

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor - Helping Dentists Access Federal Support Programs

Dr. John O'Keefe:

Today, I welcome back Dr. Sandy Mutchmor, the President of the Canadian Dental Association and he's going to update us on what CDA is doing to support the dentist, as a small business owner. Sandy, it seems as if the federal government is introducing a new program almost every day to support small businesses. What's CDA doing to help dentists access these programs?

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

Well, John, there is a growing number of these programs that are available, and it is really tough to keep track of them what ones there are and how they apply and who they would apply to. So, what we've been doing at CDA is putting together a roadmap that lines up all these programs and figures out how different dentists can apply for these and what ones would apply and so on. And when we put that information together, we are then passing that on to the provincial dental associations so that their members can access it from them and also be aware of the different local variances to these programs.

Dr. John O'Keefe:

Now I know that my default place to go for advice about these is my provincial association, but have you any plans to set up any other information source to help me navigate the programs?

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

The CDA currently has a CSI help desk, which [dental] practices use to help them with all their questions and problems that they might have in filing in electronic insurance claims through their office. And we're converting that over to a help desk for these programs so that individual dentists can get contact with somebody that they can ask questions about the different programs, how they apply and get some guidance on the links to where they would go to proceed with seeing about applying for these different programs and help them.

Dr. John O'Keefe:

Right. Now, I know that CDA is looking at other types of advice of small business support; experts like lawyers and accountants, for example. What are the key messages that you've been hearing from these experts?

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

The two main things that we've been hearing from the experts that we've been talking to that seems to be repeated is that it's very important for dentists to start talking early with their bankers and with their landlords. People may find that as it stretches on that they start having trouble, you know, meeting requirement of paying their rent or those that are still paying employees and so on. And so, to have started the talks with their bankers and their landlords to try and do things that perhaps mitigate some of these issues is always a good thing to do rather than wait until you can't make a rent payment to try and figure out what you're going to do about it.

Dr. John O'Keefe:

These really are unprecedented challenges that we're facing as dentists. And at times it can seem hard to cope. Have you any advice about where we can get information about how to cope with the challenge?

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

It certainly is a concern for us. As dentists, we're trained to do dentistry, which is what we love to go in and help people. We aren't really businessmen as our starting point. It's something we have to learn to do, to try and keep our practices going. So, in these times when we're seeing our doors closed for long periods and perhaps having to lay off numerous employees, many of whom are like family to us that have been working with us for a long time, these are very stressful things that may be overwhelming to dentists. And as time goes on this the burden of this stress will increase. And so, it is important to be able to know that there is help out there if you need it.

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

You know, in British Columbia, they do have their dentists' wellness program, which is designed to offer support for dentists and their families. And, to all dentists in Canada, there is the Membership Assistance Program that's available through CDSPI, which applies not only to the dentists and their families, but also to their employees, including any staff that may currently be laid off because of these circumstances. And those can be accessed through CDSPI. But again, the best thing is to check with your local provincial dental association to see about getting that support. But it is out there for your community.

Dr. John O'Keefe:

Well, Sandy and you're a busy fellow. I want to thank you for all you're doing for the profession, not just this time but especially today. And thanks for taking time to speak with us.

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

Thank you, John. I'm, I'm happy to do this anytime that I can help with some updates to help our dentists of Canada get through this. We are all in this together and it's something that we're all flying by the seat of our pants trying to do the best we can and we'll keep the communication going and get as much information out there to you as we can.

Dr. John O'Keefe:

Lovely. Thank you very much.

Dr. Alexander Mutchmor:

Thank you.