



ROWP News Bulletin

Practice and Industry Updates for Practitioners

Issue #2

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LETTER FROM THE MANAGER

There has been considerable debate since of the implementation of the SSR and the launch of the ROWP program regarding the number of ROWPs needed to serve British Columbia and whether there is a shortage of ROWPs province-wide or regionally. As in any free market, 'supply and demand' will address this issue over time. Four years have passed since a 'new way of doing business' began – surely the market has become more stable but is there a shortage or not?

This concern was raised by members of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and it now has the attention of the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (MHLS). Just how significant is this problem and is it a province-wide crisis or a localized, regional issue? How are building permit requirements affecting whether an ROWP is used at all? It is undeniable that the more rural areas have relatively fewer ROWPs but can these areas with so few residents spread over such large areas support more?

Over the past several years, the economy has raced along with housing construction and real estate markets reaching levels not seen in many years. Finding practitioners of any type has been a challenge. The economic boom has now receded with ROWPs in some areas reporting minor decreases in work levels since the spring while others report substantial drops as their regions are hit by layoffs in the forest and mining industries. Yet other ROWPs relate that they are just as busy as in previous years, some even more so. Is it a boom or bust for practitioners or something in between?

This is one of the questions asked in the attached survey. Any coordinated effort to address a perceived shortage of ROWPs must first identify where and how large the problems are, the possible causes and whether the issue is region-specific or province-wide.

Another section of the survey deals with an important matter raised by the UBCM, the cost to consumers for systems and related work. Whether it is the type of systems installed in an area or the fees charged by ROWPs to create plans or maintain systems, the issue of costs and pricing needs to be discussed.

There is no doubt that standards are higher since the implementation of the SSR. Septic tanks and pump chambers are larger while soil types more often dictate the use of pressure distribution rather than gravity dispersal, the main-stay in the past. There are regions of the province where traveling several hundred kilometers to see a client is normal, and where weather conditions are anything but ideal. In these situations, supplies are never just twenty minutes away and this tends to be reflected in the cost of doing the work.

Survey responses regarding average costs for different system types and regions will help concerned members of the UBCM, MHLS and ASTTBC understand costing and pricing throughout the province. We tend to hear only negative reports regarding our industry, often through the media. It is time to hear directly from ROWPs.

To the two ROWPs who stated they have no intention of filling out any future surveys, we respect your viewpoint. For the vast majority who do want their voices heard, we are listening and want to pass on your feedback to those who have the most impact on the regulation of this industry. Please send your constructive and honest comments. It is time to set the record straight.

Your Bulletin is not intended to be primarily a survey platform and future issues will have fewer of these. However, significant issues and changes are at hand and surveys are proving to be an excellent tool, the results of which will absolutely affect how this program and even the regulation operate. Your response is a valuable contribution to the future of our industry.

As always, I encourage you all to contact me with your thoughts and concerns.

Ron Hein
Manager, Onsite Wastewater Registration Program
ASTTBC

ONSITE WASTEWATER REGISTRATION PROGRAM WEBSITE UPGRADE

After several months of development effort, changes to the OWRP website are now mostly complete and the site is now up and running at: <http://wastewater.asttbc.org>. You will notice that the site is now split into Consumer and ROWP areas with much more information available for each party.

One significant change is the method for locating ROWPs by both category and now geographic region. The latter was introduced because members of the public were complaining that they could not find an ROWP in a specific town and so concluded there were not enough ROWPs available.

When ASTTBC staff checked the general area, they sometimes found more than a dozen ROWPs working in the area and covering the town in question but this was not apparent through the former search method. The overall method shows ROWPs by region since you informed us that this how you operate.

The change from Health Authority region to geographic region is receiving very good reviews from the public who are finding it easier to use while being able to check each ROWP's listing for specializations and additional services. As ASTTBC reviews the numbers of ROWPs per region, additional splitting of regions may occur. Your comments on which areas should be divided are appreciated.

The key to making this website more helpful to the public is to make sure your listing on the website has the best information possible to accurately describe the work you do or prefer, the areas within any region in which you work, and other specializations that may attract a client. If you have Internet access, follow the directions below to log into the website database and upgrade your business information. If you don't have Internet access, send a note to ASTTBC, attention Karen Taylor, and we will help you get your information posted.

1. Enter the OWRP website URL: <http://owrp.asttbc.org/p/index.php>
2. Click "Member Login" (bottom of page)
3. OWRP Log In: Enter your Membership Number (OW####) and your Date of Birth (yyyy/mm/dd)
4. Click "Login"
5. Enter the applicable marketing information. Please note you may check off more than one region serviced.
6. Click "Update Profile"

Please Note: It is your responsibility to update and maintain the "Contact a ROWP" listing information that is published on the ASTTBC OWRP website. If your information changes, either modify the listing yourself, or if you do not have internet access, contact ASTTBC directly.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS

The information ASTTBC received from the CPD survey included with the first Bulletin provided invaluable insights that will help us develop program strategies for the future. Not only did ASTTBC hear you, we passed the results on to the MHLS, along with the individual comments. Twenty-seven percent of all ROWPs responded to the survey during the busiest time of the year, an excellent return rate, and we thank you for taking the time to respond.

Would Like a ROWP Roles Workshop

Yes	63%
Maybe	1%
No	27%
No Opinion	14%

Numbers of ROWPs Responding by Geographic Area

North West	0	Central Vancouver Island	19
North East - Fort Nelson & Area	1	South Vancouver Island	22
Queen Charlotte Islands	0	Sunshine Coast	5
Kitimat - Stikine	1	Sea to Sky	1
Peace River	4	North Van/Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley	10
Bulkley - Nechako, Fraser - Fort George	7	Fraser Canyon / Thompson Nicola	10
Central Coast	1	Okanagan / Shuswap	22
Cariboo - Chilcotin	5	Columbia Kootenay	19
North Vancouver Island	3	Alberta	1

Percentage of Time Spent Planning Onsite Systems

0 percent	17%	45 percent	5%
1 percent	1%	50 percent	6%
2 percent	1%	60 percent	4%
5 percent	4%	70 percent	2%
10 percent	10%	75 percent	1%
15 percent	1%	80 percent	1%
20 percent	15%	90 percent	2%
25 percent	3%	95 percent	1%
30 percent	13%	99 percent	1%
40 percent	6%	100 percent	5%

Percentage of Time Spent Installing Onsite Systems

0 percent	16%	50 percent	11%
1 percent	2%	55 percent	1%
5 percent	3%	60 percent	6%
10 percent	6%	70 percent	8%
15 percent	2%	75 percent	1%
20 percent	2%	80 percent	12%
25 percent	5%	85 percent	2%
30 percent	4%	90 percent	5%
35 percent	1%	95 percent	2%
40 percent	9%	100 percent	7%
45 percent	2%		

Percentage of Time Spent Maintaining Onsite Systems

0 percent	67%	30 percent	2%
1 percent	1%	35 percent	1%
2 percent	1%	40 percent	1%
5 percent	8%	45 percent	1%
10 percent	14%	50 percent	2%
15 percent	3%	65 percent	2%
20 percent	2%	80 percent	1%
25 percent	1%	100 percent	1%

Percentage of Time Spent Inspecting Onsite Systems

0 percent	85%	25 percent	1%
1 percent	5%	30 percent	1%
5 percent	4%	50 percent	2%
10 percent	4%	90 percent	1%
20 percent	3%	95 percent	1%

Best Form of Course Delivery

Scale of 1 (very interested) to 5 (not interested)

Classroom	1	39%	Distance by Mail	1	23%
	2	18%		2	8%
	3	21%		3	15%
	4	8%		4	18%
	5	13%		5	36%
Field / Practical	1	68%	Distance by Internet	1	31%
	2	15%		2	12%
	3	4%		3	15%
	4	5%		4	11%
	5	8%		5	32%

Would Like a Region-Specific Soils Course

Yes	61%
No	21%
No Opinion	19% (consists mostly of non-Planners)

Computer Use in Your Business

Constantly	48%
Frequently	25%
Occasionally	14%
Rarely	7%
Never	5%

Internet Use in Your Business

Constantly	36%
Frequently	24%
Occasionally	20%
Rarely	11%
Never	8%

Longest Period over which Willing to Take a Course

0 days	1%	6 days	1%
1 day	2%	7 days	14%
2 days	20%	7 plus days	2%
3 days	28%	10 days	1%
4 days	12%	2-3 weeks	1%
5 days	18%		

Level of Interest in a Limited Electrical Endorsement Scale of 1 (very interested) to 5 (not interested)

1	56%
2	8%
3	9%
4	6%
5	20% (consists mostly of non-Installers)

Level of Interest in Courses Contributing Towards a Certificate or Degree

Very Interested	23%
Possibly Interested	33%
Somewhat Interested	15%
Not Interested	21%
	2 responses noted that their age prevented them from being interested. 1 of the 2 said that it was very important for younger people

INSURANCE FOR ROWPS

Mandatory insurance for all ROWPs is a current 'hot' topic. Recent legal actions involving ROWPs and certain matters before the Practice Review Board have raised concerns about how well the public is protected when problems caused by ROWP missteps occur. Costs to correct problems can be high but more troubling for an ROWP is when the client takes the matter to court. Sometimes it can become a simpler Small Claims Court issue, but increasingly these issues are heading to the more formal, and more costly, Provincial Court where attending without full legal counsel is not an option. The Code of Ethics requires that members protect the interests of their clients and this includes protecting them from financial risk related to the provision of work and services.

The MHLS considers the issue of mandatory ROWP insurance to be a priority and as this is an issue of the greatest importance, we strongly recommend that you respond through the attached survey. We are concerned about the financial impact mandatory insurance could have on ROWPs who may only be involved with a few systems per year as opposed to someone involved with 50, 75 or more systems. For this reason, we are exploring the options for creating an emergency fund to cover such cases and whether a portion of each Filing fee could be used to create such a fund. These and other discussions are underway with the MHLS and your thoughts at this point are very much welcome.

BUSINESS TRANSITION

Long-range planning requires us to understand when and from where our members intend to retire so strategies can be developed to reduce or prevent a negative impact on consumers. In discussions with ROWPs currently planning retirement, the choice is between closing down the business, or passing it along, either within the family or outside the family. Either way, the transition of a business takes care and planning.

Buying the name and reputation built up over the years is part of the value behind any business, along with any equipment, the client base, and the connections within a community. Establishing the value of the business is something that requires the services of both an accountant and lawyer and there are businesses that specialize in this type of work. However, setting a value for your business is only a small part of what needs to be determined to create the transition in both ownership and management.

For some ROWPs, this has included setting up a buyer and negotiating the transition steps, including the number of years to achieve a full handover, the amount of money exchanged per month, year or defined transition point, the amount of mentoring provided to assist the new owner becoming sufficiently experienced and registered, introducing the buyer to established clients, and all the other parts of 'showing them the ropes'.

A similar approach is needed if an owner intends to pass the business on to their family, with special attention being required from an accountant to minimize the impact of taxes during the sale of the business and to reduce the financial risk to the family member taking over. Again, seeking legal and accounting advice is essential to making the transition as smooth as possible. Within the survey are questions that will help all of us in this industry to understand this issue.

CHANGES TO THE SEWERAGE SYSTEM REGULATION

Changes were recently made to Section 7.0 of the Sewerage System Regulation by the MHLS through an Order in Council – these changes will provide more flexibility for the Onsite Wastewater Registration Program. The revised Regulation moves the responsibility for accrediting and determining onsite training equivalencies to ASTTBC and requires that the association establish learning outcomes for all parts of the education program. These outcomes will be defined over the coming months. Training will still be provided by the British Columbia OnSite Sewage Association through its Westcoast Onsite Wastewater Training Centre. However, other organizations will now also be able to offer equivalent training if approved by ASTTBC. ASTTBC has no intention of providing training.