Ian Kamm provided an interesting lecture last night. Always charming, sincere and personable, Ian shared his ongoing personal frustrations with the relationship between RMTs and the regulatory body. In particular, the sensitive areas consent form, late posting of the CMTO’s financials/annual report and the effect of the revised QA program on continuing education providers.

I appreciated Ian’s analysis of painstakingly reviewing the CMTO disciplinary decisions over the past eight years, looking for up and down-trending. “Concurrent relationships” presented clearly as up-trending, as with the rise of inappropriate touch and insurance fraud. Ian reported that, while inappropriate touch is largely committed by male RMTs, 55% of insurance fraud was committed by female RMTs.

Ian warned the attendees – many I suspect his former students – of what appears as indifference by the regulatory body, and in some cases possibly mismanagement. Ian pressed the audience to be more politically active, seeking position on CMTO council, talking with MPPs, even running for nomination, and supporting the RMTAO in their advocacy efforts. Ian clarified repeatedly he was not endorsing the removal of self-regulation, but did offer alternatives to regulation. Ian posed the question “Do RMTs want to be regulated?”

Sutherland-Chan provides a unique opportunity for the RMT community to gather on contentious subjects like these, and I applaud SC for the event. Let’s have more of them! SC can be a real hub of professional discourse.

I think Ian’s talk provides a platform for further discussion. I wish we had more time to consider the CMTO’s position – justifying its existence at a time when self-regulation is being stripped away in other jurisdictions. What would the RMT profession be without a regulatory body to mitigate broader legislative changes? We may not like some of the CMTO policies, but they provide an essential customization that generalized regulation would miss.

This is not simply conjecture…the Ontario government may press forward to scrap the Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) in favour of centralized administration. If the same happened to self-regulation, RMTs would need to deal directly with government.

I think Ian missed an opportunity to reflect on how complicated the CMTO’s job is. Massage has a deep history and multiple origins – from rehabilitation by physiotherapists and nurses during the World Wars to hedonistic and wellness applications in the spa, to human potential/self-actualization interests, athletic massage and workplace wellness/on-demand massage. [https://www.massagetherapycanada.com/…/boom-bust-bane-and-b…](https://www.massagetherapycanada.com/opinion/boom-bust-bane-and-breakthrough-2544?fbclid=IwAR1ckkaRIpVRbuxsUtK57ElHu_X_WNkmPikOm3VD1rzlmI2L1ONtkjK6qhc).

The regulatory body has to consider all these aspects, and values of individual RMTs, while creating policy that is well integrated and doesn’t trigger overly-punitive reactions for non-egregious offences. The CMTO must maintain that massage therapy is a “regulated health profession” …the regulatory body would largely cease to exist in the other sectors mentioned.

After 100 years of regulation in this province, massage therapy is still not recognized by government (via funding in the provincial health plan) and is still subject to the consumption tax, HST. MT must abide by regulations but doesn’t enjoy the credibility or privilege afforded other HCPs.

Ian mentioned “I wish what I do didn’t have the word ‘massage’ in it because of the negative associations”. I suggest trying to rename massage will not loose associations, so it’s our job to reframe how people view massage (corporations and NGO’s work on this all the time).

RMTs may turn from politics, hoping to simply care for people in a quiet, private space. Regulations can seem onerous to that intention. Ian’s question is an excellent catalyst to discussion, “Do RMTs want to be regulated?” It’s time to revisit the profession’s motives.

Thank you, Ian, for initiating a conversation. I hope the SC community will keep it going!

* Donald Quinn Dillon, RMT, class ‘91