

THE COMMENTATOR



Volume 2, Issue 2 - May 2013

COUNCIL'S CHRONICLES

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

The CMLTA has talked a lot lately about its renewed focus on regulatory-only programs. What does this actually mean for Alberta's MLTs? What are the CMLTA's regulatory programs?

The purpose of legislation (i.e. the law) is to protect Albertans. The CMLTA's only function is to develop and administer programs to ensure Alberta's MLTs can meet their professional obligations as required by law. This essentially boils down to three programs – initial and reinstatement registration, continuing competence assessment, and complaints resolution.



While legislation lays the foundation for all three programs, the CMLTA sets the specific parameters of program administration. This is the heart of the privilege of self-regulation - MLTs deciding for MLTs how to ensure regulatory compliance, which leads to public protection and ultimately to maintaining the integrity of the MLT profession in the eyes of the public. The untenable alternative is government appointed overseers making those decisions.

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AWARD OF DISTINCTION

DEADLINE:

June 1, 2013

[click here for details](#)

AWARD OF MERIT

DEADLINE:

June 1, 2013

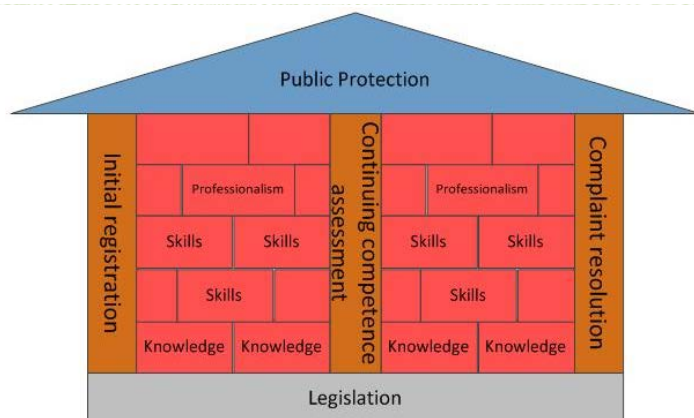
[click here for details](#)

BURSARY AWARD

DEADLINE:

December 31, 2013

[click here for details](#)



The CMLTA and individual MLTs form a partnership that lasts the length of the MLT's career in medical laboratory science within Alberta. While legislation may force the CMLTA and MLTs to 'carpool' on the journey that is an MLT's career path, the atmosphere in the car is determined by how we choose to interact. The CMLTA is committed to providing excellence and quality in its interactions with both the public and individual MLTs - the [Executive Director's Exchange](#) contains examples of quality indicators that the CMLTA office has met and also examples of how MLTs have influenced improvements that the CMLTA has implemented.

Some of those improvements have been within the Continuing Competence Program (CCP), which I would like to talk about in a little more detail because a lot of MLTs' conversations with the CMLTA, both anxious and complementary, are around this program.

'Why is the CCP set up the way it is?'

The CCP was originally developed by the College in conjunction with consultants hired by the Alberta government. Working in partnership to develop the CCP was economical and helped to keep MLT practice permit dues low during the development years and also ensured the CCP was compliant with legislation. The College CCP has been endorsed by the Minister of Health's office and is similar to other regulated healthcare professions, both within and outside Alberta. Substantial changes to the CCP must be submitted to the Alberta government for approval.

'I've changed jobs and my learning plan is no longer applicable.'

'I've been able to take a course that I didn't know about when I built my learning plan.'

'The course that I listed on my learning plan has

been canceled.'

What do I do?

The CCP has ways to deal with unexpected changes, such as job transfers. Not every continuing education opportunity or learning activity completed by an MLT has to be incorporated into her or his learning plan. The CMLTA encourages MLTs to participate in life-long-learning and offers continuing education support through the [bursary award program](#). Like everything else, writing a good learning plan takes practice. This includes thinking about and including alternate strategies to attain learning if your primary strategy is no longer an option. The [Continuing Competence Program Guidelines](#) contain excellent information and examples, including answers to the most frequently asked questions. Lastly, when in doubt, contact the CMLTA office to discuss specific questions.

'I'm being audited by the CMLTA. I'm really worried. What can I expect? Why me?'

Many MLTs express fear when selected for the compliance audit, but many MLTs who have been audited have complimented the CMLTA on the ease of the process. It is not scary at all. You simply provide the documentation that supports the completed learning plan for the selected audit year(s). If the CMLTA determines that the documentation does not meet the [Continuing Competence Program Guidelines](#) (appendix A), you will receive another letter highlighting the deficiency. This gives you another opportunity to provide sufficient documentation. Third party software randomly chooses which members will be audited each year – even the president is not exempt from this lottery.

Council has had several discussions around how many CCP audits should be conducted each year. Besides the obvious compliance benefits, one of the advantages to increasing the number of audits that has been discussed is an increase in the comfort level of MLTs with the compliance audit process. Audits are one of the most important tools at the CMLTA's disposal in our focus on enhancing public protection and patient safety and promoting high standards of professional practice. This is the [vision](#) of the CMLTA, which after all is not a nebulous entity, but really you, me, and all Alberta MLTs together.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

College Council convened on Saturday, March 2, 2013 for a regularly scheduled Council meeting. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- Council approved the 2012 audited financial statement as presented by the auditors.
- Council awarded funding to five Bursary Award applicants.
- Council approved Bylaw revisions for membership approval at the 2013 Annual General Meeting.
- Council approved annual policy revisions as recommended by the Legislation Sub-Committee.
- Council approved the 2012 Annual Report for distribution to the Minister of Health and the membership.
- Council revised policy increasing the number of regulated members randomly selected for the Continuing Competence Program compliance audit to a minimum of 10% annually with a goal over the next five years to increase incrementally to 20%.

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL

Q: Why have the number of audits drastically increased the last two years?

A: The Continuing Competence Program (CCP) compliance audit is an important tool to provide members of the public with the assurance that healthcare professionals, including medical laboratory technologists (MLTs), are maintaining current knowledge and enhancing proficiency in their chosen field of expertise. Consequently, Council has discussed the CCP compliance audit on multiple occasions, most recently at their March 2, 2013 meeting.

The vast majority of MLTs complete the audit with no problem – a fact that can tell Albertans about the high level of professionalism that MLTs actively practice. Further, the number of audits that pass on the initial review has been steadily increasing. To support the College mission of protecting the public by regulating MLTs and fostering excellence in professional practice, Council endorses an annual minimum target for the compliance audit of 10% of regulated members. Council reaffirms that members will be randomly selected to participate in

the compliance audit. Additionally, Council supports a goal of increasing the minimum audit target to 20% over the next few years once improvements in technology are implemented, such as online submission of audit documents.

College Council welcomes all questions and comments. Please email info@cmlta.org. Responses will be emailed and published.

NOMINATIONS

Council is currently accepting nomination forms for the following positions:

- 2014 – 2016 President Elect
- 2014 - 2016 Councilor
- 2014 - 2016 Councilor

If you are interested, please submit a nomination form which is available on the College [website](#). The deadline is May 31, 2013.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S EXCHANGE

The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta (CMLTA) is unilaterally focused on the legislative mandate of "patient safety and public protection" and the three regulatory areas which support this directive: setting and enforcing registration and minimum entrance to practice standards; ensuring professional competence through continuous learning; and administering a formalized process to address complaints of unprofessional conduct.

As a regulatory-only organization, the CMLTA is committed to only those programs and services which directly support the mandated functions. As a result, the College Council agreed to divest the organization of any previous ties to member services in 2012. In the absence of member services, how does the CMLTA benefit regulated members? Perhaps it is time to focus on service excellence in program delivery, and how the CMLTA excels in this area.

A definition of *service* can be difficult to articulate as it is often subjective in nature and may be viewed as an activity, performance measurement, or philosophy

. . . an intangible entity. The CMLTA defines *service* as a commitment to the provision of outstanding value-added programs to all stakeholders, including the government, regulated members, employers, other healthcare practitioners, and most importantly the public at large. These provisions include access to information and knowledge, professional interactions and communications, and a dedication to continuous program improvement.

On the surface, one may question if membership services are no longer provided by the CMLTA, why are excellence in program delivery and quality interactions with MLTs even important, as registration and an MLT Practice Permit are mandatory in accordance with the *Health Professions Act*? If the CMLTA doesn't need a competitive advantage to encourage individuals to join, why put an emphasis on quality service? Simply answered, the CMLTA aspires to the golden rule or ethic of reciprocity - *one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself*.

This does not imply the CMLTA can do away with the Continuing Competence Program, nor issue a registration and MLT Practice Permit free of charge, even though these may be the wishes of some. CMLTA service excellence is targeted at patient safety and public protection by ensuring appropriately credentialed individuals are permitted to seek MLT employment as expeditiously and judiciously as possible. For example:

- Students of accredited MLT training programs and Internationally Educated MLTs (IEMLTs) have the privilege of working under a Provisional MLT Practice Permit while waiting to challenge the CSMLS national certification examination. This provision does not apply in all provinces so Alberta MLTs have the ability to work 7-10 weeks in advance of MLTs in some other provinces.
- Applications for registration and MLT Practice Permits are processed within one week and can be expedited upon request in special circumstances. In many other Colleges, it can take upwards of 30 days to obtain the appropriate licensure and approval for employment in a regulated healthcare profession.
- Average Turnaround Time (TAT) of one business day for all email and telephone inquiries.

The definition of excellence in program delivery can

also be extended to advancements the CMLTA has implemented in consideration of feedback from stakeholders, specifically regulated members. These advancements include a user friendly website, paperless online renewal process incorporating dropdown menus, an enhanced MLT Competency Profile with the recent addition of a Biochemical Genetics and Management Bands, and a Professional Development Certificate Program which acknowledges continued learning over and above government or employer-mandated education. If one compares the initial Continuing Competence Program introduced in 2007 and the current format, numerous improvements are evident.

If one views the CMLTA and its commitment to quality programs and services through this lens, the CMLTA is not an adversary, but an entity dedicated to public protection and the preservation of the professional image and integrity of MLTs in the province.

2014 DUES NOTICE

September 15-October 31: \$560 (early bird discount)

November 1-30: \$610 (regular dues)

December 1-31: \$735 (regular dues plus processing fees)

All voluntary renewals will continue as hard-copy (MLA & Associate = \$160, Retired = \$75)

COMPETENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

The following table summarizes compliance audit statistics for the Continuing Competence Program for 2008 - 2012:

Description	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Number of CCP Participants*	2236	2358	2264	2308	2257
Successful initial audit (%)	56	69	85	89	87
Remedial work required (%)	37	27	13	10	13
Reasons for	- Failure to submit documentation				

remedial work:	Incomplete documentation				
Forwarded to Complaints Director for Non-Compliance (%)**	0	0	0	0	Unknown
Extenuating Circumstances (%)	0	0	1	2	0
Cancelled Audits (%)	7	4	1	0	0

* Total number of CCP participants is not reflective of total MLT membership as CCP participation is not required for Initial MLT Practice Permit applicants.

** 2012 participants are audited in February 2013; therefore, some results are unknown at time of print.

CSMLS REGULATION POSITION STATEMENTS

[Support for Regulation of MLAs](#)

[Support for Regulation of MLTs](#)

NLCMLS PROCLAMATION

[Newfoundland & Labrador College for Medical Laboratory Science \(NCLMLS\) Proclamation Notice](#)

PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE AND CONDUCT CONSIDERATIONS

Two complaints of unprofessional conduct received in 2012 have carried over into this year. One complaint is still pending investigation whereas the second complaint was dismissed by the College's Complaints Director as the Investigator's Report revealed the following:

- the nature of the complaint did not meet the legal threshold necessary to pursue the matter;
- the allegations did not pose a significant risk to public safety and protection in the context of the provision of competent medical laboratory healthcare services; and
- the allegations were employer-employee specific and unrelated to clinical practice. The College received one complaint of unprofessional conduct to

date in 2013. This matter is currently under investigation.

Both of the outstanding complaints have been forwarded to formal investigations and Hearing Tribunals may be convened dependent upon the Investigator's final reports.

CARNA COURT OF APPEAL DECISION UPDATE

In the October 2013 issue of *The Commentator*, an article was published on the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of *Wright versus College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta*. In this case, two registered nurses on numerous occasions stole narcotics from their employer and falsified narcotic records to cover-up the thefts. When they were caught, the nurses indicated that they had become addicted to narcotics and said they were prepared to undergo rehabilitation. For one of the nurses, this was the second time that she had been caught stealing narcotics. The matter was referred to CARNA which conducted an investigation and referred the matter to a hearing before a Hearing Tribunal.

The nurses admitted the thefts and falsification of records but argued that they could not be found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct since their misconduct was caused in whole or in part by their addiction which is a disability under human rights law. The nurses took the position that in order to accommodate them under human rights law, CARNA had to utilize an informal resolution process or an incapacity assessment rather than proceeding to a formal hearing. The Hearing Tribunals rejected this argument and found that the thefts and falsification of records constituted unprofessional conduct. The Hearing Tribunals took the addictions into account in the sanctions part of the hearing imposing an extensive remedial order designed to ensure ongoing rehabilitation and protection of the public while also providing full opportunities for the nurses to return to work once safe to do so. Both the nurses ultimately completed their rehabilitation and returned to work in accordance with the orders of the Hearing Tribunals. The nurses appealed the decision to CARNA's Appeals Committee which dismissed the appeal. The nurses appealed that decision to the Court of Appeal which upheld the decision of the

Appeals Committee. The majority of the Court of Appeal did not find any discrimination against the nurses and concluded that any accommodation that might be necessary could occur in the sanction phase of the hearing. The nurses sought leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. We indicated that we would keep our readers posted on further developments in the case.

We are pleased to advise that on March 28, 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada denied leave to appeal with costs awarded against the nurses. This means that the Court of Appeal decision in *Wright* is the law in Alberta and will be an influential precedent across Canada. The issues addressed in *Wright* are of critical importance to regulators. Professional regulatory organizations take a variety of approaches to professionals who engage in misconduct caused in whole or in part by their addictions. Some organizations address the issues through informal processes while other organizations use the formal discipline process. In this “traditional approach”, there is a finding that the thefts or other misconduct is unprofessional conduct. Then in the sanction phase of the hearing, the addiction is taken into account in crafting remedial sanctions designed to protect the public while also recognizing that addiction is a treatable illness. While there are advantages and disadvantages to both informal resolution and the traditional approach, in our view this is a policy choice best left to individual regulators. If the nurses’ challenge in *Wright* had succeeded, then professional regulatory organizations would not have been able to make this policy choice. In addition, some of the most serious acts of unprofessional misconduct are caused in whole or in part by addictions. While some professionals are cooperative in seeking rehabilitation, others refuse to recognize their problem and are not prepared to engage in rehabilitation. If regulators were prohibited from using the formal discipline process for these professionals, how would regulators be able to fulfill their public protection mandate?

We are very pleased that this matter is now finalized with the important precedent of *Wright v. CARNA*. This case is the first Court decision in Canada that squarely addresses whether human rights principles provide a defence, as opposed to a mitigating factor, where misconduct is caused in whole or in part by an addiction.

Field Law's Professional Regulatory Group represented CARNA in the case with [James T. Casey, QC](#) and [Anne Côté](#) acting as legal counsel.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: THE CHANGING FACE OF ORGANIZATIONS

There is no question organizations today are more diverse than ever. Globalization, outsourcing, and off-shoring has made organizations much more varied in nature. Cultural diversity is set to become one of the major challenges, and in my personal view, one of the biggest opportunities for organizations to improve competitiveness, enhance creativeness, and improve overall performance in a global economic community. This article will explore the definition of cultural diversity, the value of cultural diversity, and how we as individuals can create, support, and develop an organization that is culturally diverse.

A very simple definition of diverse is – that of variety or a point of difference. Organizations are diverse in terms of gender, generation, and culture. Organizations today are filled with variety which is very different from years past. Organizations around the world have become much more diverse due in part to both economic globalization and technology which has improved data transfer and communication. Globalization has removed barriers and eliminated borders allowing organizations to expand in other markets. Technology has enhanced globalization through the improvement in speed and quality of communication and transmission of information across the globe in real-time.

Before we move forward in the discussion it is important to understand the definitions of both a difference and a distinction. A difference is simply *a state of something being different or dissimilar*, whereas a distinction is *discrimination between those that are different*. This is important to understand because we can recognize a difference, but can also make a distinction between that which is different. As organizations become more diverse it is important to recognize the differences of cultures, but to not make distinctions between those cultural differences. This becomes the heart of a successfully diverse organization.

Organizational Culture

Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, behaviors, and customs of a group of people. Often culture is defined by ethnicity, language, nationality, and religious beliefs. In essence culture is a “common way of being” by a group and how we define our role as individuals within that group. Organizations in and of themselves develop a unique organizational culture where beliefs, values, and customs are shared, and processes/procedures are defined and adhered to by the members of the organization. This is often driven by the objectives of the organization, which is ultimately determined by the overall strategic vision. Organizations may be competent in understanding the traditional beliefs, values, and customs of the organization, but may find it a challenge to layer into the organization differences related to culture. Many organizations have yet to realize the potential of adding cultural diversity as a strategic imperative for continued growth and success.

The Benefits of a Diverse Organization

There is significant literature to indicate a diverse culture can result in a more cohesive and cost-competitive organization. Individuals who are included in an organization or who “feel part of the organization” feel a sense of belonging and part of the community within the organization. One can propose in these cases there is a decrease in employee turnover. One of the largest costs for an organization, both tangible and intangible is the cost of staff turnover. This cost is often hidden, but can have a significant effect on the overall competitiveness of an organization. The Society for Human Resource Management proposes the costs of turnover are: 30-50% of the annual salary of entry-level employees; 150% of middle-level employees; and up to 400% for specialized, high-level employees. One can see a culture of inclusion has the potential to dramatically decrease the costs of staff turnover. In addition there is an argument that productivity increases amongst those employees who have a sense of belonging to the organization resulting in an overall productivity increase within organizations that are culturally diverse. Although the literature is clear on this topic, imagine times in your own career where your intrinsic needs were addressed by the organization, then reflect on your productivity at the time. Were you contributing

more? Most likely the answer is yes. Why? Because you felt included and valued as an individual. The root to any successful culturally diverse organization is building an environment of inclusiveness.

There are other less tangible benefits of cultural diversity including both a positive impact on marketing programs and improving creative thinking in team-based settings. Cultural sensitivity in marketing programs has improved dramatically over the past number of decades. Marketing segmentation is the process of segmenting your marketing program into focused programs for a particular audience. Programs that are sensitive to the segment culture or values will “connect” better with the target audience. Globalization has resulted in more diverse teams working side by side or connected via technology. The literature would suggest the more diverse a team is the more creative and innovative the team becomes. The answer lies in the fact that a more diverse team has a broader set of experiences to draw from both professionally and culturally. In addition, minority views can stimulate thinking around non-obvious alternatives that provide additional solutions to problems. A note of caution here, in order to achieve these benefits, the teams must have an attitudinal awareness, understanding of, and respect for culture differences in order for these benefits to be realized.

Creating a Culturally Diverse Organization

The responsibility of creating a culturally diverse organization rests with both the leadership of the organization and us as individuals within the organization. In order to focus on the actions of this article we need to focus on the individual role in creating and supporting a culturally diverse organization. As with any change in an organization this requires intent, planning, and communication. As individuals, we can contribute to cultural diversity through the following steps:

1. Acquisition of cultural knowledge – knowing some of the history, characteristics, values, and beliefs of a particular culture. Take the time to understand the cultural differences of those whom you work with.
2. Awareness of cultural differences – being open to different cultures and open to changing cultural attitudes within the organization. In

order for cultural diversity to take hold in your organization, you need to be open to an evolving culture.

3. Sensitivity to cultural differences – knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not placing distinctions on one culture versus the other. Distinctions place barriers on the differences and ultimately hinder cultural diversity.

Organizations that gain knowledge, awareness of, and are sensitive to cultural differences are more likely to become more competent in developing an organization where cultural diversity is an advantage. As individuals, we play a key role in understanding cultural differences do exist, being sensitive to those differences, and not making distinctions between one culture and another. Through our daily work within those organizations we can contribute to an environment of openness where cultural differences are recognized, respected, and woven into the fabric of the organization's culture. The result is an organization that is progressive, competitive, and vibrant. The continued increase in globalization and the rapid growth in communication technology will only pull us closer together, and developing an organization that is culturally diverse will allow employers and individuals to reap the benefits of this growing trend.

Rod Miller is a Human Capital Strategist and Managing Director for Resources Global Professionals, a global consultancy firm. He is also an Adjunct Instructor in the area of Human Resources and holds an MBA from the University of Calgary Haskayne School of Business.



A registration banner for the CMLTA Professional Development Forum & AGM 2013. The banner features a green background with a white central area. At the top left, a red ribbon says "FREE FOR MEMBERS". The CMLTA logo is at the top right, with the text "CMLTA" in large red letters and "Professional Development Forum & AGM" in smaller blue and black text below it. The year "2013" is displayed in large white numbers. A prominent red banner in the center says "REGISTER NOW!". Below this, the date "Saturday, September 28, 2013" is written in blue. The location "Marriott at River Cree Resort, 300 East Lapotac Blvd, Edmonton (Enoch), Alberta" is listed in blue. The registration website "www.cmltaforum.com" and email "events@cmlta.org" are provided in blue. The CMLTA logo and full name "COLLEGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNOLOGISTS OF ALBERTA" are at the bottom right.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

The College awarded Professional Development Certificates to the following members:

- Kerri Albertson
- Camille Bailer
- Tracy Bennett
- Cheryl Carruthers
- Leo Dimnik
- Ellen Klontz
- Elaine Kurtz-Hardowa
- Melody Montgomery

The College also recognizes SAIT student, Catherine Komishin, recipient of the Medical Laboratory Assistant Student Endowment Award.

The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta (CMLTA) is a recognized leader in the regulation and governance of medical laboratory services. As a trusted partner in healthcare regulation, the CMLTA acknowledges self-regulation is a privilege and endeavors to enhance public protection and patient safety, promote high standards for professional practice, and contribute to the overall wellness of Albertans. The CMLTA protects the public by regulating Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs) and fostering excellence in professional practice.

The Commentator e-newsletter is the CMLTA's primary communication vehicle and is distributed February, May, and October. It provides MLTs and the public with current and timely information about CMLTA programs, services, and topics relevant to MLTs and which may have an impact on the healthcare continuum.

You are receiving this email as you are affiliated with the CMLTA.

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All regulated members are responsible for receiving The Commentator and being aware of its contents.

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