

Building Regulatory System

White Papers : Licensing Building Officials & Modern Building Regulatory System

* *ASTTBC Member Feedback Sought*

* *ASTTBC Early Response*

The Office of Housing and Construction Standards is asking for your feedback on white papers dealing with the building regulatory system and the licensing of building officials. Based on previous consultations and recommendations, they have developed a set of proposals that work together to support provincial leadership in a modern, effective building regulatory system.

ASTTBC members are invited to visit the Government website at <http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/mod/index.htm>, where you will find a survey that asks for your feedback on the proposals. **The website also hosts the two white papers and an electronic version of a presentation on the proposals.**

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact the Building Policy folk at Building.Safety@gov.bc.ca, or at 250-387-3133.

We encourage all ASTTBC members to take time to submit your comments. We stress the need to engage in order that your / our voice is heard. OTHERS are getting a LOT of attention and ASTTBC and your credentials are being overlooked in the current white papers!

As you look at the documentation you may be interested in knowing that many ASTTBC members have been actively involved with the Governments 'Modernization' initiatives over the years. ASTTBC has taken a leadership role in advancing changes to the current Building regulatory System in order to enhance effectiveness and consistency and to recognize the roles and responsibilities of ALL professionals, including ASTTBC members. Given our involvement and noting the significant role of ASTTBC members and ASTTBC as a self-governing professional association, it is disappointing that ASTTBC members and ASTTBC were given little consideration.

"I commend the BC Government and specifically Housing and Construction Standards for their work in addressing long-standing issues in the built environment. There has been modest progress to date and with a concerted and sustained effort by Government and all other stakeholders we will get to ALL matters requiring attention," comments ASTTBC's Executive Director, John Leech. *"I am concerned, though, that the current white papers make little to no reference to ASTTBC and the technology professionals registered with ASTTBC. It is not reflective of ASTTBC's contribution over the years nor the significant role played by ASTTBC members!"* Asked as to ASTTBC's approach, Leech said, *"ASTTBC will work with the current proposals, advancing suggestions which will more appropriately and respectfully take into account ASTTBC's members and their competencies as qualified professionals. ASTTBC will propose other changes to help modernize the system."*

ASTTBC's Executive Director, John Leech, advises that ASTTBC is considering the following:

1. The notion of mandatory certification and registration, ie 'licensing', requires careful consideration. While supportive of mandatory registration where it serves the public interest, especially health and safety, such restrictive practice measures must include and take into consideration ALL qualified professionals, including ASTTBC-registered professionals.
2. Many ASTTBC members serve as building officials. They may or may not be registered with BOABC. Many others are registered with BOTH associations. How do we ensure ASTTBC members' technical and professional qualifications are fully considered? ASTTBC members are recognized as 'Qualified Professionals' in other government legislation. Why not within the Building Regulatory System?
3. ASTTBC members must be included along with Professional Engineers and Architects as not requiring BOABC certification where they can demonstrate code competency.
4. Code-competency is an issue and has been for years if not decades. 'The System' needs to consider an appropriate mechanism to ensure code competency – for ALL stakeholders. A new model might require all practitioners to achieve the BOABC *Building Code Qualified (BCQ)* program. In the past ASTTBC has suggested a collaborative approach between BOABC and ASTTBC. Maybe it is time to engage all stakeholders in proving code competency?
5. BC / Canada faces a serious skills shortage. Everything must be done to fully enable practitioners. The changes being made should consider this issue and in the process make sure that ASTTBC members' competencies are fully considered and appropriately utilized. The white papers do not address this issue.
6. ASTTBC members in management positions should be exempt further certification requirements, including BOABC. The same should apply for other practitioners.
7. The minimum qualifications for registration as a building official must be carefully considered. A Foundational competencies in the building science are needed in addition to proving code competency. A minimum of the qualifications required for Certified Technician (CTech) with ASTTBC should be required for mandatory licensing of a building official. ASTTBC is NOT suggesting that all building officials should first be a CTech, although the idea may have merit.
8. The disconnect between the practice rights in the Building Code and the more restrictive limitations in the Architects Act needs to be addressed. The Architects Act restricts practice to 470 square meters gross area whereas the Building Code allows others to design up to 600 meter footprint. It is time to bring this archaic restriction into modern times and allow other competent people to design within the current limits in the BC Building Code. This is the norm in other parts of Canada. Given the age of this restriction, the competencies of ASTTBC's technology professionals and the need to utilize BC's skills to their full potential, should BC continue to support such restrictive practice?
9. ASTTBC has proposed that, given the sophistication in building design and construction, Letters of Assurance should be introduced for SOME Part 9 buildings. Can such an approach prove more effective? Save time and money for industry and regulatory bodies? ASTTBC believes it should be considered.
10. While not proposed in the two white papers, it might be time to again consider the concept of 'aligning' BOABC and ASTTBC. Over the years ASTTBC and BOABC have talked about a 'merger' of sorts. Is it time to re-ignite this discussion?