

60 Minutes with Minister Virk – ‘ASTTBC’s Minister’



Minister of Advanced Education, Amrik Virk (left), met with ASTTBC's Brian Carr (centre) and President Dave Rutherford (right). Ministry staff in the background joined by video conference. Missing is Executive Director John Leech who took the photo.

Minister of Advanced Education, [Amrik Virk](#) (MLA for Surrey-Tynehead), is the Minister Responsible for the ASTT Act and also the statutes governing Professional Engineers and Geoscientists and Architects. Amrik Virk is seen by ASTTBC leaders as 'ASTTBC's Minister'. Because of ASTTBC's broad mandate there are many Cabinet Ministers with whom ASTTBC naturally links. ASTTBC also maintains connections with Critics for the Official Opposition.

'Better late than never' really applies to this posting. ASTTBC met with Amrik Virk, Minister of Advanced Education, in August 2013 however technology, our Executive Director's busy schedule and even a little procrastination got in the way of getting this up on the web. Apologies. Technology also played a key role as Ministry staff was stuck on Vancouver Island due to fog and so video conferencing technology was put to effective use.

"We had an extraordinary hour with Minister Virk," enthused ASTTBC's elected President, Dave Rutherford, AScT, BCLS, CLS. "From technology education and careers to the challenges we face securing professional recognition and Qualified Professional (QP) status, the conversation was light, engaging, and free-flowing. We had a long list of topics, most of them viewed as 'high priority'. On the legislative front ASTTBC talked with the Minister about changes to the ASTT Act and implementation of PTech in BC." In addition to President Dave, ASTTBC's representatives included Public Representative on Council, Dr Brian Carr, and Executive Director, John Leech.

The topics and a few notes on each:

1. ASTT Act

- * 25 years old and in need of updating
- * Technical Specialists are not defined as 'members'
- * Various levels 'member' status for Technical Specialists

2. Skills Utilization

- * PTech Implementation in BC
- * 1 Act - 2 Association or other acceptable model
- * Qualified Professional
- * House Inspection licensing - Minister Coleman as responsibility to improve the Regulation
- * Electrical Work Practitioner - proposal to recognize ASTBC members to do a small sliver of electrical work. ASTTBC and BC Safety Authority are nearing completion of program
- * Building Official Licensing - ASTTBC ask that ASTTBC registration be appropriately considered / recognized
- * Building Code - introduce Letters of Assurance for Part 9 buildings
- * WorkSafe BC Regulations - seriously restrict ASTTBC members. Little progress in securing QP recognition

3. Architects Act

- * The most restrictive in Canada
- * Unchanged in over 90 years
- * The statute needs to recognize ASTTBC designers

4. Human Resources - Sustainable Supply

- * BC Programming needs attention; no growth in 10 years
- * Ten year plan requested
- * Internationally Trained Technology Professionals - ASTTBC has introduced many initiatives in support of ITTPs
- * BC Training Tax Credit - should be opened to allow employers to seek funding for Technology Professionals

5. Science & Technology Culture and Awareness

- * BC Government encouraged to lead effort to enhance S&T culture
- * Need a plan to enhance S&T
- * Awareness of technology education & careers needs serious attention

The 60 minutes with Minister Virk went by quickly given the 'healthy' list of topics. Minister Virk promised to not only stay on top of matters of interest to ASTTBC, he offered to help address and remove a few items from the growing list of issues warranting attention.