

The View from Two Sides

AS OF MARCH 31, 2016, David Hughes and I sat for the last time in deliberation as Lay Members on the Council of the College of Applied Biology. Neither of us considered, when appointed in 2007, that we would find ourselves still involved nine years later! I think it is fair to say that neither we nor the Council had an idea about how long we would be involved or how gratifying it would be to serve the College as it moved from its infancy to a fully functioning organization.

Serving as a Lay Member for a regulatory body carries several responsibilities imposed by statute, the most important of which requires Lay Members to always act in the public interest. Decisions concerning upholding the standards of practice expected of professionals through well-established entrance requirements, continued high quality of practice, and discipline of members benefits from those outside the profession who would be vigilant for any tendency to stray into member interest over public interest.


When we first arrived, the Council was composed largely of committed members who had worked for many years to bring the College to fruition through the efforts of the (then) Association of Professional Biologists of BC, now known as the Association of Applied Biology (APB). Despite the hard work and persistence of this group, it was a big shift to move from member interest and advocacy for biologists to shape the fledgling organization into the headspace of self-governance, discipline and the public interest!



It is safe to say that David and I had little knowledge about the profession of applied biology. After all, the last biology either of us studied was in high school and 'applied' didn't really clarify anything for us at the outset. However, what we were able to contribute to Council were previous experiences on boards, an interest in supporting self-governance, and a willingness to learn. On the other side, the members of Council hoped, I'm sure, that we'd not ask too many silly questions, turn up regularly, and perhaps have something of value to offer - 'two views'.

It did not take long for us to become fully involved as there were many tasks to do to bring the College and its Council into compliance with the *Act*. We took the view that we could make significant contributions to the establishment of procedures and practices that would benefit the smooth functioning of the College. The rest of Council took the view that even though we would remind them to examine their decisions from the perspective of the public interest, many hands make light work, so we should do our share! And we learned! We learned that we had the privilege of working with committed professionals, proud of their profession and the role applied biology played in our province. We learned about Riparian Areas, bats, elk habitat, stream buffers, newts, and toads. We became personally invested in the financial health of the College, in establishing good communication tools, and in the importance and development of an audit process.

Although we may have started our role with the College as 'outsiders' mandated to keep a keen eye on the public interest, we became much more. We became members, in every sense of the word, of Council and in supporting the College. So, what will the Lay Members who follow us find as they participate in the deliberations of Council and serve on the various committees of the College? A mature organization that has established the brand of the College and grows the regard for the profession in a time when we need professionals who deliver sound scientific advice in our communities.

It has been an honour and privilege to serve these last nine years, and we leave with many wonderful memories and a firm belief that the College of Applied Biology is in good hands. 

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen McDermid
Former Lay Councillor