

## **Minister Coleman Discusses Electrical Work, House Inspection, PTech and more with ASTTBC**



Minister Rich Coleman (centre) is flanked by ASTTBC President Dave Rutherford (left) and Executive Director John Leech. ASTTBC presented Rich with an eagle feather by Salish carver Len McKay.

Minister of Natural Gas Development, Minister Responsible for Housing and Deputy Premier, [Rich Coleman](#), met with ASTTBC President Dave Rutherford and Executive Director John Leech to talk about a number of areas of interest to the Minister and to ASTTBC. Rich is MLA for Langley-Aldergrove.

Electrical Work Practitioner Program - The Minister wanted to know about ASTTBC's proposed EWP program, given some of the expressions of concern raised by a number of parties. ASTTBC briefed Minister Coleman on the status of the new ASTTBC certification program leading to an ASTTBC Certificate and recognition by the BC Safety Authority in a very narrow slice of 'electrical work'. The Minister reviewed some of the concerns that have been brought to the attention of Government by the IBEW, Electrical Contractors Association of BC and Electrical Articulation Committee. ASTTBC advised the Minister that safety and professional qualifications and accountability are ASTTBC's top priorities and certainly the primary interest of the BC Safety Authority. ASTTBC indicated that misinformation on the education and training required of ASTTBC applicants to the program has seriously skewed the conversation. "This program will bring added value by recognizing and enabling within the formal regulatory environment ASTTBC members actually doing this minor area of electrical work," said ASTTBC Executive Director, John Leech. ASTTBC President Dave Rutherford stressed, "We assured the Minister that ASTTBC's 55 years as a professional regulator can be confidently relied upon to deliver a high quality program with full professional accountability."

House Inspection Licensing - the Minister has been asked by Premier Clark to determine and implement a new home inspector accreditation, "to ensure consumers buying a home can be assured that their inspector is qualified and trained to help them purchase the largest investment in their lives." During our conversation Minister Coleman outlined at a high level the process for review of the current program leading to a more effective framework. Licensed by Consumer Protection BC (CPBC) since 2009, inspectors must first be certified by one of FOUR different associations, one of which is ASTTBC. John Leech stated following the meeting with Minister Coleman, "In 2010 ASTTBC tabled with CPBC and the BC Government a brief which outlined the key issues of four different standards for certification, practice, professional accountability and association capacity to deliver independent professional regulation." ASTTBC is confident that this review will lead to a much more effective system in which consumers CAN rely upon the standards of their professional house inspector.

Professional Technologist (PTech) - ASTTBC is interested in seeing PTech developed in BC and is 'talking it up' with members of Government, notably Ministry staff and Cabinet Ministers. ASTTBC outlined for Minister Coleman the status of PTech in Alberta (in law for 4 years), the Licensed Engineering Technologist which is now law in Ontario but not yet put into practice, and PTech in Newfoundland and New Brunswick where the two provincial associations adopted or allowed PTech instead of AScT or CET. The Minister expressed interest in the ASTTBC proposal and promised to speak with Minister Amrik Virk (Minister of Advanced Education and Minister Responsible for the ASTT Act).

Letters of Assurance for Part 9 Buildings - ASTTBC has for several years quietly advocated for Letters of Assurance for Part 9 buildings. "The Letters should help streamline the process, save money and generally make the plan approval process much more effective," said ASTTBC's John Leech. "During the Modernization initiative we proposed adding Letters for Part 9 buildings, noting that this would help bring professional reliance to all building systems." The Letters would need to be signed off by a Qualified Person such as a PEng, Architect or ASTTBC member. ASTTBC acknowledges that some builders or designers may still wish to go through the usual plan review process and this could still be allowed. Leech suggested that where a Qualified Professional signs off on a design / plan the submission would move quickly through the approvals process at local government.

Architects Act - this BC legislation is "the most restrictive Architects Act in Canada", claims ASTTBC's Executive Director. ASTTBC has been asking Government for several decades now to remove the restrictions and allow ASTTBC members to practice to their full potential. ASTTBC will continue to seek Government support to open the legislation and remove the restrictive barriers to ASTTBC members' practice. In the current Act one must be a registered Architect to assume responsibility for a building exceeding 470 square metres gross area. ASTTBC has pointed out that in many provinces someone other than an Architect can design a building within Part 9 which, for three storeys, means 600 square meters x 3 = 1800 square metres gross area. "Quite the difference between the restrictions in the BC Architects Act and Part 9 of the Building Code," concludes Leech.

Building Official Licensing - another topic of interest to ASTTBC is the Government review in 2012 of Building Officials and the proposal to require licensing of these practitioners. While a survey of stakeholders indicated general support for licensing, a number of key issues arose, including that small local government would likely face challenges hiring a licensed Official and that ASTTBC members, PEngs and Architects practicing as an Official would need to get licensed. This was further clarified although will likely be a topic for further discussion should this initiative go ahead at some point in the future. ASTTBC has been advised by BOABC that the proposal to license Building Officials is NOT on the table for consideration anytime soon. ASTTBC will continue to build linkages with BOABC

with an eye on how the two organizations might more effectively work together given the overlap of membership.

Modernization II - ASTTBC was a strong supporter of the Modernization process, led in the early to mid 2000's by now Assistant Deputy Minister Jeff Vasey. During the meeting with Rich Coleman ASTTBC congratulated Jeff, who also attended this meeting, and the Minister on past developments and encouraged the Minister to continue to support the roll-out of the key elements of the original Modernization initiative. Dubbed by ASTTBC as 'Modernization II', the Association is hopeful that the Ministry will keep working on some age-old issues that, when considered and resolved, should lead to a more effective building regulatory system.