CMA Secretary-General resigns

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The Canadian Medical Association’s Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer, William Tholl, has resigned after more than 7 years in the job.

Tholl resigned following discussions with the CMA’s Board of Directors, he said in an interview with CMAJ. “The Board obviously has the obligation to hire or to not. It has nothing to do with Left versus Right or policy differences of that nature. It has everything to do with leadership.”

Barbara Drew, who will serve as the acting chief executive officer while the CMA searches for a permanent replacement, would not comment on the circumstances of Tholl’s departure, citing privacy issues.

Dr. Michael Golbey, chair of the CMA Board, said Tholl was not at the end of his contract, but that “he and the Board mutually agreed that he would depart.”

Tholl is “proud as heck” of the years he spent at CMA and what he and his team accomplished.

“We’ve made CMA one of the most effective, if not the most effective, advocacy voices in Canada for health and healthcare,” he says.

Tholl also lists making health human resources a priority of governments, and establishing a world meeting network concerning physician health and well-being and a public health office, as among his accomplishments. He is also proud of the new governance structure for the CMAJ.

“We’ve stabilized the CMAJ and put it on a new trajectory,” Tholl says.

Tholl presided over the CMA when it dismissed Dr. John Hoey as editor-in-chief of CMAJ, and Anne Marie Todkill as senior deputy editor, sparking the resignations of many of the editorial staff, and attracting global media attention. The controversy prompted the CMA to establish a governance review panel, which recommended a new governance structure to guarantee independence for the Journal and negated the CMA’s right to alter any content (CMAJ 2006;175[4]:339-40).

Tholl plans to volunteer in the area of mental health, and will continue to advance the Canadian Health Leadership Network, he says. He has recently been appointed to the board of the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

Drew, who anticipates it will take 8 or 9 months to find a new chief executive officer, says the Board is committed to the organization’s current strategic plan.

“I’m quite confident that CMA will go on quite well while we search for a new CEO, and under new leadership,” Drew says. — Laura Eggertson, Ottawa, Ont.

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