

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Inaugural thoughts from your new AMA president

I want to thank you Paul, on behalf of the profession, for all of your work this past year as president of the AMA. I know that you anticipated being busy; I think that the reality of the past year was more than anyone could have prepared for.

On top of your work with the AMA, you continued to work tirelessly in the ICU – caring for Albertans in their time of need. You made yourself available, at short notice, for meetings with the staff, with the Negotiations Committee, with the GoA, and really ... anyone who needed you. You kept a cool head, looking at all sides, and helped temper emotional responses when needed. I can't think of anyone who could have guided the profession as well as you did! I am so happy I will have you there as we move through this next year, for your wisdom and experience is invaluable.

On behalf of all of us, I'd also like to thank Marianne Boucher, Paul's wife, for lending us your husband this past year! As I am sure you are all aware, a role like this is one that requires the support and investment of our partners to be successful. Marianne, in a year of COVID restrictions and changes – you made it possible for Paul to focus on the AMA and our profession. You looked after the home front and were there as a sounding board when needed – and for quiet times as well. Home is our safe place, where we go to remember all that is truly important in life, and to recharge so we can continue on. Thank you!

The past year as your president elect has just flown by. I am grateful for the leadership that Dr. Paul Boucher has provided, the mentorship of Dr. Chris Molnar, and the AMA board, committee members and staff. As I take up the baton from Paul and lead us into the year to come, I have thought long and hard about the challenges facing our profession. The saying "for every cloud, there is a silver lining" is one that I have often found to be true. It is hard to embrace change when the status quo is comfortable. I don't think anyone would describe our current situation as comfortable!

I see this year ahead as one of challenge, but also one of potential, of growing together through adversity, of supporting one another. COVID continues, and the realities of the crisis Albertans are facing won't fade any time soon.

It is time. It is time for us, as a profession, to continue to stand united against the challenges thrown our way by government.

It is time for us to continue to push for an agreement that recognizes the principle of income equity, for all physicians – no matter how they are compensated (FFS, ARP, AMHSP, third party).

It is time for us to push for an agreement that recognizes challenges of meeting a budget that does not make physicians responsible for things we can't control.

It is time for us to continue to advocate for fairness in our treatment by government, to be able to resolve disputes before they become battles.

It is time, time for us to promote equitable health care for all Albertans, no matter where they live or their socio-economic status.

It is time, time for us to focus not only on the current COVID-19 wave and the immense pressure we are under – but also on the impacts to all patients as the cost of deferred care begins to be seen.

It is time, time to recognize that investment in a strong primary care foundation is critical to the success of any changes we make to our health care system. Investment in the Patient's Medical Home and Neighbourhood will pay dividends in reducing costs to the health care system through allowing team-based care for all Albertans, rural and urban.

It is time, time to actively remove barriers to care by pursuing a stronger virtual care schedule to stabilize practices and reach out to those who cannot get care in other ways.

It is time for us to stand up and advocate for our junior colleagues to ensure that their training and future career opportunities in Alberta are fair and meet the needs of Albertans too.

It is time. Time to think outside the box. To look at creative alternatives, to help us meet the challenges head on, to support one another and to make the future a bright one again. It will not be easy, nor will the answers be readily seen. Together, as a profession, we can build new relationships and forge together.

As we move ahead, I am committed to continuing to keeping membership informed. I invite you to reach out with your ideas, concerns, suggestions anytime as this is truly a team sport.

I am honored to be your president and will commit to doing my best for you, for the AMA and for Albertans. Thank you and stay safe.

- Dr. Vesta Michelle Warren

President, Alberta Medical Association, 2021-22