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Technology Professionals: Value to the Public Interest

Annual Report of the Public Representatives for 2018
as submitted for the ASTTBC AGM on June 13, 2019

Serving as Public Representatives on the Council of the
Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC:

Roslyn Kunin, PhD
Rob Campbell, PEng
James Coble, MA

Role of Public Representatives on the ASTTBC Council

Public Representatives provide professional regulatory bodies with input on decision-making and third party oversight over the work of a self-governing body such as ASTTBC. Public Representatives are, in essence, stewards of public interest, particularly as it relates to safety and protection. Their primary role on the ASTTBC Council is to help maintain and improve public trust in the professional endeavours of ASTTBC as a public organization and in the work and conduct of its Council, CEO, staff and membership.

Appointed by Council, the Public Representatives have full voting rights. As such, the Public Representatives are expected and encouraged to fully engage and participate in all discussions at ASTTBC Council.

Purpose of the Public Representatives Annual Report

The Public Representatives Annual Report is an independent statement, and is prepared and presented without the need for Council or staff approval. The 2018 Report covers the period beginning January 1, 2018 and ending December 31, 2018.

The report is forwarded to the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, the Minister responsible for the *ASTT Act and Regulations*, 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 website for public access along with previous Annual Reports. A condensed version will be presented at the ASTTBC Annual General Meeting on June 13, 2019. A summary will also be included in ASTTBC e-NEWS and ASTTBC CONNECT.

Public Representatives' Perspective of Key Advancements and Challenges

Many of ASTTBC Council's key agenda items of public interest that were identified in the 2017 Public Representatives Report continued to be active on Council's agenda in 2018, and indeed some will continue to be active in 2019. The recommendations offered in the 2017 Public Representatives Report remain valid until these topics have achieved a state of conclusion at Council, so may not be repeated in this report unless deemed necessary.

Governance & Management

ASTTBC CEO

John Leech, former ASTTBC CEO, retired in 2018. He served ASTTBC in the capacity of Executive Director / CEO for 44 years. Under John's leadership, ASTTBC has made great strides. In preparation for his retirement, ASTTBC Council initiated a hiring process for his replacement.

The transition provided ASTTBC with a unique opportunity to consider the future direction of ASTTBC under new leadership. While John was, and will always be, a champion of ASTTBC, the time was right to consider how ASTTBC might build on his many successes.

In April 2018, after extensive due process and consideration ASTTBC identified Theresa McCurry as the preferred candidate. Theresa has since proved to be an astute choice, bringing different yet equally effective skills and knowledge to the CEO role. Her diverse experiences leading other large organizations cannot be understated and have so far greatly benefitted ASTTBC.

***Commendation:** The Public Representatives want to congratulate ASTTBC for the numerous hours spent carefully managing the hiring process. The intentional and thoughtful deliberations leading up to Theresa's appointment have instilled confidence among the Public Representatives that ASTTBC will continue to serve public interest and to keep public safety a high priority.*

Professional Legislation and Regulation

In November 2018, the BC Government passed the *Professional Governance Act*. The *Act* establishes government oversight of a number of professional associations, including ASTTBC, via the creation of the Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance. The intention of the *Act* is to set and enforce consistent governance standards across these professions. To that end, regulations will be developed – with some already proposed for consideration – over the next several years to support the *Act*'s implementation. Government has thus far taken the approach of consulting with the affected associations as regulations are proposed.

While in principle, the Public Representatives support the idea of consistent governance standards, particularly those that build off the already exemplary efforts of ASTTBC to protect public interest and safety, the impact of the regulations on the associations, and indeed on practicing professionals, is not entirely clear.

Of further note, the *Act* itself outlines a process for the amalgamation of two or more professional bodies that it governs. Any request for amalgamation may come from the Office of the Superintendent or from one or more of the covered professional bodies. This would likely have a profound effect on how practicing professionals (e.g. members of ASTTBC) are regulated and by whom. For example, scope of work, rights to practice, and professional development could all be up for reconsideration. An amalgamation is not a foregone conclusion. However, ASTTBC must be prepared to fully understand the implications and prepare accordingly.

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives recommend that the ASTTBC CEO and Council continue to proactively engage with and provide feedback to the BC Government on the development of any regulations as deemed necessary.*

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives recommend that the ASTTBC CEO, Council and staff continue to gather information from all stakeholders on the implications related to, and perspectives on, a request for amalgamation – regardless of origin – and be prepared to provide an evidence-based rationale and subsequent duly considered response to any such request.*

Rights to Practice & Qualified Professional

Rights to Practice

As noted in last year's report, one of ASTTBC's key intentions has been to seek approval for appropriate rights of independent practice. Fortunately, the *Professional Governance Act* includes the legislative framework to grant the right of reserved practice (i.e. right to practice) as prescribed through a yet to be determined regulation. Clearly, recognition for and the practical implementation of rights of independent practice are well within the reach of ASTTBC and its members. However, the Government, as is evident in its recently released intentions paper, has thus far not been prescriptive as to which designations are eligible for rights of independent practice. ASTTBC has a diverse membership (PTech, CTech, TechSpec, etc.) that provides a wide array of professional services. All members make significant contributions to applied science, technology and technical projects across the province regardless of designation.

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives recommend that the ASTTBC CEO and Council continue to proactively engage with and provide feedback to the BC Government on the development of the regulation(s) related to rights of independent practice to ensure membership and public interests are front and centre.*

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives recommend that the ASTTBC CEO, Council and staff develop a framework that clarifies the rationale for which designations will be recommended for inclusion in any*

regulation related to rights of independent practice given the diversity of membership falling within ASTTBC's purview.

Professional Recognition

The Public Representatives are well aware of the quality education and training our members receive in order to practice in British Columbia. Competency benchmarks developed through Technology Accreditations Canada (TAC), of which British Columbia is a member, are important factors for predicting future success. Currently, these benchmarks are common to only four provinces. While we certainly acknowledge the level of competency our members achieve – which in turn has a direct effect on protecting public interest and safety – their practice is geographically limited. The Public Representatives recognize the efforts of ASTTBC President, Trent Reid, in carrying on the work of Past President, Keith Trulson, to engage with Technology Professionals Canada (TPC) and the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT) to consider issues of harmonization, mobility and/or transferability.

We also acknowledge ASTTBC's efforts related to improving professional recognition among students, the public and employers alike. The implementation of the *Professional Governance Act* will likely assist with this endeavour because of the emphasis it places on holding practitioners accountable.

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives reiterate last year's recommendation that ASTTBC continue to consult with TPC and CCTT with a view to reducing barriers to our members' ability to practice nationally, without compromising the standards the public has come to expect and indeed depend upon.*

Member Services

Technical Specialists

The title of Technical Specialist has been a recognized designation for over 20 years. The status of Technical Specialist within the association is a salient issue. As it stands, while they are fee-paying professionals they do not enjoy full membership rights. For example, they do not have the ability to stand for Council. Technical Specialists make up a significant percentage of ASTTBC fee-paying professionals, and the work they do is informed by applied science and engineering technology principles. Like many other members of the association, they too make significant contributions to myriad projects across BC. In the interest of public safety, it makes sense that ASTTBC Council enhance their status within the association, thereby providing greater oversight.

Commendation: *The Public Representatives applaud ASTTBC Council's consideration of the status of Technical Specialists within the Association. This will only further heighten public confidence in the work carried out by every member of an applied science, technology or technical-based team.*

Education and Engagement

As noted in last year's Public Representative report, ASTTBC is consistently active in promoting the advantages to employers and the public at large of professional certification. Marketing strategies emphasize the rewards of working in the applied science, technology, and technical fields as well the value of being a member of ASTTBC. Thus, such promotional work is not only about attracting new members, but it is also about retaining existing members. A growing, active and engaged membership is what will ultimately drive ASTTBC to new heights.

Recommendation: *The Public Representatives recommend that ASTTBC Council and staff continue to promote applied science, technology and technical careers widely and to continue to explore new ways of doing so, as well as to promote the value of becoming and remaining an ASTTBC member for those who are or will be eligible to do so.*

2018 Annual Report of the Public Representatives is respectfully submitted by,

Roslyn Kunin, PhD
Rob Campbell, PEng
James Coble, MA