

## Spring cleaning

**E**ven though the weather hasn't quite caught up, it really is springtime. At this time of year I like to go through my files and cupboards and do a little dusting and tidying to get ready for the summer ahead.

As I prepare to wrap up my term as president, I thought I might share with you some small bits of my experiences and observations over the last year.

### Doc on the road

This year I have traveled to a total of 30 communities to reach out and engage with members. I've covered more road than I can even imagine. It has been fantastic meeting with so many of you around the province. While you spoke to me about issues with a regional focus, the fact is—whether we're rural or urban, family physician or specialist, male or female—we share so many of the same concerns and objectives. Doctors tell me they just want to be able to do the best they can for their patients. I was really inspired to see so many of you engaged in innovative projects and partnerships at the community level, all designed to better treat patients and make the best use of health care dollars. My traveling is almost done, and I will be sharing with you a report that summarizes these discussions. Our incoming president, Dr William Cunningham, has committed to continuing to connect with members face to face in communities around the province, with the goal of listening to what you have to say, and ensuring that the BCMA is responsive to your needs.

### Doc and Media 101

Since becoming president I've done many media interviews on important issues. I've learned a lot during this time—strategies like taking a deep breath before interviews, focusing on

my key points, and avoiding repeating negative questions. Ensuring that the public hears doctors' opinions on major policy issues is a very important focus for the BCMA president, as he or she is the voice of the organization. It has been my privilege to speak to the public on your behalf. I must share with you my personal pinnacle of success: I was asked to do an interview with Global News to comment on the morning sickness of Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge. My family of royalists was ever so proud!

### Urban doc goes rural

Having been a doctor in Burnaby for most of my professional life, I was pleased to get out and meet so many of the rural docs who make such a positive difference in our communities every day. The challenges of rural practice are huge, but so are the rewards. I also enjoyed connecting with rural docs at the Rural Physicians of Canada conference held recently in Victoria. As my colleague Dr Granger Avery told the *National Post* a few weeks ago, "The life of a rural physician requires rational risk-takers... not cowboys, but not nervous nellies!" That's so true. The BCMA has done some good work to help deal with phy-

sician shortages in our rural and remote communities, but there is still a lot more to be done. I know the BCMA will continue to move forward on important initiatives to support our rural docs. As well, with BC's physician shortage problem, we need to continue striving to provide residency positions here at home for our Canadian students studying medicine abroad.

### A message for new docs

One of the most inspiring things I get to do as president is connecting with our young doctors, in particular our medical students. When I visited first-year students last September, one of them said to me, "Dr Ross, you probably don't remember, but you delivered me! My mom has been your patient for over 20 years." Well, I did remember, and was thrilled to see a circle close. As I end my practice, someone whom I delivered is getting ready to embark on his medical career, his whole life ahead of him. To all the medical students out there, keep rising above the challenges, because the rewards of practicing medicine make it all worthwhile.

—Shelley Ross, MD  
BCMA President

