

## Whom Does Our National Councillor Represent?

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Along with 35<sup>1</sup> other members of the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association (MSHA), I also belong to CSHA. Each of these 36 CSHA members pay dues to CSHA and many of us have also contributed time to the activities of the association. However, when we as CSHA members nominate candidates and later vote to elect our National Councillor from Manitoba, there are about 150 other MSHA members who are also eligible to nominate candidates and later cast a vote. These MSHA member voters do not pay dues to CSHA but can nominate and elect the Councillor who decides how the money from CSHA members' dues will be spent.

According to the Bylaws of CSHA, the National Council is the policy-making body of the association. Its duties also include approving the budget and membership requirements. Officially the National Councillor from Manitoba does not represent me and all the other CSHA members in Manitoba alone but the provincial association as well. (The bylaws state "Represent the Association members from their provinces and their respective provincial association at the National Council").

This combined representation is an unusual mixture of two kinds of organizational structure. A national organization could be a group of individual members who are organized on a geographic or other basis for representation, or it could be a group of organizations such as provincial associations who band together and are represented as a group. But each of our ten National Councillors is elected as one individual to serve several constituencies who not only are different but differentially proportioned and who as a group or as individuals may have different views.

Thus the Councillor from Alberta represents the 271 members of the Speech and Hearing Association of Alberta. Of these 155 are also members of CSHA (a CSHA member has only one vote for Councillor even though he/she may hold membership in both organizations). The 16 CSHA members in Alberta who do not belong to SHAA also have one vote. Thus the Councillor from Alberta must find a balance among the interest and welfare of not only two separate organizations, provincial and national, but the members of each alone and a substantial number who are members of both.

It sounds good that the Councillor represents both CSHA members and the provincial association but the bylaws do not apportion the relative responsibilities. What takes priority when the interests of the members of CSHA or of CSHA itself are different from the interests of the provincial association?

Five members of the National Council — the Executive — are elected by CSHA members alone but the majority of the Council — ten members — are elected by the members of the provincial association as well as by CSHA members.

In Manitoba all professionals working in the province must hold a licence to practise and belongs to MSHA. Thus all CSHA members are also MSHA members. This is not the case for other provinces. There are approximately 100 CSHA members living and working in Canada who do not belong to their respective provincial associations. There are also *over one thousand* members of provincial associations who do not belong to CSHA (See Table I).

In Manitoba, and eight of nine other provinces, there are more members of the provincial associations than there are CSHA members. In five provinces, the CSHA members are outnumbered and could be outvoted by the members of the provincial association in the election for National Councillor. It is theoretically possible for a group of non-CSHA members in these five provincial associations to join together, arrange for one of them to join CSHA to be eligible to stand for Council, nominate that person, and subsequently outvote CSHA members. Such a group could send to Council a representative with an agenda possibly antithetical to the views of CSHA members and possibly in conflict with the long range interests of CSHA. And the CSHA members' dues would pay the expenses of that representative to the meeting!

Even if the above scenario, although theoretically possible under the Bylaws, does not happen, there remain significant questions about the situation.

1. Non-CSHA members do not receive publications and may not be informed about issues facing the association.
2. In nine provincial associations the number of members in the provincial association exceeds the number of CSHA members.

3. In one-half of the provincial associations the dues are \$25 or less. A \$25 fee entitles one to the same vote for Councillor and representative as CSHA's \$85 fee.

4. On a variety of professional issues that are decided by Council, the views of the provincial association may well be different from those of CSHA members. Such issues as a unified code of ethics, a national directory, national non-statutory certification, publications, and conventions sites are all examples of issues where views could be in conflict.

5. CSHA members could, and indeed are, held responsible for financial commitments made by Councillors who also represent a group (i.e.: provincial members) who have no financial responsibility for such commitments.

I strongly believe that all professionals should belong to both their national and provincial associations and take an active role. But the reality is that many do not. And from this reality two major issues emerge that must be addressed:

1. Is it reasonable to suppose that one individual as Councillor, no matter how dedicated and informed, can fairly represent the interests of two separate organizations and three different groups of individuals (provincial members, CSHA members, and those who are members of both)? What happens when the interests and views conflict?

2. Is it fair and equitable that the professional who chooses to join CSHA and contribute time and money, has the sole right to elect his/her Councillor who decides policy and allocation of members's dues, or should those hundreds of professionals who choose not to join CSHA have a free vote and free representation with no financial nor professional responsibility?

<sup>1</sup>The information in the text and table is based on two sources. Information on the number of CSHA members in each province and their membership in provincial associations is from the CSHA 1984 directory. Information on total membership in provincial associations and dues is from a survey reported in *Human Communication Canada*, December 1983, and collected as of June 1983. Readers should note that there is a time differential of about six months between the two data sources.

<sup>2</sup> There are about a dozen CSHA members who belong to more than one provincial association which would result in some small but unknown duplication in provincial membership totals.

<sup>3</sup> Student members cannot vote so were not included in CSHA figures.

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Table I

Province	Total Provincial Association Membership <sup>2</sup>	CSHA members in Province <sup>3</sup>	CSHA members who did not report provincial membership	% of Provincial members who are CSHA members
Alberta	271	169	16	57%
British Columbia	265	145	24	46%
Manitoba	184	36	0	20%
New Brunswick	35	17	4	37%
Newfoundland	21	14	4	61%
Nova Scotia	39	50	9	100%
Ontario	562	181	28	27%
P.E.I.	9	8	1	78%
Quebec	400	64	9	14%
Saskatchewan	61	46	5	67%
Total	1847	730	96	34%