

## **BETTER TOGETHER: One Regulator is Good for the Public and Professionals**

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We have been observing the disputes in other parts of the country between engineers and technologists. Some have been going on for a long time while others are new. As two regulatory organizations in Manitoba, we are sharing our experience with others. In this article, we offer a solution that is good for both the public and professionals.

A common path began in 1965 when the technologists and technicians of Manitoba incorporated and formed the Manitoba Society of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (MANSCETT). The new organization was invited to share an office with the Association of Professional Engineers of Manitoba (APEM). This began a journey of cooperation and collaboration for the two groups ever since.

### **It's All Engineering**

When considering the two groups, one must accept that engineering is a continuum with room for all practitioners. Both engineers and technologists work within the scope of the practice of engineering. No matter which career path is chosen, both technologist and engineer sit at the same table with a different yet complementary set of skills, useful and effective as part of a team delivering a successful project, product, or technical solution to a complex problem.

### **Disputes**

Disputes have arisen because someone postulated that there is a distinct scope of practice called engineering technology. This is a fallacy because it's all engineering. Each group takes a different educational path and brings a different set of skills to end up working on the same team to achieve a common goal. Applied science, engineering, technology, innovation – call it whatever you want, but it's all within the same scope of practice.

Should both be mandated to hold the same scope? No. Differences in the educational paths prevent equality of scope or practice. Does this make one lesser than the other? No. It's just different. Why call it certified engineering technologist (CET) and professional engineer (P.Eng.) then? Because the public expects certainty in the services provided. Reliable power, water supply, sewage treatment, communications, data security, medical devices, food supply, and many more benefits are provided to communities through a complex system involving engineers and technologists. Legislation is written for the benefit of society. Rules are put in place to protect the public and provide services while preventing injury, death, and environmental and economic losses.

Regulation of engineering practice has occurred in Canada for about 100 years. This is done through the provincial legislatures in the public interest. Is more regulation by more groups

necessary? No. Governments do not want more regulation – they want public safety through efficient and practical regulation. It is both efficient and practical for engineers and technologists to join together in a unified model for the sake of good governance and public safety.

### **Taking Responsibility**

Responsibility for a clearly defined scope of practice must be stated in legislation in order to avoid confusion for the public and professionals. This occurs in *The Engineering & Geoscientific Professions Act of Manitoba* through the licensing of persons to practise either a full scope of engineering (P.Eng.) or a specified scope of engineering (Eng.L.). Both are authorized to practise engineering, authenticate, and take responsibility for their work. One is available to engineers and the other is available to technologists, but both get to practise engineering according to their respective competencies. In Manitoba, both P.Eng. and Eng.L. applicants are checked for education, experience, professional development, and disciplinary history.

### **One Regulator**

A grand solution is being explored in Manitoba. Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba and the Certified Technicians and Technologists Association of Manitoba are considering joining together as one regulator. Rather than fight over vague differences, the two groups are committed to a future of co-existence, cooperation, and collaboration via one organization. We think this can be accomplished by re-writing two pieces of legislation into one, creating *The Engineering, Geoscientific, and Applied Science Technology Professions Act*. The resultant organization would be called Engineers, Geoscientists, Technologists Manitoba.

We think this is a future vision for several reasons. It removes confusion for the public and establishes clarity for everyone – professionals, students, higher education institutions, employers, and governments. When a student, new graduate, or newcomer seeks to affiliate with a professional body, they only need to apply to one regulator.

Member status in one association builds on the common elements and offers something for everyone. Licensing, certification, professional development, upgrading, competency assurance, and a common Code of Ethics are all possible through one organization. One oversight body checking competency, standards, and ethics is a strong unified model.

It simplifies the process for all, bringing clarity for the public and professionals. It defines the various roles (technician, technologist, engineer) for employers. It removes costly duplication and makes it easy to collaborate on professional development and continuing education for every member regardless of status. Each learns from the other in a symbiotic relationship.

### **Bright Future**

Finally, in a world where technical skills and problem-solving are critical for every nation, Canada must compete with other countries for engineers, technologists, technicians, scientists, researchers, and other professionals. Bringing domestic and international professionals together in one unified model is good for each province and for the overall economic well-being of Canada. Fighting over scope of practice is a foolish waste of time and resources. We call upon the engineering and technology regulators in Canada to consider what is happening in Manitoba and adopt a similar model. Let's make a bright future for everyone – the public and professionals.