



## **TOWARD THE FUTURE**

**A plan for the College of Veterinarians of Ontario to establish a culture of confidence, by partnering actively with its members to meet the demands of practising veterinary medicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### **Introduction**

As the largest regulatory body for veterinarians in Canada, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario enjoys the respect of its contemporaries, and the expectation that it will take the lead in regulatory issues. This is so in an era when professional self-regulation is under increased scrutiny by governments, which are themselves subject to increased pressure from the public. Regulatory reform is underway in many areas. Accountability and transparency are paramount; and the expansion of government oversight of professional bodies requires proactive work for each one of us.

By law, and by determination of the Council of the CVO, this organization is mandated to work with its members to protect the public interest. Our corporate Vision compels us toward a goal of “complete public trust through professional excellence” and our Mission further requires that we “protect the public by regulating and enhancing the veterinary profession in Ontario”.

With all of that in mind, our plan to carry out this mandate involves three strategic results areas, and outlines the activities that the CVO will undertake during the next 12 months in order to establish and develop the processes needed to reach our goals. A detailed operation plan has been created for staff in order to accomplish the goals outlined below.

### **The Key Results Areas**

- A) Government Relations
- B) Quality Assurance
- C) Public and Member Communication and Education

# Enabling Action

## Key Result Area: Government Relations

As a self-regulated profession Ontario veterinarians enjoy the privilege of exclusivity in their practice while bearing the responsibilities imposed by law on the manner in which they conduct those practices. Since the early 2000's governments have been subject to more and more pressure from the public to assume accountability for problems that emerge in the efforts of professions to self-regulate; such problems the public views as evidence of an inherent conflict of interest.

Although the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is the branch of government responsible for the Veterinarians Act and associated regulations, other provincial and federal ministries have begun to share oversight rights on the CVO through legislation that impacts our own.

The business plan calls for us to take a pro-active role in establishing and developing relationships with OMAFRA, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Health Canada, and other government branches and agencies such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

We will offer our assistance and ideas with programs and initiatives, and establish ongoing dialogues on current or pending legislation which affects us directly or indirectly. We will as well monitor trends in legislation that seem likely to apply to us in the future – for example, changes in the Regulated Health Professions Act and its operations.

We believe that these activities will help us to keep the profession informed, encourage government to know and respect our views, and position the College as a valuable member in the tri-partite relationship among governments, veterinarians and the public.

## Key Result Area: Quality Assurance

### A) Members

The currently available elements of CVO's Quality Assurance (QA) program include publication of practice guidelines, delivery of medical records workshops, provision of a peer review of medical records program, and collection of continuing education hours (reported voluntarily by members). The College now needs to develop an overall QA program that sets goals and measures its outcomes in a transparent, accountable manner. The QA Committee is in the process of reviewing its current plan and making additions to the QA components offered by the College to its membership.

The business plan for the College therefore calls for a work plan that the QA Committee will follow in order both to promote current elements of the QA program and to develop new components. Further, to better communicate with members about the QA program,

a new QA button will be created on the website, where the unfolding plan will be presented as it develops; as well, guidelines and position statements will be reorganized and relocated on the website to make them easier to access. The new program elements will be developed in a modular fashion and will likely include legislative/operational member-service and peer-and self-assessment components. The membership will be consulted throughout the development process, and each component will be introduced to Council as appropriate.

## **B) Council**

Council has established itself as a strong body with the vision and mission necessary to move the CVO and the profession forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A review of Governance models and policies was held last year, and is next due in 2010. Meanwhile the work of the committees reporting to Council changes and grows in this era of increasing accountability. Therefore we will be reviewing and revising our orientation presentation for new Council and committee members, arranging this year's legal audit of Council and the statutory committees, and ensuring that the forms are ready for the annual Council Performance Evaluation exercise.

In addition we will be planning and scheduling the Complaints Committee's yearly retreat for the discussion of policies, procedures, meeting formats and other issues which they are not able to review and explore in their regular, case based, meetings.

We will continue to keep Council members informed of opportunities to attend both regulatory and veterinary conferences, seminars, meetings and events in order to increase the CVO's visibility to the public, members, and other stakeholders, as well as to ensure the opportunity to stay current with governance issues in addition to those affecting practitioners. As well, we will develop the Council Learning Portfolio so that each Council member can document his or her professional development activities.

## **C) Staff**

The plan is such that staff will be working to assist Council and members to achieve their goals, while keeping current in their own individual areas of expertise. We have conducted research on database design, and are currently reviewing proposals for a new design that will integrate our information systems so that we can provide thorough and efficient services. We will be monitoring training and Continuing Education opportunities to identify and participate in meetings, seminars, workshops and other education, information sharing and networking events.

In addition we will be cross-training staff to ensure that there is a seamless service provision even when a staff member is absent; as well, we will be monitoring integration of new and continuing tasks that result from the implementation of the business plan.

## **Key Results Area: Public and Member Communication and Education**

As long as there is a lack of information, unclear information, or mystery surrounding the activities of the CVO, there will be a perceived reason for distrust, both in the minds of the public and the profession.

This is the major thrust of our business plan and its essential underpinning – constant communication, interactive relationships and an open, transparent style of governance to deliver services which assist the members to practice veterinary medicine in the public interest. The integrity of our processes requires that we balance very carefully the need for privacy in many situations with processes that are clear and clearly explained such that they are and are seen to be fair and equitable.

One of the elements of the CVO's business plan focuses on creating, publishing, distributing and publicizing clear and helpful information about access to the profession through numerous pathways. We will be reviewing and redesigning our information sheets, including explanations of the various licensure exams and procedures, and accreditation requirements. We will be sending and taking this information throughout the province and across borders to jurisdictions from which international applicants may come. Our plan is to use print and electronic media frequently, distribution centres, presentations and workshops – and other opportunities to engage with potential applicants and the public.

Our closest applicant pool is the current group of OVC students. The plan includes developing closer relations with them and their teachers to share information about the future of the profession, and establish the CVO as an important and welcome player in their professional lives.

As well, we want to encourage our members to see the College as a partner in addressing their practice issues. We have identified as an important and somewhat troubling issue the generation gap between experienced practitioners and those just beginning. We are therefore planning to reinstitute the Members' Forum format for our Annual General Meeting, and feature this issue as the theme. In addition, we plan to identify, research and explore issues such as the concept of mandatory malpractice insurance, and others as they arise.

On an ongoing basis we have built into the plan changes and revisions of our communications tools and processes. We will communicate frequently and in a variety of ways; we will continue revision of the design and presentation of Update; make our website more interactive, user friendly, and easier to navigate; establish and develop consultative, collaborative and cohesive relationships with umbrella organizations, food animal veterinarians, researchers and laboratory veterinarians, regional veterinarian associations, etc. to share information and obtain feedback regarding the role of the CVO in their lives.

The plan also includes a pandemic planning exercise to ensure continuous service for essential matters such as licensing (including emergency licences in situations involving the Canadian Veterinary Reserves), accreditation and public and professional assistance – as well as coordination of communication services.

## **Monitoring Progress**

It is essential for us to engage in ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluating the plan over the period of the next 12 months. We believe that a “Balanced Scorecard” approach would be appropriate, wherein the Registrar reports to Council on status and progress at each Council meeting, as well as on environmental or other impacts which affect the progress, and Council sets aside time to review the advancement and set goals. In addition there should be regular reporting to our members, the public, and other stakeholders.

We are pleased to present this plan for your review and approval, and look forward to a busy and exciting year.