with the College that some registrants are advocating.

To preserve the privilege of self-regulation and public trust, the Board and the College as an institution must continue to demonstrate our commitment to the public interest, regardless of which individuals hold any particular position.

There are many ways to contact us and to have your voice heard:

- Respond to invitations to comment
- Join a committee, working group or the Board
- Write to the Board directly, call the Registrar or the Deputy Registrar, or speak to any of our eight dentists on staff
- Attend the Annual General Meeting in person or via webcast
- Vote in the upcoming election
- Come talk to us at our booth at the Pacific Dental Conference, at a dental component society meeting, or one of our other appearances



Respectfully yours,

Board of the College of Dental Surgeons of British Columbia

19 February 2016

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