



COLLEGE & ASSOCIATION OF
Acupuncturists
OF ALBERTA

ANNUAL REPORT

January 1 to December 31, 2019

submitted to

Health Disciplines Board

Contents

I.	President’s Message.....	2
II.	Public Member Report.	6
III.	Introduction.....	7
IV.	Council/Committee Members and Office Staff.....	9
V.	Governance.....	11
VI.	Registration of College Members.....	13
VII.	Training Programs and Examinations.....	14
VIII.	Continuing Education Program.....	15
IX.	Complaints and Disciplines.....	16
X.	Financial Information.....	17
XI.	Other Professional Activities.....	17
XII.	Conclusion.....	18

Attachments:

- Audited 2019 Financial Statements

I. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the past year the College and Association of Acupuncturists of Alberta (CAAA) continuously delivered amazing achievements for the health of general public we serve, while facing dramatic challenges, especially with the outbreak of COVID 19. We could not be more proud of how CAAA members continue to contribute in helping our communities. With the progress made and the strengths held we are confident that these challenges will be overcome and we can, and should, do more. This year we are looking to build on this momentum and continuously deliver quality services to the safety and health of Albertans.

This report will share the activities of CAAA council and committees outlining our work to fulfill our commitments to society and our mission to advance the public safety and Health through our practice, education and service.

1. Transition to the Health Professions Act

In 2019-2020, we experienced and were impacted by the change/delay of government policies, economic problems, and COVID 19 pandemic. Our priority, transition from the Health Disciplines Act (HDA) to the Health Professions Act (HPA), was delayed.

The transition from HDA to HPA is an important step for our profession. The Health Disciplines Act and the associated Acupuncture Regulation are both outdated and the transition is necessary for our members to practice under Health Professions Act. Since 2013, the CAAA has been working to complete transitioning the acupuncturist profession from HDA to HPA. As explained in the information session and consultation session, the transition serves the best interests of the public, the profession and the government. Council and many members have made strenuous efforts on this transition. The second revised draft Regulation has been submitted to Alberta Health on November 5, 2019. It is sincerely hoped that the importance of the transition can be fully recognized and supported by all members. The acupuncturist profession may not be able to afford any further delay in the transition.

2. Establishment of policies, standards and regulation

a. Patient Records Standards

The new Patient Records Standards related to patient records was developed and became effective from January 1, 2019. This standard clarifies the detailed requirements for patient records and helps reducing confusion and possible complaints.

b. Nomination and Appointment of Committee Chair and Members

As per CAAA bylaws, the Council appoints committee chairs and members. To ensure transparency and consistency of the appointment process, the Council approved the

policy regarding Nomination and Appointment of Committee Chair and Members on January 5, 2019.

- c. **Standards of Practice to Protect Patients from Sexual Abuse/Misconduct**
In response to Bill 21, Act to Protect Patients, CAAA developed a Standard of Practice for Bill 21.
- d. In 2019, in response to feedback from Council and committee members, a new Orientation Manual was developed which integrated most recent policies.

3. Committees Activities

a. *Budget, Finance and Audit Committee (BFAC)*

The two major sources of revenue of the College were registration fee and examination fees. Examination fee is charged on a cost-recovery basis. The registration fee in Alberta remains in the low end among provinces in Canada, of the same profession. Internal control by BFAC plays an important role in financial arrangements. BFAC reviews and revises relevant policies on a regular basis, and conducts thorough internal audits. Thanks to BFAC for the excellent work. An external financial audit has been conducted to ensure financial integrity.

b. *Conduct and Competence Committee (CCC)*

CCC performs an important role in protecting the public interest through dealing with hearings referred to different issues. The committee members, including public members, fulfilled their roles in terms of fairness, efficiency and effectiveness on a volunteer basis. Marc Raedschelders, long time dedicated member and chair of CCC, retired at the end of 2019. Amanda Ballas has been appointed as the new chair. Thank you Marc for the excellent services and welcome Amanda to the new role.

c. *Registration and Program Review Committee (RPRC)*

RPRC has successfully fulfilled its role in reviewing applications for registration, and made significant contribution to the development of Minimum Standards for Professional Acupuncture Education, review of proposed school and ongoing approval for restricted registration applications.

d. *Examination Committee (EC)*

EC has contributed tremendous amount of time and efforts as volunteers to the development and administration of a valid, fair and defensible registration examination. Thank all for the great efforts. The Case Study examinations took place on January, 18, 2020. Based on the decision of CAAA and the Examination Committee the April 2020 retake examination for Modalities, Acupuncture Points, and Safety & Jurisprudence is

postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The examination will be rescheduled pending on further information from the government. All candidates will be notified of the examination by email and/or postal mail and the information will also be available on the CAAA website: www.acupuncturealberta.ca.

e. Member Service Committee

CAAA also undertakes an association function which is performed through Member Services Committee (MSC). Based its association function, the College has been offering continuing education programs to members to help meet the registration requirements and, more importantly, to maintain and improve their competency and skills. MSC has also launched and participated in promotional activities to increase public awareness of the profession, such as presenting the profession to medical students at University of Alberta. Although on hold because of the pandemic, The MSC has been working on organization of a social event and other projects such as public education presentation for Acupuncture awareness.

4. COVID-19 pandemic

With the appearance of the first case of COVID-19 in Alberta on March 5, Registered Acupuncturists faces an unprecedented challenge. As health service providers, we are facing this challenge together and we have made tough but necessary decisions to protect the health and safety of patients and ourselves, and to provide continuous urgent care of our patients when it is necessary and possible.

The information and decisions of CAAA were made after discussions and consultations with Alberta Health based on the best evidence and advice coming from our government and public health officials. Ultimately, these decisions were made because the health and safety of our members and the public are our top priority.

On April 30, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), indicated that changes to CMOH Order 07-2020 are pending as part of Alberta Government's Re-launch Strategy. The change to restrictions to acupuncture practice will be continuously updated. CAAA will remain in contact with provincial and federal officials, our public health agencies, and other Colleges regarding this issue. We will continue to share any new information with you.

Thanks to all our registered members for your patience and cooperation during this difficult time in response to the challenges posed by COVID-19, thanks to our office staffs for continuing to show your sincere commitment to our members and their requests.

As we continue to act together in the face of this challenge, we will play our part in reducing the risks caused by the COVID-19 virus. Please continue to practice proper hygiene and social distancing, and continue to show kindness and patience towards one another.

I wish you all safe and healthy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Boxin Wanglin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Boxin Wanglin
President of the College and Association of Acupuncturists of Alberta

II. PUBLIC MEMBER REPORTS

April 20, 2020

This year marks the end of my tenure on Council. It has been a great pleasure to serve as a Public Member for this profession, and to have had the opportunity to work with very passionate and committed fellow Councillors. I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve in this capacity, and for the support you have shown. The Council has demonstrated great commitment and dedication toward the advancement of acupuncture, and I trust these efforts will continue. I wish you all the best for the future.

Kind regards,

Carmen Lawlor, Public Member

INTRODUCTION

The profession of acupuncturists has been regulated in Alberta since 1988 under the *Health Disciplines Act* (hereinafter, “Act”), and the associated *Acupuncture Regulation*. It used to be governed by the Acupuncture Committee under the Health Disciplines Board established under the Act.

The College and Association of Acupuncturists of Alberta (the “CAAA”) was designated by the Minister of Health to regulate the profession of acupuncturists in the public interest, effective January 1, 2011.

Mission Statement

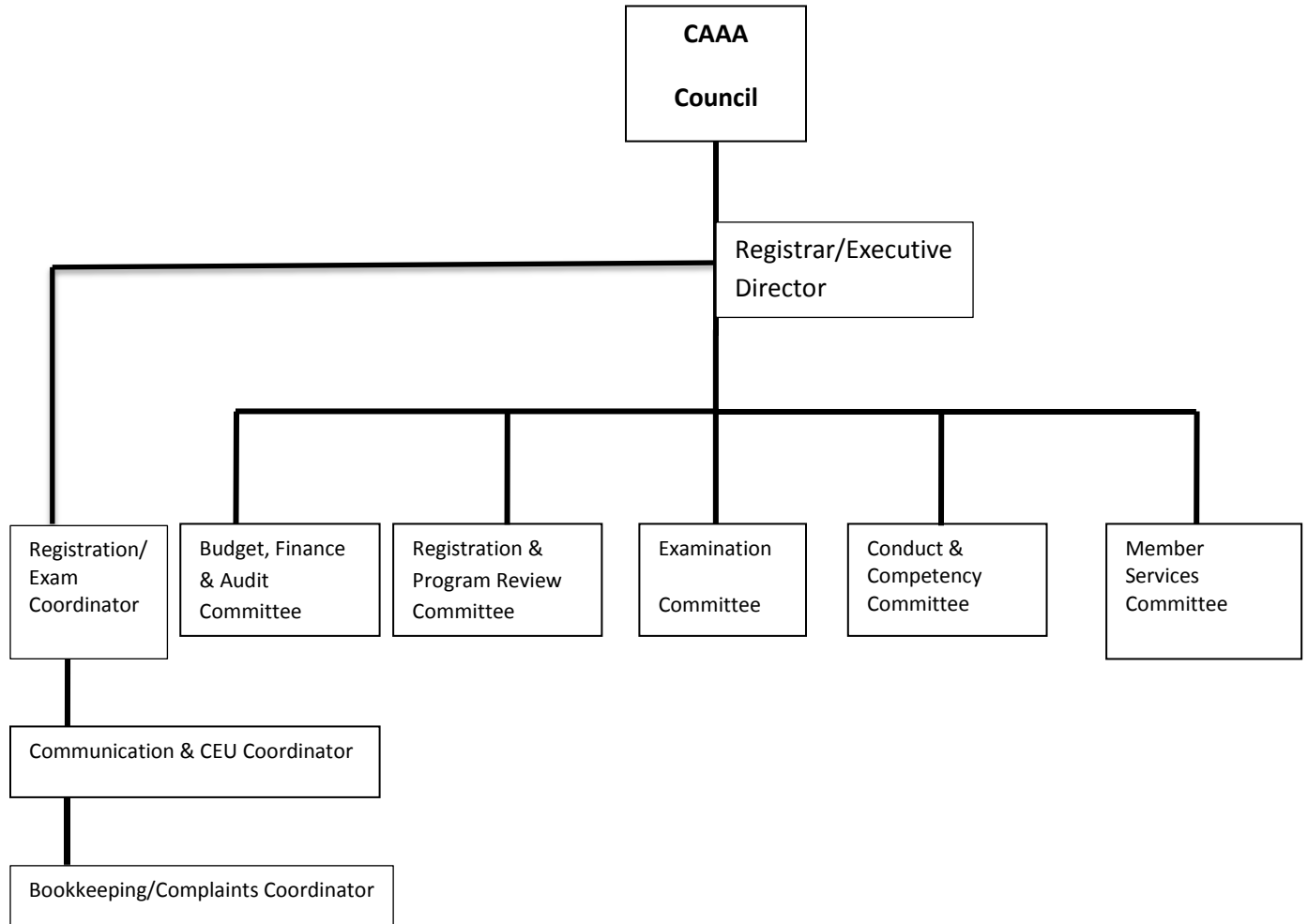
The CAAA serves the public interest and supports the acupuncture profession by setting high standards of practice, education, competence, and ethical conduct.

Vision

The CAAA is committed to excellence in the regulation and support of the Registered Acupuncturists of Alberta.

Organizational Structure

The organization structure of the CAAA is set out as below. The Council, Committees and positions are established in accordance with the *Health Disciplines Act* and the By-laws of the CAAA.



III. COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Council is responsible for the governance and management of the regulatory and business affairs of the CAAA. It is composed of registered acupuncturists elected by the membership and public members appointed by Lieutenant Governor. Committee members are appointed in accordance with the CAAA Bylaws.

Council members and committee members for the term 2018-2020 are as follows.

Council Members

Boxin Wanglin, President
Heather Thompson, Vice President
Yang Su, Treasurer
William Zhao, Director
Wenjun Dai, Director
Helen Anderson, Director
Carmen Lawlor, Public Member
Jessica Wyllie, Public Member (resigned in 2019)

Registration and Program Review Committee (RPRC)

Jessica McDonald, Chair (resigned April 2019)
Jessica Stankowski
Zhaocheng Han
Zoe (Ying) Zhao (appointed December 2019)
Heather Thompson (resigned October 2019)
Michelle Phillips (resigned May 2019)

Conduct and Competency Committee (CCC)

Marc Raedschelders, Chair (retired from January 2020)
Amanda Ballas (Acting Chair from January 2020)
Michael McFarlane
Ann Zee
Linda Wu
Annie Wu
Vonalee Gilroy (appointed September 2019)
Brenda Kohut (appointed September 2019)
Wendy Powell (appointed September 2019)
Lisa Evren (Public Member)

Examination Committee (EC)

Lowell Ask, Co-chair

Wenjun Dai, Co-chair
Don Fan
Yucheng Chen
Jingzhao (Ricky) Wang
Rose Galikas

Budget, Finance and Audit Committee (BFAC)

Yang Su, Chair
William Zhao
Jay McCoy
Jingzhao (Ricky) Wang
Sarena Armsworthy

Member Services Committee (MSC)

Lindsay Babcock, Co-chair
Carol Xu, Co-chair
Margaret Kennedy
Lyla Yip
Sarah Martins
Kirsten Carson
Mujun Chen
Tonya Coutts Wirth (resigned June 2019)

CAAA Office Staff

Paul Hu, Registrar/ Executive Director
Jenney White, Registration and Examination Coordinator
Janelle Kulak, Communication Coordinator/Assistant to Executive Director
Lesley Bober, Finance and Complaints Coordinator

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IV. GOVERNANCE

The mandate of the College and Association of Acupuncturists of Alberta (the CAAA) is to regulate the profession of acupuncturists in the public interests. Throughout the year of 2019, in addition to continued efforts on the transition to the *Health Professions Act* and completion of the Minimum Standards for Professional Acupuncture Education, efforts were also made to improve the governance capacity of council and committee members, deal with complaints in a more efficient and effective manner, and take proactive actions to help members improve their competency in provision of treatments to patients.

Transition to the Health Professions Act

Legislation provides the legal framework for the governance of a profession. The acupuncturist profession has been regulated under the *Health Disciplines Act* and the *Acupuncture Regulation* since 1988. Without timely amendment, the *Health Disciplines Act* and the *Acupuncture Regulation* have become outdated legislation and present significant challenges for effective governance of the profession. This deficiency is clearly reflected in the different mechanisms between the *Health Professions Act* and the *Health Disciplines Act* for dealing with applications for registration and complaints.

The CAAA has been working on the transition to the *Health Professions Act* since 2013. In 2019, Council reviewed the feedback from the consultation on the proposed regulation under the *Health Professions Act*, and decided to conduct a survey on advanced activities. Based on the survey results, Council voted to prioritize the transition at its meeting in September 2019. Survey results were also communicated to members in the CAAA Newsletter. Based on the feedback from Alberta Health and with assistance from the CAAA's legal counsel, the second revised version of the proposed Acupuncture Regulation was submitted to Health Department on November 5, 2019.

The transition will serve the best interest of the public through enhanced transparency, and improved governance and efficiency which are required by the *Health Professions Act*.

In 2019, Alberta Government passed two important legislations: *Red Tape Reduction Act* and *Fair Registration Practices Act*. The transition of the acupuncturist profession to the *Health Professions Act* is in alignment with the commitment of Alberta Government, and will support the CAAA to meet relevant requirements contained in the legislations.

The transition also serves the interest of the profession. The *Health Professions Act* will provide a better framework for the CAAA to fulfill its mandate, and the Schedule 1 to the *Health Professions Act* better reflects the practice of this profession.

It is a consented request from the profession to Alberta Government to complete the transition as soon as possible.

Minimum Standards for Professional Acupuncture Education

Education is the very foundation of a profession, and has direct impact on the competency of registrants, as well as safety and effectiveness of treatments on patients. To establish Minimum Standards for Professional Acupuncture Education remained one of the priorities of the CAAA in 2019. Below is a list of related activities in 2019.

- The draft was circulated for consultation early January 2019.
- In person consultations were offered in February and March, 2019.
- The final draft from the Registration and Program Review Committee was received end of April, and Council reviewed the final draft end of July.
- The proposed Minimum Standards were presented to the Health Disciplines Board on October 1, 2019, and feedback received November 2019.

Council reviewed the feedback from the Health Disciplines Board at its meeting in December 2019, and decided to continue communication and consultation with stakeholders.

Governance Capacity

Council and committees have important responsibilities and make important decisions. They serve the profession as volunteers. To help them perform their duties, it has now become standard practice of the CAAA to offer the following to council and committee members:

- a board development workshop to council members and committee chairs after each election;
- a workshop to officers of council and committee chairs on how to conduct council/committee meeting; and
- an orientation workshop to all members of each committee regarding their roles and responsibilities.

In 2019, Council approved a policy, Procedures for Nomination and Appointment of Committee Chairs and Members. This policy helps to ensure transparency of the appointment process, and the Council takes more consideration of the competence and merits of the applicants in the appointment process.

In 2019, in response to the feedback from council and committee members, an Orientation Manual for Council and Committee Members was developed, which provides preliminary

information about the history of the profession, the governance structure, roles and responsibilities of council and each committee, as well as relevant policies and standards.

As volunteers, some council and committee members perform important tasks on their own time without adequately compensated. This approach is not fair for those members, nor sustainable for the CAAA. In response, the Council has approved a revised Honorarium Policy which allows a member to claim for the time they spend on the CAAA business.

Improved efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with complaints

In accordance with the *Health Disciplines Act*, the registrar is responsible for preliminary investigation into complaints received by the CAAA. Conduct and Competency Committee will hold hearings on cases that are referred to the committee.

In 2019, the CAAA received higher than usual number of complaints. In order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, investigators were appointed to conduct the preliminary investigations, and the registrar will perform the role of complaints director to make decisions after reviewing the preliminary investigation report. In addition, more members were appointed to Conduct and Competence Committee which provides more flexibility for the committee chair to coordinate a hearing date.

Based on the experience in dealing with complaints, the CAAA adopted a more proactive approach by offering educational opportunities to members to avoid and prevent complaints, instead of taking punitive actions after the fact.

To further improve transparency and efficiency, Conduct and Competency Committee has been working on policies such as publishing hearing decisions and adopting an alternative complaint resolution approach.

V. REGISTRATION OF COLLEGE MEMBERS

Registration Categories	2019
Full registration	764
Temporary registration	1
Restricted registration	14
Inactive	15
Total Number of Registrants as of Dec. 31	794

VI. TRAINING PROGRAMS AND EXAMINATIONS

Currently, there are five acupuncture programs approved by the *Health Disciplines Board*, offered at:

- MacEwan University, Edmonton, since 1998
- Alberta College of Acupuncture & TCM, Calgary, since 2000
- Calgary College of TCM & Acupuncture, Calgary, since 2004
- Canadian Institute of TCM, Calgary, since 2004
- Reeves College, Edmonton, since 2008; revised curriculum approved in 2014

Registration and Program Review Committee has been reviewing an application for acupuncture program, and will make its recommendation in 2020.

The CAAA has been working to establish minimum standards for professional acupuncture education. Before the standards are approved, a temporary moratorium has been placed on applications for new acupuncture programs.

The Alberta Acupuncturist Registration Examination consists of the following components:

- Pan-Canadian Written Examination for Acupuncturists (multiple choice questions)
- Pan-Canadian Clinical Case-study Exam for Acupuncturists (open ended responses required)
- Safety and Jurisprudence Examination (multiple choice questions)
- Safety Exam: Modalities (hands-on, practical)
- Safety Exam: Acupuncture Points (hands-on, practical)

The table below is a summary of candidate performance at the Alberta Acupuncture Registration Examination with a comparison between graduates from approved acupuncture programs in Alberta, candidates of Alberta including out-of-province and international graduates, as well as all the candidates in Canada:

Components	Exam Date	AB Graduates	Alberta total	Canada total
Written	Oct 19, 2019	53/81(65%)	59/91(65%)	246/347 (71%)
Case-study	Jan 18, 2020	69/77(90%)	75/85 (88%)	273/311 (88%)
Safety & Juris	Oct 19, 2019	57/73 (78%)	61/80(76%)	
Modalities	Oct 19 & 20, 2019	53/71 (75%)	56/80(70%)	
Acu Points	Oct 19 & 20, 2019	49/75 (65%)	49/83(59%)	

Statistics may be subject to changes as a result of rescoring.

VII. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM

As part of its association function, the CAAA has hosted or co-hosted the following continuing education events to help members maintain/improve their competency in 2019:

Date/Place	Topic	Speaker
Mar 20 (Edmonton) Mar 27 (Calgary)	Proposed Standards of Practice for Bill 21: Protecting Patients from Sexual Abuse/Misconduct	Helen Anderson
Apr 14 (Edmonton)	Excess/Heat in upper and Deficiency/Cold in Chronic Diseases	William Zhao
Apr 28 (Red Deer)	AGM CEU Event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed Consent & Patient Records • Standards and Standards of Practice to implement Bill 21 	Marc Raeschelders and Helen Anderson
May 11 (Calgary)	Five Elements Colour Theory	Zhaozhang Wang
Jun 23, Jul 21, Aug 18 and Oct 20 (Calgary)	Fu, Yi Series: Part 1 – 4	Yi Fu
Sep 7 (Edmonton)	Introduction to Heat Sensitive Moxibustion	Dennis Lee
Sep 14 & 15 (Edmonton)	Ben Shen Psychotherapy	Joseph Changqing Yang
Sep 24 (Edmonton) Oct 5 (Calgary)	Insurance Billing and Fraud Education	Jil Tanguay – Alberta Blue Cross
Sep 29 (Edmonton) Oct 26 (Calgary)	Draping Techniques for Effective Treatments: From Relaxation to Rehabilitation	Anastasia Sinkovskaia

In 2019, a survey was conducted to determine the demand of membership and to improve the quality of continuing education program. Based on the feedback, the CAAA amended its policies related to continuing education. More quality continuing education programs demanded by members will be delivered in a systematic manner.

VIII. COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINES

One of the major responsibilities of a professional regulatory body is to deal with complaints in a fair, efficient and effective manner. In 2019, the CAAA received unusually high number of complaints. The CAAA has been working with Conduct and Competence Committee, legal counsel, investigators and other parties to deal with them in accordance with the *Health Disciplines Act*.

Below is a summary of the complaints received in 2019.

Categories of complaints by complainants	Number of complaints	Description
Patients or patient's family vs members	4	Allegations about the conduct, skills, judgment or fitness to practice
Patient vs non-acupuncturist	1	Unauthorized practice of acupuncture
Insurance companies vs members	3	Allegations about insufficient patient records
Public vs members	3	Allegations about misconduct
Acupuncturists vs acupuncturists	5	Allegations about misconduct

To file a complaint is one way for the public to express their concerns about a registered acupuncturist. With the mandate to protect the public interest, the CAAA has taken all complaints seriously and dealt with them diligently. It is also a time and resources consuming process. To ensure the public interest is adequately protected in a fair and justified manner, the CAAA has retained legal counsel on some cases.

In addition, based on the experience in dealing with complaints, the CAAA has taken a more proactive approach by offering continuing education opportunities to members. When members integrate such knowledge into their practice, the chances of being the subject of a complaint will likely be reduced.

To further enhance transparency, protection of the public interest and efficiency, the CAAA has planned to develop policies regarding publishing hearing decisions and adding an alternative complaint resolution approach for addressing complaints.

IX. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial policies have been strictly followed, and financial prudence exercised. The CAAA continued to retain a professional accounting firm for bookkeeping, and the CAAA office has followed very detailed procedures to keep all financial records.

In 2019, the CAAA amended its honorarium policy which allows more flexibility for members to be compensated for their work demanded by the CAAA. In response to the advice from 2018 financial audit, a policy was approved regarding management of reserved fund.

Overall, the CAAA continued to fulfill all statutory obligations while maintaining a sound financial position. An audited 2019 Financial Statements will be presented at the 2020 Annual General Meeting and be posted on the CAAA website for review. A copy of 2019 Financial Statements is enclosed.

X. OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Supervision Guide**

In accordance with the *Health Disciplines Act*, restricted registration may be granted, with the consent of the applicant, by Registration Committee. Restricted registration is intended to allow opportunities for applicants to practice under supervision, in order to maintain or improve their competency and skills before they meet all requirements for independent practice.

To protect the public, Registration Committee developed a Supervision Policy. In 2019, a Supervision Guide was developed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the applicant and the supervisor, as well as to provide tools for supervisors to evaluate restricted registrants.

- **Public Education Presentations**

Public awareness of acupuncture is one of the identified challenges faced by the profession of acupuncturists. To better serve the public, especially those areas where healthcare may be underprovided, the Member Services Committee has developed a public education presentation as well as relevant guidelines which members may use for presentations in their communities. It is expected to increase public awareness of acupuncture, and for the public to receive truthful and direct information about acupuncture and make informed decision.

- **New Member Welcome Package**

Most members of the acupuncturist profession are self-employed. Very often new members feel under-supported how to start their career in the profession. Member Services Committee developed a New Member Welcome Package which provides useful information to new members.

- **Collaboration with other Canadian counterparts**

The CAAA is a founding member of the Canadian Alliance of Regulatory Bodies for acupuncturists and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners (CARB). In 2019, the CAAA has collaborated with other CARB members in the development of the Pan-Canadian Examinations, as well as revising the Entry-level Occupational Competency Profile.

With the assistance of an assessment corporation, Pan-Canadian Examinations will be offered as a computer-based test from October 2020, and will be offered twice a year (April and October) from 2021, which will reduce the wait time of candidates and facilitate their entry to practice.

XI. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the CAAA has achieved significant progress in 2019, thanks to the guidance of council, commitment of committee members, support of members, services of office staff, as well as the assistance of all stakeholders. No doubt it has also experienced some unique challenges. For example, in addition to administration of the current Health Disciplines Act and the associated Acupuncture Regulation, the CAAA has been working on the proposed regulation under the Health Professions Act; based on identified deficiencies and student concerns, the CAAA has been working to establish Minimum Standards for Professional Acupuncture Education. These are the two fundamental issues faced by the profession for many years. Other issues, such as the use of doctor title and scope of practice, are related to the fundamental issues and will be addressed with the transition to the Health Professions Act.

People are from different background and may have different interests. It is normal that people have different opinion. In addition to learning how to deal with different opinion, the CAAA has followed and will continue to follow an unwavering principle in each endeavor of the CAAA: the public interest shall be the priority and the development of the profession shall serve the public interest. The CAAA will make united efforts to engage as many members as possible in moving the profession forward. With improved governance and improved competency of membership, the acupuncturist profession will make further contribution to the health and wellness of Albertans.