

BCDHA Joins Our Dentistry Colleagues in Requesting Equality in the New College Board Composition

The BC College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP) recently released proposed bylaws for consultation, which included their intention for how non-public members of the new Board of Directors would be allocated. The current bylaws will allocate seats for:

1. One Dental Hygienist/Dental Hygiene Practitioner
2. One Dentist or Dental Therapist
3. One Denturist
4. One Dental Technician
5. One Certified Dental Assistant
6. One Additional Registrant from one of the five above-listed professions
7. Six public members

This arrangement means that a dentist may not be on the Board if a dental therapist is elected for seat #2 and any other non-dentist registrant is elected for seat #6. This situation may seem unlikely, but the reality is that the dentists will be a minority in the new College, and a coordinated vote could result in there being no representation from dentistry. This is not what we want. From the beginning, BCDHA has advocated for fairness and equity in the formation and management of the new College. We believe that this proposed set of bylaws will only cause further friction between the professions—and will ultimately impact how we deliver safe, trusted patient care.

The College has cited two reasons for setting the bylaws in this way:

1. There are a small number of dental therapists, and the College believes the seat may sit empty because no dental therapist is willing to be on the Board; there has been no consultation with dental therapists about this. As the association representing dental therapists, we can state with certainty that if provided a seat, the dental therapists in BC will step forward to ensure the seat is never vacant.
2. The proposed bylaws allow each profession to have two individuals from their profession on the Board. However, dental hygienists, CDAs, denturists and dental technicians are guaranteed to hold at least one seat. Neither dentists nor dental therapists have a guarantee of even one spot. There are six seats and six professions—it seems straightforward that each profession should receive a seat.

The inception of this new College is the first of several amalgamations across the health care system designed to move toward modernizing healthcare in BC. Failure to guarantee a Board seat for dentists does not instill trust in the oral health professions that the new BCCOHP intends to move away from the behaviours that have brought trouble in the past, nor will it provide reassurance to all of the other health professions who are watching this amalgamation carefully. Now is not the time to create friction if government wishes to see a successful transition to the modernized *Health Professions Act*.

We support the BCDA in calling for one Board seat for each of the six oral health professions.