

Ask not what your profession can do for you; ask what you can do for your profession



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As a Canadian living in the United States and a 1979 graduate of Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, I have appreciated the daily updates on the coroner's inquest provided by the Chiropractic Communications Working Group (CCWG). This group is comprised of the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA), Ontario Chiropractic Association (OCA), Canadian Memorial

Chiropractic College (CMCC), and the Canadian Chiropractic Protective Association (CCPA). While the events leading to the inquest are most tragic indeed, it is a consolation to receive accurate information that sheds light on the situation.

The communications have served to remind me how grateful I am to be a member of the Canadian chiropractic profession – albeit from a distance. Furthermore, the communications have strengthened my conviction that it is a professional responsibility of all chiropractors to support their academic institutions and to have membership in the profession's organizations.

Even in light of the tremendous efforts exerted by these professional organizations to protect chiropractors and chiropractic during the recent inquest, some professionals choose to not belong to their provincial or national associations, the CCPA, or the CMCC. The arguments go something like this:

- *I can't afford the dues.*
- *What have they ever done for me?*
- *I don't agree with the decisions they make or the direction of the college – they do not reflect my views of chiropractic.*
- *I can get my malpractice insurance cheaper elsewhere and I don't have to belong to the association to get it.*
- *I didn't even graduate from CMCC, why should I support it?*

The same excuses can be used as reasons to join the associations and to support our chiropractic colleges.

Not being able to afford the dues is a weak argument. As a professional, the costs are minimal. Observing the efforts and expenses of all the above named groups –

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including hundreds of volunteers – during the current inquest proceedings, it is difficult to justify refusing to contribute to the cause. The results of such actions affect every chiropractor, coast to coast. Paying the dues is a basic responsibility of being a professional. Without past efforts by these groups, chiropractors' incomes would be even less than they are today.

What have they ever done for me? Sometimes it is difficult to see tangible results, especially when many of the activities occur behind the scenes, not readily visible to the average practicing chiropractor. It is important to bear in mind that without the persistent efforts of these groups, chiropractic would not have risen to its current status in the health care community. Indeed, they have done a great deal for every one of us.

I don't agree with the decisions they make, or the direction the college is taking. It would be impossible for every chiropractor in Canada to agree fully with every single decision made by the provincial or national association. It would be equally impossible for everyone to agree with 100% of college policies, directions, and decisions. The solution here is simple: join, pay the dues, become a part of the democratic process, and exert some influence on the system. If your views are shared by a majority of the constituents, then they are difficult to ignore. Furthermore, there are instances when the greater needs of the profession exceed our own individual needs.

I can get my malpractice insurance cheaper somewhere else and I don't have to belong to the association to get it. The CCPA came into existence in the mid 1980s in response to a sudden change in the insurance industry in which the large private insurance carriers suddenly discontinued malpractice and professional liability coverage for health care personnel. The emergency formation of the CCPA by the chiropractic profession remains one of the most successful initiatives in the history of Canadian chiropractic. This protective association has proven itself time and again as more than just an insurance company. It is truly a protective association, concerned with protecting the chiropractor against frivolous claims, against inappropriate allegations, and during legitimate unfortunate circumstances. They not only deal with claims effectively, they take a proactive role in quality assurance, claim avoidance, risk management, and practitioner education. Based on CCPA's track record and performance, it is

impossible to imagine any other insurance carrier providing as complete protection for the Canadian chiropractor and their patients.

I didn't even graduate from CMCC so why should I support it? At first glance, this seems like a valid rationalization. On deeper examination however, it is evident that CMCC is much more than a college. For fifty years, it was **the only** college representing Canadian chiropractic and Canadian chiropractors. Every Canadian chiropractor has benefited from CMCC's research, its high profile, and its representation of the profession. One only needs to observe how CMCC was innocently swept into the recent inquest proceedings to appreciate their importance and the extent to which they represent the entire profession. The cost of such representation far exceeds the cost of educating CMCC graduates, and it is a responsibility of everyone – regardless of *alma mater* – to share that burden.

(More recently, the University of Québec at Trois Rivières (UQTR) has also been educating Canadian chiropractors. They receive government funding from the Quebec University system, a situation much different from that of CMCC. UQTR's student tuition is significantly lower for example, and funding at CMCC is 100% dependent on student tuition and contributions from provincial chiropractors.)

Canadian chiropractors are most fortunate to have several organizations with one relatively unified voice. Your Provincial Association, CCA, CCPA, and educational institution are the cornerstones of chiropractic in Canada. Their service to the profession is rock solid. It is unfortunate that it takes something like the tragic events that have led to the current coroner's inquest to awaken the profession to the true value of these organizations. They represent us with the authority and dignity the public and the profession deserve. Without 100% membership and support, it is difficult for these organizations to function effectively. By strengthening the organizations, the entire profession benefits.

John F. Kennedy stated. "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Perhaps it's time we adopted that same attitude about the profession and ask whether we are fully supporting our organizations to the same degree they are supporting us.