



Professional Reliance – What’s Going on?

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THE VALUE OF hiring professionals is widely recognized throughout the province, which is why questions raised about the benefits of professional reliance and how it is implemented, as in the case of the *UVic Environmental Law report* and a recent *BC Business article* on environmental assessments, are particularly disconcerting.

The Council takes the public’s concerns about professional reliance seriously. Members of Council and staff were active in engaging Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Mike Morris during his investigation of professional reliance, providing input to an earlier draft of the UVic report, and responding to the BC Business article with a letter to the editor. A key component of professional reliance is holding members accountable for their practice or conduct, and regulators must be seen to be doing so. The College is currently working on a number of initiatives to further assure members and the public we are meeting our obligations as a regulatory body: increasing the transparency of our discipline process, creating a practice review program as another tool to ensure members are competent in their practice, and developing a new online ethics course and exam.

The College Council is looking to further strengthen the College’s ability to protect the public interest by enacting the Technician category, as included in our *Act*, and introducing a new category of membership for those working in the natural resource arena and providing support to decision-makers, who do not currently qualify

for College membership. We have met with Minister Polak, Deputy Minister Wes Shoemaker, Assistant Deputy Ministers Mark Zacharias and Kaaren Lewis, and Director Peter Trotzki to further these initiatives.

Disappointingly, the recent implementation of changes in hiring practices by the Ministry of Forest Lands & Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) devalue professional reliance. The MFLNRO removed the requirement for some managers to hold professional designations, and a new hiring toolkit removed the requirement of professional designation for select positions where right-to-title designation was formerly required (*i.e.*, membership with the College or the BC Institute of Agrologists). Council members and staff have met with Minister Steve Thomson and MLA Mike Morris to discuss this issue.

In sum, the core business of the College continues in spite of members not supporting the dues referendum in August. Nevertheless, we will be re-evaluating our strategic priorities for 2016 to ensure we remain fiscally sound. Consequently, implementation of some activities in our strategic plan will need to be postponed. See pages four and five for an update on Council’s response to the referendum for 2015. Additional information on changes to strategic priorities for 2016 will be provided in a future issue of *College Matters*.

The College wants to hear your thoughts on the recent scrutiny of professional reliance in BC. **cm**

Dr. Vanessa Craig, RPBio