From the President

Mathematics educators face a series of unique and difficult challenges. Our clients and the public at large are questioning the quality of education being offered to students. Excellence is a word that is heard frequently when outcomes of education are being discussed. However, in our pursuit of excellence we must be careful not to leave a large group of our students behind.

This problem is further complicated by the fact that our society is changing at an increasingly rapid pace in ways we find hard to predict. Children now being born will not graduate until the 21st century. What will the world be like at that time? Will it be much like it is now or totally different? What mathematics skills will students need? What social problems will the teacher have to deal with?

Another major problem we are now facing is the increasing scarcity of resources. At the moment we are in an economic downturn that has caused everyone, educators included, to reassess their priorities and look for more efficient ways to meet these priorities. It is conceivable that this trend will not be a short-term aberration; therefore, we will have to become even more efficient as renewable resources decline.

In order for the Mathematics Council to help you cope with these problems within your classroom, it needs your assistance. We need to have a dialogue among mathematics educators of Alberta concerning the issues affecting mathematics education.

What do you think should be important in mathematics education? What attitudes, knowledge, and skills do students need to acquire in order to live meaningful, productive, and happy lives? What mathematics do students need to know to function in society? How will we ensure that students achieve an appropriate level of competence in numeracy? Some questions that are perhaps even more difficult than these are: How will we define competence in numeracy? What emphasis should there be on problem-solving skills? What role should technology play in mathematics education? For instance, should we teach students how to factor polynomials, or should we simply teach students how to use a graphing program or spread sheet to find roots? Should all students take the same mathematics courses through secondary school, or should instruction be differentiated? If we differentiate, then at what grade level? Has increased accountability been beneficial to teachers or students?

Make your view known. Write to the editor of *delta-K*, Gordon Nicol; write to the current issues chairperson, Louise Frame; write to me; or write to any other Council members. We want to know how the Council can help you.

Ron Cammaert, MCATA President