



From the Desk of the Registrar

March 2022

Dear Regulated Members,

As many of you know by now, ACSLPA has been undergoing a transition over the past 18 months that has moved the College from being a self-regulating professional body with some association-like activities, to a co-governed regulator of professions. These changes have been years in the making, initially evolving from society's and government's expectations of colleges and, more recently, at a much quicker pace through changes to the legislation that created ACSLPA and governs its activities. The evolution of the College is expected to continue over the coming years as already-announced legislative amendments come into force and new legislation is unveiled.

Where did this all start?

ACSLPA, and all health colleges in Alberta, are created by the Health Professions Act (HPA). This legislation was first proclaimed in 2002 (the year ACSLPA became a college) and until 2019 had experienced relatively few changes. In establishing colleges, the HPA provides them each with the mandate to "carry out its activities and govern its regulated members in a manner that protects and serves the public interest". It goes on to say that colleges do this by providing direction to and regulating the practice of its members, by establishing, maintaining and enforcing standards for registration, continuing competence, and professional practice, and by establishing, maintaining and enforcing a code of ethics. This encapsulates why ACSLPA was created, why we exist still today, and what is expected of the organization.

Until just a few years ago there was a common belief among professions, government, and others that "what's in the interests of a profession is also in the interests of the public". This belief was founded on the idea that a contented professional workforce was well positioned to give good service to the public. This understanding enabled and encouraged colleges like ACSLPA to pursue association-like activities (such as professional development conferences, awards ceremonies, and profession-specific job boards) in conjunction with our regulatory activities (such as processing applications and investigating complaints).

A confluence of events has been changing minds and hearts in recent years, however, as some self-regulating professions forgot, or maybe never fully understood, that serving and protecting the public was supposed to be the first priority and the association-like activities were a privilege earned through faithful observance of the public-first rule. To be clear, I'm not talking just about Alberta's health colleges here; the public perception of all self-regulating professions across Canada has been undergoing increasing scrutiny for several years along with a growing perception that some professions and some professionals seemed to be "getting away" with things that aren't widely considered acceptable. I don't believe ACSLPA or its regulated members contributed in any way to this general critique of self-regulating professions, however, we've been swept up in changes that are much bigger than us.

Where are we now?

In 2021, ACSLPA more or less completed the transition from a self-regulating professional body to a co-governed regulator of professions. This started at the top, as our council composition changed from being 9 regulated members + 3 public members (appointed by the government) to 6 regulated professionals + 6 public members. It continued through the cessation of the few remaining association-like activities in which we were still engaged. These remaining association-like activities included the job board, participation in research and sharing of this information with regulated members, and the awards and recognition program (including the Honours of the College Award). Several people have reached out to me to express concern about the loss of ACSLPA's advocacy work and professional development (PD) conferences. Advocacy hasn't been an ongoing ACSLPA activity for many years now (going back to at least 2008). While ACSLPA does not participate in advocacy, we strive to be a trusted resource for information when government or others are making decisions. In relation to PD, the last conference we held in 2019 was barely viable because fewer and fewer members were attending conferences each year.

Last year our webinars attracted far more attendees than our annual conferences ever did (and the recordings have been viewed on our YouTube channel many more times still). We are busy working to adapt to new responsibilities and requirements that amended legislation and/or new legislation has introduced. Among these new requirements, we are working to develop a new continuing competence program (some information has already been made available about this and much more will be coming soon), amending standards for performing restricted activities, and different labour mobility rules. Because we try to tailor these requirements to fit with your work and needs as practitioners, you can expect to be engaged in the future by webinars and requests for your feedback before some of these new standards become practice requirements. Participating in the feedback process is a great way to have your concerns heard and to better understand changes that are upcoming.

What does the future hold?

In my view, the future for ACSLPA and for the SLP and Audiology professions in Alberta is looking pretty bright (at least to the extent that good regulation can reflect positively on practitioners within a profession – I know you are facing many hurdles as practitioners). We have a small but mighty team of employees and volunteers and we're each committed to doing the best job we can in regulating SLPs and audiologists fairly and responsibly. We always do our utmost to make sure that the needs and views of regulated members are considered when new standards, guidelines, or requirements are introduced; your feedback and participation does count! The College is currently reasonably well-resourced and you continue to pay among the lower registration fees for SLPs and Audiologists in the country.

I think I can also say we're entering into a new period when the old perception is being turned on its head and now "what's in the public interest is also in the profession's interest" will ring truer. When you and your fellow professionals uphold high standards and practice competently, that improves the reputation and public perception of all practitioners in your field. When the College has fair rules that are efficient and respect both government expectations and your needs as practitioners, that builds public confidence and helps you to know where the College stands on issues that matter to the work you do. While there won't be conferences anymore, we plan to keep ramping up our virtual member education to reach you on a range of regulatory topics wherever you are in the province.

While the College has been through changes, and our relationship with you has changed as well over the years, we look forward to continuing to serve, to be engaged, and to hear from you.

Sincerely,



Michael Neth,
Registrar & CEO