



College of Alberta Dental Assistants

Governance Review

Summary of Key Findings

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Generally, we believe that CADA is well governed. The governance structure that CADA works within is modern, incorporating many of the significant regulatory changes that regulators and governments have been making over the last decade across Canada, often in response to governance reviews (both voluntary and imposed). Some of these structural changes have been made by the Alberta government in recent years and some have been voluntary changes of CADA – which are never easy transitions to navigate with registrants. We complement CADA for its work to modernize its governance and be willing to not always take the easy road in doing so. Some of the most notable features of the governance structure that align with modern regulatory governance include the elimination of registrant elections in favour of a competency-based appointment process for registrant Council members; moving away from a dual mandate or elements of a dual mandate with a focus on the single public-interest regulatory mandate; and relative to other regulatory legislation CADA enjoys a high level of flexibility to continue to change and modernize its governance without legislative change. Although these may not seem significant, they are. This strong foundation allowed us to dig deeper into CADA's governance practices.

CADA Council members and staff have a clear understanding with respect to the College's role and their individual role. Registrants are not as clear about the College's mandate. There is a strong set of governance policies laying out a strong governance framework. However, we believe that culturally, CADA has focused more on governance "outputs" and compliance than ensuring there is a deep understanding of the governance policy or process

and ensuring that everyone involved sees the connection between the policy and the regulatory outcomes of the College. As part of this, Council needs to find ways to engage more meaningfully in CADA's governance as currently very competent staff step in to fill the "void" that is created by a lack of Council engagement which then creates more dependence and reliance on staff. Currently staff drive CADA's governance, where Council needs to be driving it with the support and advice of staff.

We believe that although robust, the governance policies need to be reviewed to ensure they are as simple as possible, information is easy to find, and most importantly they are seen as "living, breathing documents" by those that use them – especially Council, committees and staff. We also believe that work needs to be done to ensure role clarity with respect to decision-making – what entity or person makes what decision, who else might be involved in the decision and how.

Like the feedback emerging from the governance reviews of many Canadian regulators over the last ten years, CADA needs to continue to find ways to engage the public more meaningfully in its decision-making. More and better consultation, increasing public members on regulatory and governance committees, and re-envisioning the public advisory network with other College partners.

The College has gone a long way to move away from elections to a competency-based appointment process for Council members. Although in its early stage, we believe that this process can be refined to be more intentional at articulating needs and gaps, and more assertive in actively recruiting registrants



that fill these gaps. Currently, there is a small pool of engaged registrants – this pool needs to grow in order to broaden the diversity and experience that Council and committees have access to. Similarly, the process to select the Chair and Vice Chairs needs to be more transparent, and needs to begin with a clear articulation of what is expected and what competencies are needed in the roles. After being selected, the Chair and Vice Chairs need access to more learning and support to grow in the roles.

The culture of Council and committees is respectful and seen by most as positive, however there is a tendency to avoid difficult conversations or conflict, which may result in critical discussions being avoided. Council and staff need to engage in learning to be more comfortable having difficult

conversations and need to be more intentional about the culture they are trying to create – moving beyond just collegiality and respect.

Lastly, we believe more work needs to be done to improve and enhance almost all areas of oversight. This starts with a better understanding of what oversight for each of the areas means, what can be delegated to committees and what conversations have to happen at the Council table, and what information and agenda time Council needs to feel comfortable in their oversight roles. There is a strong, trusted relationship with staff, which is a strength, however at times this results in unreasonable reliance, requiring Council to be more engaged in these critical governance oversight areas.