

Proposed New Membership Structure

Frequently Asked Questions: Addressing Key Concerns

A number of members have shared their concerns about the proposed changes to the membership structure. We thought we would share these with you in case these are on your mind too as you prepare to vote. Before you do, we hope you will also consider our Sonography Canada response to some of these apprehensions.

1. **Why doesn't Sonography Canada just stay the same and offer membership to those who hold Sonography Canada credentials? Because this would not be a true representation of our profession in Canada.**

CONCERN: Some people have on-the-job experience but no credentials or have credentials based on theory alone that do not include a clinical skills assessment (e.g. ARDMS, CCI, DMU, etc.). These changes would dilute/devalue our profession, our credentials, and the reputation of our association.

The reality is that individuals currently employed as sonographers in Canada can vary a great deal in terms of the training they have received, and the job requirements imposed by employers.

For the most part, this new motion simply **reflects changes that have already been made to the membership structure over the past few years:**

- In the early 2000s, many Canadian sonographers with other credentials (largely ARDMS) were granted equivalent Sonography Canada credentials.
- In 2018, upon regulation of the profession in the province of Ontario, sonographers approved by the College of Medical Radiation and Imaging Technologists of Ontario (CMRTO) became eligible to become non-credentialed members of Sonography Canada.

Therefore, our membership has already been expanded to adapt to a profession and healthcare system that is continuously evolving.

While the membership structure is changing, the following things have **NOT CHANGED:**

- Sonography Canada **IS AND WILL REMAIN** the credentialing body and the membership-based national professional association for sonographers in Canada. (Note: We do not have the legal basis to regulate the profession in any part of the country.)
- As a professional association, our goal **IS AND WILL CONTINUE** to be to promote the pursuit of professional excellence by ALL practicing sonographers in Canada, throughout their career.
- As the official credentialing body in Canada, Sonography Canada **WILL CONTINUE** to set the professional practice standards and professional competency profiles for diagnostic medical sonographers in Canada.

Our association's credibility is derived from our representation of **ALL** practicing sonographers. If we only represent those who hold our own association's credentials, we are unable to elevate the competencies and standards of the large number of remaining individuals who are actively working as sonographers in healthcare facilities across the country.

Therefore, we **WILL CONTINUE TO** advocate for:

- Credentials to be an essential employment requirement to practice diagnostic medical sonography in all regions of Canada;
- the maintenance of credentials as a job requirement;
- individuals to obtain sonography education from accredited programs in Canada and then pursue Sonography Canada credentials.

2. Is Sonography Canada seriously considering admitting sonographers without any credentials at all as members of the association? **YES**

CONCERN: Some sonographers have on-the-job experience, but no credentials. Some of these individuals arrive in Canada with experience acquired in other countries. These changes would dilute/devalue our profession, our credentials, and the reputation of our association.

Yes, but this will not mean that these sonographers will receive a credential nor be "registered" with Sonography Canada. It merely gives them the opportunity to access CPD opportunities and PLI (under a separate program than credentialed sonographers at a higher premium).

Please note that this proposal differentiates between MEMBERSHIP and CREDENTIAL i.e a society membership versus a registry. Sonography Canada is hoping to be inclusive of those who are not credentialed so that they may have the opportunity to expand their learning and perhaps make the decision to obtain credentials.

Our goal is now to elevate the practice standards of those practicing sonographers without credentials. Practicing Non-credentialed Members would be welcomed to Sonography Canada under **strict conditions, with limited rights and privileges of membership:**

- They **MUST** meet Sonography Canada requirements for continuing professional development;
- They may purchase our **PLI at a higher premium**;
- They **WILL NOT** have voting privileges;
- They **MAY NOT** serve on committees or stand for election to the Board of Directors;
- Their membership card will clearly indicate that they have "**No Approved Credentials**".

Accepting an individual as a member of Sonography Canada **DOES NOT** mean that they hold credentials or that they will be granted a credential without completing our written exams and Canadian Clinical Skills Assessment. The processes by which an individual earns a Sonography Canada credential **WILL NOT** change.

3. Does this mean that the association will, once again, be implementing a grandparenting period for those with other credentials? NO

CONCERN: Some individuals will be receiving Sonography Canada credentials without having truly earned them.

This proposed membership structure **WILL NOT** change the status of your current credentials. You will continue to hold the credentials you currently have.

Altering our membership model **WILL NOT** alter our credentialing process nor the standards imposed by provincial regulators. The only way to acquire a Sonography Canada credential (CRGS®, CRCS® or CRVS®) will be to complete the relevant exams and Canadian Clinical Skills Assessment (CCSA™).

NO GRANDPARENTING into Sonography Canada credentials will take place for any sonographer as result of this change.

Acceptance as an Active Member of the association **WILL ONLY CONFIRM** that you are a practicing sonographer or educator. **It WILL NOT automatically mean that you hold a Sonography Canada credential.**

- If a member **does not hold** Sonography Canada credentials, they will be encouraged to earn one by completing our rigorous credentialing process — written exams and Canadian Clinical Skills Assessment (CCSA™).
- If a member **does hold** Sonography Canada credential(s), they will be encouraged to maintain them by fulfilling the association's CPD requirements.

4. How will employers and regulators know that MEMBERSHIP with Sonography Canada would no longer mean that a sonographer holds Sonography Canada credentials?

CONCERN: Employers will continue to assume that all Sonography Canada members hold Sonography Canada credentials.

Should members vote in favour of the membership structure changes, a proactive communications campaign with employers will be implemented immediately following the vote.


Secondly, employers may verify if a sonographer holds a Sonography Canada credential by accessing our online member directory accessible from our website or by contacting us directly.

Thirdly, Sonography Canada already follows up with employers to request content updates to their job postings so that any references to Sonography Canada 'membership' as a hiring requirement is replaced with a requirement for Sonography Canada 'credentials'.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the provincial regulator in Ontario (CMRTO) already requires that applicants confirm that they have completed Sonography Canada's entry-to-practice credentialing process (i.e. exams and clinical assessment), not that they are a member of Sonography Canada, before they can be registered. We expect that this will hold true as regulation progresses across the country.


Finally, the Sonography Canada membership card will clearly indicate one of three possible categories of member credential status:

- A. Sample membership card for an Active Member **with Sonography Canada credentials**: The card states the specific credentials held by the member (e.g. **Canadian Credentials**: CRGS®)


	Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada P.O. Box 1220 Kemptville, ON K0G 1J0 www.sonographycanada.ca Tel. 1-888-273-6746 Fax. 1-888-743-2952
Member Name No. 11 <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Active Credentialed Canadian Credentials: CRGS® No Liability Insurance </div>	Member's Signature <hr/> CRGS® = Canadian Registered Generalist Sonographer CRCS® = Canadian Registered Cardiac Sonographer CRVS® = Canadian Registered Vascular Sonographer CRS® = Canadian Registered Sonographer - limited credential <small>® registered trademark of Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada</small>
Expiry: 2020-04-30	

➔ Identification of Sonography Canada credentials

- B. Sample membership card for an Active Member **without Sonography Canada credentials** but with credentials from another approved credentialing body (e.g. ARDMS, CCI, etc.). The card will state **"No Canadian credentials"**.

	Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada P.O. Box 1220 Kemptville, ON K0G 1J0 www.sonographycanada.ca Tel. 1-888-273-6746 Fax. 1-888-743-2952
Member Name No. 11 <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Active No Canadian Credentials With Liability Insurance </div>	Member's Signature <hr/> CRGS® = Canadian Registered Generalist Sonographer CRCS® = Canadian Registered Cardiac Sonographer CRVS® = Canadian Registered Vascular Sonographer CRS® = Canadian Registered Sonographer - limited credential <small>® registered trademark of Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada</small>
Expiry: 2020-04-30	

- C. Sample membership card for a **Practicing Non-credentialed Members**. The card will state **"No approved credentials"**.

	Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada P.O. Box 1220 Kemptville, ON K0G 1J0 www.sonographycanada.ca Tel. 1-888-273-6746 Fax. 1-888-743-2952
Member Name No. 11 <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Member No approved credentials With Liability Insurance </div>	Member's Signature <hr/> CRGS® = Canadian Registered Generalist Sonographer CRCS® = Canadian Registered Cardiac Sonographer CRVS® = Canadian Registered Vascular Sonographer CRS® = Canadian Registered Sonographer - limited credential <small>® registered trademark of Sonography Canada / Échographie Canada</small>
Expiry: 2020-04-30	

5. Will Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) for non-credentialed sonographers be separate from those with credentials? YES

CONCERN: “Professional Non-credentialed” sonographers should not be grouped in the same insurance policy as those with credentials because I do not want our rates to be affected by their claims.

Sonography Canada **DOES NOT** want the quality of our PLI program nor PLI premiums for our Active members to be adversely affected by the inclusion of Practicing Non-credentialed sonographers.

Therefore, there **WILL BE** two separate insurance policies. Coverage will be the same, but those without any credentials **and** are not regulated will be charged a higher premium. Having two distinct policies means that any potential increased risk is contained within its specific member group.

If there are increased claims within the Practicing Non-credentialed group, this **WILL NOT** influence premiums for the Active Member group. Small incremental increases **MAY** be seen due to general inflation, not because of the addition of non-credentialed members.

Sonography Canada has proposed this change to the membership structure because:

- It is mandatory for sonographers to hold PLI in regulated provinces as well as in some unregulated provinces in Canada. As more provinces are regulated, there will be an increased need for sonographers to hold PLI to be eligible to work. We are simply anticipating an impending need.
- Sonography Canada does not realize significant revenue from the sale of PLI. We simply sell it to our members on behalf of the insurer for which we receive a small administration fee. The sheer size of our membership helps to keep the rates very competitive for sonographers.

6. Why is Sonography Canada proposing to include allied health professionals as members? Will they be granted a credential? NO

CONCERN: These are unqualified people doing our work. The quality of point of care ultrasound (POCUS) may be suboptimal compared to the work of qualified sonographers. As a result, it could potentially lead to job losses for qualified sonographers and put patient care at risk.

Allied health professionals joining Sonography Canada **WILL NOT be considered Active Members nor be granted a credential**. Their membership benefits will be limited whereby they **WILL ONLY** be entitled to access our information and education resources. This may benefit their broader practice and ultimately the quality of patient care.

These allied healthcare professionals are governed by their own regulatory bodies and professional practice guidelines regarding the limited use of ultrasound as part of their scope of work.

While many sonographers may not support this development, POCUS has been a reality in Canadian for some medical professionals for about 10 years. and will likely grow in its use.

Allied healthcare professionals who would seek our membership are those who are open to learning and to bettering their skill set. Allowing them to hold a **LIMITED MEMBERSHIP** in Sonography Canada will allow us to influence how they use sonography within their defined scope of practice.

7. **Why should retired members be able to volunteer as members of Sonography Canada committees or the Board of Directors? Their participation is restricted and only possible on certain committees**

CONCERN: Retired sonographers are no longer current in terms of the knowledge, skills and requirements of the profession. Also, these people may be taking a volunteer opportunity from currently practicing members.

The Board of Directors has stipulated that any committee that deals with the credentialing process, professional standards, or governance of the organization (i.e. the Board of Directors) must be made up ENTIRELY of Active Members who hold current Sonography Canada credentials. There are a few committees where this may not be as critical, and which could benefit from the expertise and insight of a retired member.

- Sonography Canada wishes to benefit from the experience and expertise acquired by individuals throughout their career. All members can benefit from this knowledge.
- Retirees often have extra time to devote to committees, with many of them wishing to maintain ties to their profession.
- The composition of ALL committees will ensure that there is an appropriate combination of active versus inactive practitioners.

8. **Are these changes to the membership structure being proposed for financial reasons only? NO**

CONCERN: The association should be prioritizing the best interests of the profession and of sonographers, not the financial viability of the association. We should not sacrifice the quality of our profession for financial reasons only.

The financial viability of the association is just one reason that Sonography Canada is proposing changes to its membership model.

The primary reasons Sonography Canada was established were to be the Canadian voice of medical sonographers and to foster best practices and promote the pursuit of excellence. To be credible as **the voice**, we must represent a broader spectrum of sonographers in the country to be taken seriously.

Great strides have been made to date, largely in the realm of setting competency profiles, practice standards, examinations and credentialing. We are recognized at home and abroad for these achievements.

However, the sonographer world is changing as regulation of the profession is enacted. While we are and will be **the** credentialing body in Canada, it will be mandatory for sonographers to be a member of their regulatory body. Membership with Sonography Canada will increasingly be voluntary.

Given that dedicated sonographer societies will likely disappear as provinces regulate, having a national organization dedicated exclusively to the needs of sonographers will be critical to maintaining a voice for the profession.

Financially, our goal is to offer members the best possible value for their membership. Our recent member survey (December 2018) revealed that sonographers are looking for us to advocate more strongly for their professional needs, to develop more accessible CPD opportunities and to make available a more diverse, relevant suite of member benefits.

The majority of our current benefits and activities – annual conference, standards setting and entry-to-practice examinations, learning library, the Journal and PLI – are included in the membership fee or are delivered strictly on a cost recovery basis. There is very little profit margin to further enhance member services.

An expanded membership base will allow us to put in place the resources needed to further the advancement of the profession (as we have always done) AND to affordably offer value-added services to members within an ever-changing healthcare environment.

9. What are the implications if this motion doesn't pass?

Whether or not our membership structure changes, there will continue to be sonographers practicing in Canada without credentials, with credentials from other credentialing bodies, and/or those who have been approved for a license to practice by a regulator. With this motion, our goal is to raise the standards of all practicing sonographers in Canada by including them as **MEMBERS** of our association. In short, if we can't communicate with these practicing sonographers, we can't influence them, educate them and contribute to improving their knowledge, skills and standards of practice.

Sonography Canada is the only national professional association in Canada specifically devoted to the profession of Diagnostic Medical Sonography. If our association is not representative of all sonographers and is not financially viable, our voice is weakened and there is a risk that it may one day disappear. The interests and needs of sonographers would likely be combined with those of other imaging professionals and perhaps even with other healthcare professionals.

To prevent this from happening, Sonography Canada is trying to modernize the association and to offer greater supports to its members. We will continue to maintain and enhance professional practice standards, to advocate for the value of credentials and to offer professional services to members. In short, a broader member base will help to ensure a stronger voice, longevity for the organization and greater support for sonographers over time.