



History of Denturists & the Rise of Denturism in Ontario

Clinic raids, incarcerated denturists, fighting for independence!

The DAO remembers the dedication, courage and personal sacrifice of a small group that enabled the denturist profession and the public to be the real benefactors of their efforts.

1970: Denturist Society of Ontario is founded

- An initial meeting was held in spring of 1970 with the purpose of attempting to change legislation allowing the licensing of Denturists to practice denturism.
- Ben Sweet and Clarence Phipps provide information session on the benefits of becoming a Denturist and a working group is established to develop a draft brief. Gordon Smith from the Western provinces is brought in as a legislative advisor in Denturist struggles.
- The Denturist Society of Ontario is founded (DSO) with elected officers: Ben Sweet, President; Art Hamm, VP; Egil Chramer, Treasurer; Brian Monk, Secretary.
- Accomplishments of the DSO in its first year:
 - √ Committees set up to determine skill level and capabilities, and peer review to aid with protecting against dentistry's opposition with our ability to provide dentures directly to the public
 - √ New denture clinics can open under scrutiny of an inspection committee and includes office, waiting room, washroom, clinic facilities, operatory and lab equipment
 - √ **Membership fee for the DSO is \$100/month!**

1971: Denturism is illegal dentistry

Raids on denture clinics are conducted by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) seeking out denturists practicing illegal dentistry; however, a Judge's minimal fine (\$100) and dismissal of other charges, plus an enthusiastic public response, encourages new denture clinics to open across Ontario

1972: Bill 246 - Dentists supervise Denturists

- **DSO incorporates as a not-for-profit corporation**
- More clinics are raided and **DSO President Ben Sweet gains the distinction of being the only denturist in Canada to be incarcerated for repairing a partial denture!**
- Mass public hearings are held to hear the testimony of satisfied denturist patients
- Several Denturist Acts are brought before the legislature only to be amended & withdrawn, and ultimately the Minister of Health (MOH) introduces Bill 246 which places all denturists under the direct supervision of dentists.
- Bill 246 requires that upon passing a qualifying exam, denturists must close their own practices and seek employment under a dentist.
- MOH threatens DSO members with **\$2000 fines and/or six months in jail if denturists are caught practicing denturism unsupervised** by a dentist but the DSO holds firm

1973: Bill 70 – Unsupervised Full Dentures

- New MOH introduces Bill 70 which:
 - √ **Permits a denturist to work unsupervised on complete dentures, but to fabricate partial dentures under supervision of a dentist**
 - √ Changes the professional designation from Denturist to Denture Therapist

1974: Royal Assent for Bill 70

- The Denture Therapist Act (Bill 70) reaches royal assent and remains a flawed & patchwork piece of legislature endured for the next 19 years
- Qualifying exams to practice Denturism are held

1982: The DSO becomes the DAO

The Denturist Society of Ontario (DSO) and the Ontario Association of Denture Therapists (OADT) merge and become the Denturist Association of Ontario (DAO)

1985: Denturist survey is conducted

The Governing Board of Denture Therapists completes a survey in 1985 that shows that 17% of practitioners had not taken any continuing education courses; 20% of practitioners had no malpractice insurance and 36% of practicing denturists were age 50 or older

1991: Denturism Act passes third reading

- The Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) and health professions specific acts, including the Denturism Act, pass first reading in the Ontario legislature
- In August 1991 **DAO President Ken Battell presents the DAO's submission to the Standing Committee on Social Development in support of Bill 50, the Denturism Act, a strong and cogent presentation in support of our current scope of practice.**
- Subsequently Bill 50 passes third reading in the legislature

1994: Major Victory – Denturism Act Passes!

The RHPA and Denturism Act are proclaimed and come into effect, changing the title from Denture Therapist to Denturist and Denturist's scope of practice expands to include unsupervised partial dentures

Unity is strength ... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved