Technology Professionals: Value to the Public Interest

Annual Report of the Public Representatives 2013
May 23, 2014

Serving as Public Representatives on the Council of the
Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of British Columbia:

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ASTTBC’s Role within the Applied Science Professional Arena

British Columbia’s technologists, technicians and technical specialists achieve professional certification and recognition through ASTTBC. Professional designations granted under the ASTT Act are Applied Science Technologist (AScT) and Certified Technician (CTech).

ASTTBC also certifies qualified individuals as a Technical Specialist in Building Design, Construction Safety, Fire Protection, House and Property Inspection, Onsite Wastewater, Public Works Inspection, Site Improvements Surveys and Steel Detailing.

The ASTT Act provides BC’s technologists, technicians and technical specialists with a Code of Ethics, provides a disciplinary mechanism to deal with breaches of the Code, and protects the titles Applied Science Technologist and Certified Technician and their designations AScT and CTech. The titles for Technical Specialists are outlined in the ASTT Regulations.

Role of Public Representatives on the ASTTBC Council

Public Representatives provide professional regulatory bodies with input on decision-making and ensure a third party oversight over the work of a self-governing body such as ASTTBC.

The following framework outlines general guidelines for the Public Representatives:

- To provide a tangible link between the expectations of the public, society and provincial government, and a professional regulatory body
- To serve as an independent voice
- To contribute opinions and recommendations to Council governance and decision-making related to issues of public interest
- To monitor the governance of the association with a view to ensuring the association serves the public interest
- To focus in areas affecting public health and safety, and a sustainable environment
- To assure a high level of public trust in the association’s professional standards, certification, and the accountability and compliance of the members of the association as they provide quality and value-added services to the public
- To assist with continuous improvement initiatives that promote the legislated ‘Objects’ and Council’s Vision, Mission and Goals
- To refrain from engaging in ASTTBC Council decisions related to business operations

Public Representatives are expected to:

- Represent the interests of the public by raising issues related to decisions being prepared for implementation by Council that have the potential to impact them
- Solicit appropriate stakeholders to assure adequate consultation and guidance to inform opinions and recommendations to Council
- Provide a Public Representatives Report to the BC Government, public and ASTTBC members

Purpose of the 2013 Public Representatives Annual Report

The Annual Report focuses on ASTTBC initiatives in 2013 that serve the public interest by enhancing the professional recognition and practice rights for technologists, technicians and technical specialists registered and regulated through ASTTBC. It is an independent statement and is presented to the ASTTBC Council without need of their approval.

The report will be forwarded to the Minister of Advanced Education, The Hon Amrik Virk, Minister Responsible for the ASTT Act, all Members of the BC Legislative Assembly and the, BC Members of
the Parliament of Canada. It is also available to other interested stakeholders and will be posted to the ASTTBC web site for public access, along with previous Annual Reports.

A condensed version will be presented at the ASTTBC Annual General Meeting on May 23, 2014. A summary will also be included in ASTTBC e-NEWS and ASTTBC Connect.

Council Governance

ASTTBC Council meetings run openly, transparently, professionally and efficiently, with clear policy recommendations and decisions relative to ASTTBC’s legislated mandate and the Council’s Vision, Mission and Goals. At all times, the Public Representatives are afforded the opportunity to fully engage and participate in providing contributions, opinions and recommendations to Council governance and decision-making relative to issues of public interest.

Commendation: ASTTBC Council is to be commended for their respectful and open treatment of Public Representatives.

Public Representative Perspective of Key Advancements and Challenges

This report will focus on select items that are deemed by the Public Representatives to be of key interest to the public.

1. Professional Regulations and Right to Practice

While collaborative dialogue between ASTTBC and APEGBC continued through the early 2013 to look for ways to define practice rights for qualified ASTTBC members within the framework of the engineering and geoscience teams, it recently stalled.

This is disappointing to the Public Representatives and we encourage Councils of both organizations to re-engage and continue dialogue and focus on serving and protecting the public through the engineering and geoscience teams.

The Public Representatives believe in the engineering and geoscience teams, and that appropriate scopes of practice should be developed and granted to qualified ASTTBC members.

Recommendation: The Public Representatives recommend that ASTTBC and APEGBC re-establish dialogue and ensure that the focus is on serving and protecting the public in the engineering and geoscience arenas. Further, we encourage both organizations to focus on the ‘big picture’ and establish a framework in which the public can be better protected through enhanced practice rights for all members of these teams.

2. Technology Professional Canada

In 2010, ASTTBC and sister associations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario officially withdrew from the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT). An alliance model for creation of Technology Professionals Canada (TPC) has been signed between ASTTBC and the provincial associations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario to manage common issues and national interests as professional regulatory bodies. Dialog and planning continues. Manitoba and the Maritime Provinces remain as members of CCTT, and Quebec is not affiliated with either TPC or CCTT.

Progress on formation of a new model of program accreditation through a Technology Accreditation Canada (TAC) initiative is ongoing.

The Public Representatives believe that while professional certification of technologists and technicians is conducted independently by each province’s regulatory associations, it is critical that all graduates across Canada are measured for professional certification using common expectations and standards of practice. To do so effectively, we feel that it is critical that all provinces be ‘on the same page’ and sit at the same table when discussing national issues.
Despite the departure from CCTT, ASTTBC members continue to carry portability of membership as a Certified Technician (CTech) or Applied Science Technologist (AScT) to all provinces in Canada, with eligibility to work in all provinces and in many other countries.

**Recommendation:** The Public Representatives reiterate that ASTTBC Council’s appointed designates work diligently and cooperatively to establish common ground for a single national forum as quickly as feasible.

This should be:

- One that provides the best outcome for public safety, for post-secondary program accreditation and for all present and future certified technicians and technologists in British Columbia and other provinces, and
- One that has all provinces and territories aligned with, and members of, a single national forum

**Recommendation:** The mobility of credentials across Canada and internationally is a fundamental principle. This must be kept and expanded in all discussions and outcomes arising from the creation of a new national forum, and similarly for any revision to the current national accreditation program.

### 3. Technology Accreditation Canada

Accreditation of the technologist and technician programs offered in BC exists to assure ASTTBC, employers, and the public that graduates of such programs meet the educational standard required under the ASTT Act for professional certification and registration as an Applied Science Technologist or Certified Technician.

National accreditation of technology programs is currently administered through the Canadian Technology Accreditation Board (CTAB), a program accreditation branch of CCTT. ASTTBC and the provincial associations from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario no longer believe that CTAB is carrying out this function in a satisfactory manner. As such, an alliance model for formation of Technology Accreditation Canada (TAC) is ongoing between the four provinces. ASTTBC has granted accreditation extension for BC programs coming due for accreditation renewal until TAC is operational, but volunteer support to CTAB is no longer provided.

The four provinces continue to endorse the use the National Technology Benchmarks (NTB) as the minimum standards required for technologist and technician designations, while transitional debate to TAC continues.

ASTTBC has expressed commitment to ensuring that no BC program or student is harmed by the effects of transition to TAC accreditation.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that ASTTBC liaises with public and private BC post-secondary institutions offering ASTTBC-pertinent technician and technologist programs to ensure that public safety and graduate consistency is maintained throughout the transition, using appropriate benchmarks under which program accreditation and professional certification is measured.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that ASTTBC continue addressing the matter of management of any existing or revised measuring benchmarks until it better meets the needs of ASTTBC. It is also recommended that such benchmarks be accessible free of charge to the public and post-secondary institutions.

### 4. Professional Recognition

Program accreditation and professional certification of technologists and technicians is not compulsory in Canada, unless required by specific legislation, professional regulatory or other bodies or employers; unlike the mandatory requirements for professional engineers. ASTTBC is however, the recognized body for:

- The oversight of program accreditation
- Granting the AScT and CTech professional designations
- Developing and improving professional practice for AScTs, CTechs and other members based on the Code of Ethics
- Investigating and disciplining members for breaching the Code of Ethics

Throughout its existence, ASTTBC has also undertaken an active role in promoting the values and rewards of program accreditation and professional certification to post-secondary institutions, potential employers, inter-related associations, future and present technicians, technologists and technical specialists, government officials, and the public.

Similarly it has preached the advantages of careers as technicians and technologists to teachers and counsellors in the K–12 system, government officials and the general public. This latter involvement has included the need of high school students to take the sciences and mathematics that are prerequisites that are program entry requirements that prepare graduates for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers.

ASTTBC has partnered with Science World, awarded scholarships and supported efforts throughout the Province that endorse science and technology.

**Commentation:** ASTTBC is congratulated for:

- Affirming the public trust in the technology professions through the monitoring and administration of measurable qualification and performance benchmarks and code of ethics.
- Supporting technology awareness
- Promoting science and mathematics for students in Grades 11 and 12
- The encouragement of individuals to seek professional certification within ASTTBC
- The encouragement of employers to require membership in ASTTBC when hiring or establishing work projects
- Promoting the values of national accreditation for technology programs

5. **Other Initiatives**

The above initiatives are small representation of ASTTBC’s activity. It would be remiss to ignore the daily efforts of staff to provide quality and benefits to the technology professions, ASTTBC membership and the public.

Of particular note, ASTTBC has been:

- An active participant with government and APEGBC in reviewing the recognition of foreign credentials with the objective of eliminating barriers, while maintaining standards of professional expectations and practice.
- Active in the promotion of technician and technology careers to young aboriginals and women.

**Commentation:** ASTTBC and staff are commended for their diligent and professional efforts in these arenas.

The Annual Report of the Public Representatives 2013 is respectfully submitted by,

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