

ASTTBC Talks Electrical Work With Ministers Bond & Virk and MLAs Sullivan and Ralston



MLA Bruce Ralston (left), John Leech and MLA Sam Sullivan chatted about ASTTBC's Report 'A Strategic Direction for Technology Education and Skills in British Columbia'. During the conversation Bruce raised questions regarding ASTTBC's work with BCSA to recognize ASTTBC members to carry out a very narrow sliver of 'electrical work'. Leech assured Ralston that safety would be assured and professional certification and accountability would be enhanced.

ASTTBC's Executive Director, John Leech was in Victoria a week ago to talk with Liberal MLA Sam Sullivan about technology education and careers and other topics of interest to ASTTBC. During their conversation, veteran NDP MLA for Surrey-Whalley (where ASTTBC has its headquarters) Bruce Ralston, dropped in to talk with Sam. After a brief exchange Bruce noted that he had been approached with some concerns about ASTTBC's Electrical Work Practitioner program (EWP) in which qualified electrical, electronics and biomedical technologists and technicians will be able to apply to ASTTBC for a Certificate that, under BCSA authority, recognizes their work in a very narrow area of 'electrical work'. ASTTBC has been working diligently with the BCSA for over two years on the details of the program, scheduled for launch this fall. The BCSA is, with this initiative, recognizing ASTTBC 'training' and ASTTBC members' qualifications to carry out a very narrow and limited scope of electrical work.

Bruce Ralston stated that he had been advised that ASTTBC will issue the Certificate to members "with only 200 hours" of training. Leech provided MLAs Ralston and Sullivan with correct information as to the qualifications needed to secure the ASTTBC Certificate. "It was clear that Bruce was working with incorrect information and so it was a great opportunity to set the record straight," said ASTTBC's John Leech. "I advised Sam and Bruce

that this program will protect safety; assess and qualify ASTTBC members; have no impact on a TQ electrician or the Red Seal program and provide professional accountability measures that will further assure ongoing competence. Leech noted that ASTTBC members will be required to abide by ASTTBC's Code of Ethics, report their Continuing Professional Development and have their CPD audited. Further measures such as practice reviews / audits and re-certification are being discussed as the final touches are put on the program and Policy.

The EWP program also came up in ASTTBC's meeting with Ministers Shirley Bond (Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training) and Amrik Virk (Advanced Education and Minister Responsible for the ASTT Act). ASTTBC President Dave Rutherford, TECC Chair Sid Siddiqui and John Leech met with the Ministers in Victoria on July 25. During that meeting Minister Bond noted that the issue of the EWP and concerns about public safety was raised by NDP MLA Doug Routley (Nanaimo-North Cowichan) during a recent Legislative Committee session. "I informed Ministers Bond and Virk that such concerns are ill-founded and appear to be driven by a lack of understanding by those raising the concerns. Leech noted he has not talked with MLA Routley but immediately following the meeting with Bond and Virk called and asked to meet Doug. He was not available that day and Leech indicated he would follow up.

"ASTTBC has bent over backwards to engage with organizations such as the Electrical Contractors Association of BC to provide information on the qualifications required to secure ASTTBC's Certificate," said John Leech. "ASTTBC met three times with ECABC leaders, once jointly with BCSA. In all meetings ASTTBC assured ECABC that the program will recognize ASTTBC members and bring this narrow scope of work within the regulatory scheme and in this way better assure safety." ASTTBC mapped out the more than 6,500 hours of education, training and experience required of ASTTBC members before they qualify for the Certificate. ASTTBC has also committed to posting and maintaining on ASTTBC's web site all policies and a current list of all members holding a Certificate to ensure public visibility and accountability.

"I am working on the understanding that the program will be launched October 1, 2013," said Leech. "ASTTBC has developed the EWP initiative over several years at a cost of over \$200,000. Our considerable effort to improve safety and enable ASTTBC members has resulted in recognition of the ASTTBC program by BCSA. We are now working over the balance of summer with BCSA to make some final adjustments to the program to even further enhance the ASTTBC process for assessing members. I am confident ASTTBC's considerable investment will result in the launch of a top notch program that serves the public interest and assures safety. "