

# Massage Therapy Survey- Alberta

February 1, 2017

Massage Therapist Association of Alberta  
Remedial Massage Therapists Association  
Natural Health Practitioners of Canada Association

Effective Business Communications

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## Executive Summary

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Massage Therapists across Alberta were invited to participate in a joint survey by the Remedial Massage Therapists Association (RMTA), Massage Therapist Association of Alberta (MTAA), and Natural Health Practitioners of Canada Association (NHPC) in November and December of 2016. The goal was to gain further understanding of the issues surrounding regulation of massage therapy in Alberta.

**Members were asked to:** rank the issues to consider regarding regulation of Massage Therapy; indicate how the Associations can address members' top priorities; indicate what members want the Associations to consider when moving forward with next steps; and, indicate their preference for how often to communicate regarding the progress to regulation.

The responses from each Association are very similar and indicate that Massage Therapists in Alberta are aligned.

### The Findings:

#### 1. Items to consider to consider regarding regulation (ranked in descending order)

- a. No exam for existing practitioners
- b. College fees
- c. Mobility to other jurisdictions (provinces)
- d. Upgrading opportunities
- e. Which schools will be recognized
- f. Board members of College

#### 2. How the Associations can address members' priorities

- a. **No exam for existing practitioners** – Long-standing members want to be “grandfathered” and admitted to the College based on previous education (often taken before the 2200 hour program existed), years of experience, being long-time members of the Association(s), having completed regular upgrading, obtaining their CEE, being approved by insurance companies, and having built successful practices. There is also considerable support to exempt those who have graduated from a 2200 hour program from having to take an exam.
- b. **College fees** – Members want affordable, reasonable fees that are comparable to other Colleges. They are concerned that combined College and Association fees will be cost prohibitive for many practitioners who work part-time and have limited incomes.

- c. **Mobility to other jurisdictions** - Members want to see consistent standards for massage therapy across Canada so they can move freely between provinces with their qualifications recognized and without extra fees or exams.
- d. **Upgrading opportunities** - Continuing education is important to the members; however, training and development opportunities need to be affordable and accessible. Members are interested in quality programs such as online courses, webinars, local workshops/seminars, and they would like content to include complementary modalities.
- e. **Which schools will be recognized** - There is concern regarding the inconsistency in the quality of massage therapy schools in Alberta. Members are looking for higher standards, consistency in pre-requisites, curriculum, and testing, quality of course delivery and instructors, standard hours of education, and recognition from the College.
- f. **Board members of College** - Members want assurance that the board will be competent, qualified, experienced, and represent Massage Therapists. They want to know how they will be selected.

### 3. Things to consider when moving forward with next steps to regulation:

- a. **Transition to regulation** - Consideration should be given to each practitioner's experience, education, knowledge, insurance approval, continuing education credits, CEE status, and modalities practiced. Those with 2200 hours education or equivalent should be transitioned without an exam. Members would like the transition to be as smooth and as easy as possible. There is confusion about how it will be determined who qualifies for the College and who doesn't. Members feel they should be allowed time to upgrade if required and that long-term members who were educated before the 2200 hour programs were introduced must be respected.
- b. **Professionalism/Role of the Registered Massage Therapist (RMT)** - Clarity regarding the role of the RMT as a legitimate, professional, health care provider with defined ethics and credible training. This will require consistent standards regarding education, competency, practice standards, and accountability. Clarify if RMTs will be able to diagnose and order tests. Protect the title RMT and who can use it. Ensure the medical community and the public are aware of the professionalism of RMTs. Ensure there is autonomy to continue to practice complementary modalities.
- c. **Affordability** – Concerns regarding affordability include understanding how fees will be set, will they pay double fees (Association and College), will Association fees decline, will College and Association fees be due at the same time, will costs be so prohibitive that some practitioners will not be able to continue, and will exams be costly? Fees should be in line with other Colleges (i.e. nurses etc.). Suggestions included keeping fees low, offering more value, and offering payment plans. Members have already invested in their careers. They want/need costs to be fair and affordable.
- d. **Education (Schools) / Continuing Education** - Members would like to see uniform standards for school curriculums, pre-requisites, tuition, quality of instructors, length and quality of programs, and exams. They would like to know who will approve accreditation, how the schools will be held accountable, if they will be audited, if there will be part-time and full-time programs considered, and if there will be a list of accredited schools. Regarding continuing education, members would like a range of continuing education and upgrading opportunities that are accessible, affordable, or even free. They are interested in learning about a range of modalities, business and marketing, exam preparation, and

review classes offered through in-person training (with some local access), seminars, webinars, conferences, online programs, reading programs, and weekend courses. They would like adequate notice of offerings so they can plan (time & \$). They would like to see fair guidelines for credit weighting (i.e. a \$200 two week course not having the same credits as a \$20 weekend course).

**4. Frequency of communication regarding progress:**

42% of members would like to be updated when there are new developments. 29% would like to be updated quarterly and 26% would like to be updated monthly. This feedback suggests releasing communications to practitioners when there is new information to share, with no less than a quarterly update.

Members cited the importance of being informed regarding progress, timelines, the role of the College, what to expect, what's required, next steps, and the benefits of regulation, as well as having the opportunity to provide input.

Members would also like to see increased awareness and a boost in perception with both the public and the medical community regarding the regulated practice of Massage Therapy in Alberta.

## Methodology

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The survey was developed through the collaboration of the three associations (RMTA, MTAA, and NHPC).

**Methodology:** The survey was offered to the 6,964 members of the three Associations via paper surveys at information sessions held across the province in November and through an online survey in December. For the online survey, each Association was provided with a unique collector link. This was to allow the segregation of responses by Association in the software. Data from the paper surveys were input into the software, also segregated by Association. Data analysis was completed using the software plus an analysis of the open-ended questions to identify common themes.

**Validity of the Findings:** The results of the Massage Therapy survey provide an accurate representation of the thoughts and opinions of the members at the point in time the survey was completed. The response included 414 paper surveys and 1300 online surveys completed. The total response of 1,714 represents a margin of error of +/- 3% with a confidence level of 99%.

The responses from each Association are very similar and indicate that Massage Therapists in Alberta are aligned.

## Margin of Error and Confidence Levels Made Simple

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*A survey is a valuable assessment tool in which a sample is selected and information from the sample can then be generalized to a larger population. Surveying has been likened to taste-testing soup – a few spoonfuls tell what the whole pot tastes like.*

*How well the sample represents the population is gauged by two important statistics – the survey's margin of error and confidence level. They tell us how well the spoonfuls represent the entire pot. For example, a survey may have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. These terms simply mean that if the survey were conducted 100 times, the data would be within a certain number of percentage points above or below the percentage reported in 95 of the 100 surveys.*

*In other words, Company X surveys customers and finds that 50 percent of the respondents say its customer service is "very good." The confidence level is cited as 95 percent plus or minus 3 percent. This information means that if the survey were conducted 100 times, the percentage who say service is "very good" will range between 47 and 53 percent most (95 percent) of the time.*

*A 95 percent level of confidence means that 5 percent of the surveys will be off the wall with numbers that do not make much sense. Therefore, if 100 surveys are conducted using the same customer service question, five of them will provide results that are somewhat wacky.*

Pamela Hunter  
[www.isixsigma.com](http://www.isixsigma.com)

## Comparison of Survey Responses by Association

### Comparison of Responses by MTAA, RMTA, and NHPC

The responses from each association are very similar and indicate that the things that are important to massage therapists across the province are aligned (although not identical).

**Rank the following items that you want us to consider going forward with regulation of Massage Therapy.**

MTAA	RMTA	NHPC
<p>Ranking of importance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No exam</li> <li>2. Mobility</li> <li>3. College fees</li> <li>4. Schools</li> <li>5. Upgrading opportunities</li> <li>6. Board members</li> </ol>	<p>Ranking of importance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No exam</li> <li>2. Mobility</li> <li>3. Schools</li> <li>4. College Fees</li> <li>5. Upgrading opportunities</li> <li>6. Board members</li> </ol>	<p>Ranking of importance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No exam</li> <li>2. College fees</li> <li>3. Mobility, upgrading opportunities (tied)</li> <li>4. Schools</li> <li>5. Board members</li> </ol>
<p>Top themes in “other” (small response)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standardization of training curriculum and requirements</li> <li>2. Enhanced reputation of MTs, GST exemption, autonomy of practitioners</li> </ol>	<p>Top themes in “other” (small response)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concern about MT college restricting what modalities can be practiced</li> <li>2. Fees &amp; role of association</li> <li>3. Ethics &amp; professionalism, GST</li> </ol>	<p>Top themes in “other”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grandfathering, recognition of long service, CEE, no exam</li> <li>2. Fees and costs a concern</li> <li>3. Continuing education and insurance issues/coverage</li> </ol>

## How can we address your top priorities?

MTAA	RMTA	NHPC
<p>Themes based on frequency of mentions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consistency of standards across regions</b> – members want to be able to move freely between provinces across Canada, with their qualifications recognized and without extra fees or exams. They would like standards to be consistent from province- to-province, or to have national standards.</li> <li><b>Fees</b> - Members want fair, affordable, reasonable fees. They are concerned about having double fees (association and college). They want value for the fees. Suggested a payment plan (monthly/quarterly).</li> <li><b>Quality of Schools</b> - Members want uniform standards for curriculum, instructors, hours of training, and competencies. They would like clear recognition of approved schools, to have the AB schools consistent with other provinces, and perhaps a national exam.</li> <li><b>Continuing Education/Upgrading</b> – Members want affordable, local, diverse, quality training and development</li> </ol>	<p>Themes based on frequency of mentions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fees</b> - Members want fair competitive, affordable (low) fees. They are concerned about two sets of fees being cost prohibitive, about the number of part-time workers with low incomes who will struggle , and with facing additional fees and expenses they have in order to run their practice. <b>Consistency of standards across regions</b> – Members want recognition of their qualifications so they can relocate in other provinces without difficulty. They would like to see AB standards that align with other regulated provinces, that are federally recognized, and perhaps a national board. They are also concerned that insurance is portable.</li> <li><b>No exam for existing members</b> – Would like years of experience, education, and being insurance approved taken into consideration. There is considerable support for those who have 2200 hours not having to write an exam.</li> <li><b>Quality of schools</b> – Members are looking for higher standards, consistency in curriculum and testing, quality of course</li> </ol>	<p>Themes based on frequency of mentions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fees</b> - Members want affordable, reasonable fees that are comparable to other colleges. They are concerned that combined college and association fees will be too expensive and they suggested graduated fees payment plans, staggering fees so they are not due at the same time, and lowering association fees to reflect some functions moving to the college. Many practitioners work part time and have limited incomes.</li> <li><b>Grandfathering</b> – Existing members want to be recognized and admitted to the college based on previous education, years of experience, being long-time members in good standing, having built successful practices, and doing regular upgrading.</li> <li><b>No exam for existing members</b> – Members feel they should be recognized for existing education, experience, obtaining their CEE, being insurance approved, and having built successful, long-term practices. They feel the college should recognize a combination of education and experience in the transition.</li> <li><b>Consistency of standards across regions/the country</b> – Members would like the ability to move from province-to-province without exams or other issues. They suggested that the AB</li> </ol>

<p>programs. They are interested in more modalities and would appreciate more notice (for planning &amp; budgeting) and payment plans.</p> <p>5. <b>No exam for existing members</b> – those who have 2200 hours, have written an exam, or who have equivalencies in terms of experience, education, and who are insurance approved should not have to write an exam. (However, some MTAA members would like to see an exam either going forward or even for current members to ensure competencies and respect for the designation of RMT.)</p> <p>6. <b>Board members</b> – MTAA Members want to ensure that Board members are competent, qualified, experienced, and transparent and that they represent the members’ interests. They would like to know who they will be and how they will be selected – i.e. an election?</p>	<p>delivery and instructors, standard hours of education, and recognition from the college.</p> <p>4. <b>Grandfathering existing members</b> - Members want to be recognized and admitted to the college based on education, years of experience, doing regular upgrading, and /or having graduated from a 2200 hour program.</p> <p>5. <b>Continuing education/Upgrading</b> – Members wanted to maintain their competency and ensure they are up-to-date. They would like more opportunities that are affordable, accessible, and local (workshops/seminars).</p>	<p>college should align with other colleges or perhaps there should be one national college with national standards.</p> <p>5. <b>Continuing Education/Upgrading</b> – Members feel their continuing education is important and they would like more opportunities that are affordable, accessible, and local. They are also interested in online courses, webinars, group discounts, new modalities, and the ability to take courses through other health organizations that would be recognized.</p> <p>6. <b>Quality of schools</b> – There is a feeling that there is currently a great deal of variance in the quality of schools. Members would like to see higher standards for curriculum and instructors. They would also like to see consistency in standards and program pre-requisites.</p>
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## What things do you want us to consider as we move forward to the next step towards regulation of Massage Therapy?

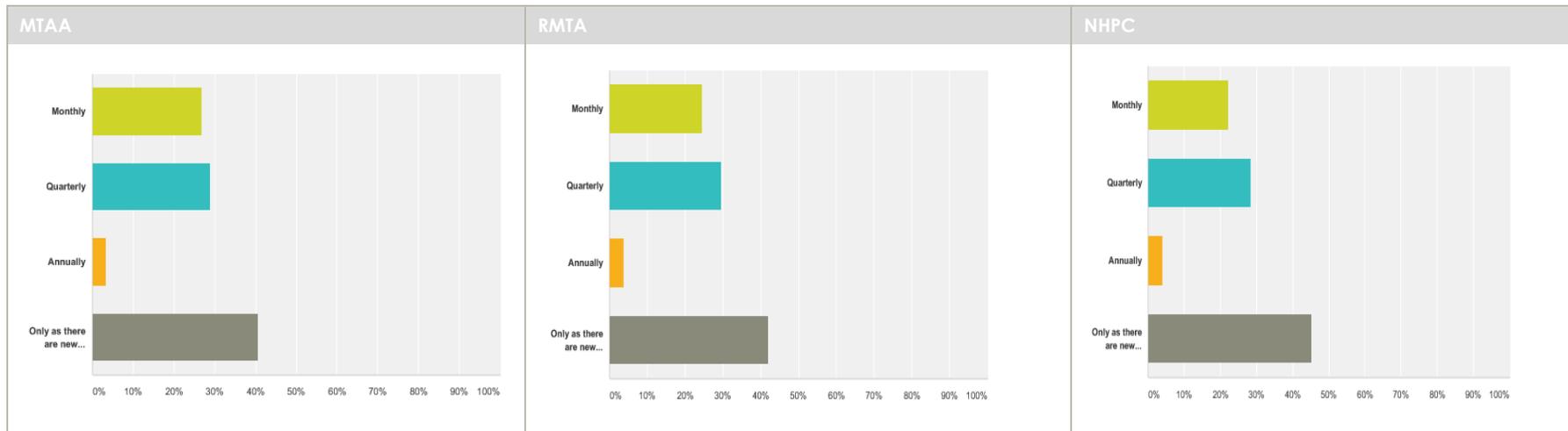
For all three associations there were a range of responses. Based on the frequency of responses, the top three concerns are summarized below followed by a list of significant themes.

MTAA	RMTA	NHPC
<p>Top three things to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Education/Schools</b> – Standardize massage therapy education. Clarity around the accreditation process and accountability of the schools. Ensure standard curriculum, hours of training, pre-requisites, exams, perhaps consider a degree program. Ensure curriculum is compatible with other regulated provinces.</li> <li><b>Association</b> – Ensure continued collaboration of the associations or look at having one combined association to provide a stronger voice, and economy of scale for members regarding insurance, education, health plans, benefits etc.</li> <li><b>Professionalism/Role of RMT</b> – Higher standards. Clarity around who can use the title “Registered Massage Therapist”. Clarify the role, and if RMTs will be able to diagnose and order tests. Ensure the public is aware of the professionalism of RMTs.</li> </ol>	<p>Top three things to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Professionalism/Role of RMT</b> – Clarity within the profession, the medical community, and the public regarding the role of the RMT as a legitimate, professional, health care provider with defined ethics and credible training. Higher standards regarding education, competency, practice standards, and accountability. Protect the title RMT and who can use it. Weed out those not qualified. Ensure there is autonomy to continue to practice complementary modalities.</li> <li><b>Affordability</b> – Fees/dues must be affordable and reasonable and provide value. They should be in line with other colleges (i.e. nurses etc.). Members also want affordable, accessible continuing education/training. Members have already invested considerable funds to be able to practice and are worried about costs being prohibitive with regulation.</li> <li><b>Consistent Standards/Recognition</b></li> </ol>	<p>Top three things to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Transition to College</b> - The biggest issue is grandfathering of existing members with no exam required. Many feel that consideration should be given to the practitioner’s experience, education, knowledge, insurance approval, continuing education credits, CEE status, and modalities practiced. Some feel that just those with 2200 hours education or equivalent should be transitioned without an exam. Members would like transition to be as smooth and as easy as possible. There is confusion about how it will be determined who qualifies for the college and who doesn’t. Members feel they should be allowed time to upgrade if required and that long-term members educated before the 2200 hour programs must be respected. The phrase “<i>no member left behind</i>” was used many times.</li> <li><b>Affordability</b> – Concerns regarding affordability included understanding how fees will be set, will they pay double fees, will association fees decline, will college and association fees be due at the</li> </ol>

	<p><b>across the country</b> – The ability for Massage Therapists to move across provinces is important to the members. They would like to see consistent standards and requirements all across Canada so they can move without restriction or costly exams. Questions were raised regarding a national college or national regulations and standards.</p>	<p>same time, will costs be so prohibitive that some practitioners will not be able to continue (especially part time/low income MTs), and will exams be costly? Suggestions included keeping fees as low as possible, offering more value, offering discounts (for volunteer work, pre-payment, or long-term members) and payment plans. Members have already invested in their careers. They want/need costs to be fair and affordable.</p> <p>3. <b>Education (schools) and Continuing Education</b> – Members would like to see uniform standards applied to school curriculums, pre-requisites, tuition, quality of instructors, length and quality of programs, and exams. They would like to know who will approve accreditation, how the schools will be held accountable, if they will be audited, if there will be part-time and full-time programs considered, and if there will be a list of accredited schools.</p> <p>Regarding continuing education, members would like a range of continuing education and upgrading opportunities that are accessible, affordable (or even free). They are interested in learning about a range of modalities, business and marketing, exam preparation, and review classes offered through in-person training (with some local access), seminars, webinars, conferences, online programs, reading programs, and weekend courses. They would like more notice of offerings (bring back email notice) so they can plan (time &amp;</p>
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<p>Significant themes (in order)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education/schools</li> <li>2. Association (Collaboration/consolidation)</li> <li>3. Professionalism/Role of RMT</li> <li>4. Continuing Education/Communication with members &amp; public (tied)</li> <li>5. Affordable fees /Standardization across regions (tied)</li> <li>6. Hours required to maintain RMT status</li> <li>7. Grandfathering</li> </ol>	<p>Significant themes (in order)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professionalism/Role of RMT</li> <li>2. Affordability</li> <li>3. Standardization across regions</li> <li>4. Grandfathering</li> <li>5. Education/schools</li> <li>6. Continuing Education</li> <li>7. Communications with members &amp; public</li> </ol>	<p>\$. They would like to see fair guidelines for credits (i.e. a \$200 two week course not having the same credits as a \$20 weekend course).</p> <p>Significant themes (in order)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transition (including grandfathering)</li> <li>2. Affordability</li> <li>3. Education (schools) and Continuing Education (tied)</li> <li>4. Professionalism/Role of RMT</li> <li>5. Standardization across regions</li> <li>6. Communication with members &amp; public</li> <li>7. Association (Collaboration/consolidation)</li> </ol>
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## Communication - how often do you want updates regarding regulation of Massage Therapy?



There is strong consistency between the associations regarding frequency of communications. The feedback suggests releasing communications when there is new information to share, with no less than a quarterly update. Members from all three associations cited the importance of communication to keep them informed regarding progress, timelines, the role of the college, what to expect, what's required, next steps, the benefits of regulation, and to have the opportunity to provide input. They would also like increased awareness and exposure and a boost in perception with both the public and the medical community regarding the regulated practice of Massage Therapy in Alberta.

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Effective Business Communications

# The Survey

## Regulation of Massage Therapy in Alberta

### Introduction

Over the last two years, the coalition of the theNatural Health Practitioners of Canada, (NHPC), the Massage Therapist Association of Alberta (MTAA), and the Remedial Massage Therapists Association (RMTA) has make significant progress on regulation of Massage Therapy in Alberta.

In July 2016, an updated formal Application for Regulation was delivered by the three associations to the Alberta Government, Department of Health. The application addresses standards of competence, risk, how the profession is distinct, how regulation impacts a practitioners mobility, how the proposed college will carry its powers and duties under the Health Protection Act, and the cost of the college. We are waiting for the government to complete their first review of the application.

In November 2016, NHPC, MTAA, and RMTA collectively reached out to members on the topic of regulation. Information meetings were held in Red Deer, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and Edmonton. A paper survey was provided to members at these sessions. At this time, over 300 paper surveys have been completed and collected.

We believe it is very important for every member of our organizations to have an opportunity to provide feedback as we continue to move towards regulation.

If you have not yet completed a survey, please complete this [brief electronic survey](#). If you already filled out the paper survey DO NOT complete this survey.

If you have any questions please contact your association.

**NOTE:** All responses are confidential and will be compiled in a summary report. No individual responses will be shared. Findings from the survey may be referenced in discussions with the Alberta government; however, they will be anonymous and presented in the context of the overall feedback from Massage Therapists in Alberta.

## Regulation of Massage Therapy in Alberta

### Survey Questions

1. Rank the following items that you want us to consider going forward with regulation of Massage Therapy (1- most important 7- least important)

<input type="checkbox"/>	College fees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Board members of college
<input type="checkbox"/>	No exam
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobility to other jurisdictions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrading opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Which schools will be recognized
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

2. If you ranked "other" in your top three, please indicate what "other" is.

3. How can we address your top priorities as you ranked them above?

4. What things do you want us to consider as we move forward to the next step towards regulation of Massage Therapy?

5. Communication - how often do you want updates regarding regulation of Massage Therapy?

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually
- Only as there are new developments

## Regulation of Massage Therapy in Alberta

## Conclusion

### **Thank you for completing the survey.**

The results of this survey will be provided to the NHPC, the MTAA, and RMTA before the end of December. Watch for information from your association regarding the results and next steps in the new year.