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ITPs made a difference in 2004

Working together, BC's internationally trained professionals (ITPs) accomplished a great deal last year. The public is beginning to understand that qualified medical workers remain unemployed, just when more healthcare staff are urgently needed. The provincial and federal governments are learning of the huge potential benefit to Canada that ITPs represent in every industry, and of the costs associated with their underemployment.

And ITPs themselves are finding their collective voice. They are meeting in growing numbers to offer energy, skills and ideas to help remove obstacles to professional work in this country. Local organizations are working together to create provincial and national organizations that will be recognized by government, employers and regulatory agencies.

BCITP Net: the story so far

BCITP Net was formed in 2002, with funding from Canadian Heritage, to support the development of professional associations for ITPs. BCITP Net has helped to establish SITEBC (for engineers), AIMDBC (for physicians and surgeons), and BCITP associations in the Okanagan and Vancouver Island for skilled workers in all fields. As ITPs continue to join and strengthen these organizations, BCITP Net is beginning to set new goals and broaden its activity. In 2005 this will include the establishment of provincial and national ITP roundtables as described in this issue.

Provincial Roundtable now forming

A roundtable is a coalition of associations, meeting to discuss common issues and achieve common aims. One of BCITP Net's initiatives for 2005 is the establishment of a province-wide Roundtable on Access to Professions for ITPs.

This Roundtable can:

- provide a mechanism for ITP organizations to collaborate in promoting access to their professions;
- develop strategies to influence government and regulatory bodies in the area of access to professions;
- represent participating ITP organizations in broader discussions of policy and best practices on access to professions;
- provide leadership in the development of policy recommendations; and
- promote its activities and recommendations in the professional community.

Eighteen ITP associations met in November at the Roundtable's first meeting in Vancouver. They set priorities on common issues and barriers to employment, and struck committees to discuss how to address them as a group of organizations. Meetings will continue throughout 2005 and into the spring of 2006.

The Roundtable will meet again on Thursday, Feb. 3, from 6.30 – 9.30 pm, at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, 5288 Joyce Street, Vancouver (one block from the Joyce Street Skytrain station). Representatives from all interested ITP associations are welcome to attend. For information contact Sandy Ber- man at 604-873-8545.

SITEBC recognized

SITEBC now has formally established itself as a not-for-profit organization and is actively recruiting new members. This association was established to represent internationally trained engineers in their efforts to overcome obstacles to professional employment in BC. Engineers wishing to join SITEBC are invited to visit www.sitebc.ca.

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AIMD BC getting the ears of the media

AIMD BC is working effectively to get its story told, as it saw when local media attention focussed on current and future medical staffing shortages in November and December. Eleven AIMD BC members have now received training to interact with the media, and four have been interviewed in the past two months.

Articles and letters have appeared in the Vancouver Sun and Province newspapers, and CBC Radio covered the issue in news stories and phone-in discussions. The Vancouver Sun ran a two-part feature story during the Christmas week. (To read it, visit the “Resources” page at aimd.bcitp.net.)

In co-operation with several local doctors, AIMD BC co-ordinator Patrick Coady helped to draft a bill to federally fund international medical graduates. The bill will be introduced in the House of Commons by the Honourable John Reynolds. This initiative was covered by the Vancouver Province newspaper.

Three doctors, including one from the Okanagan, represented AIMD BC at November’s Provincial Roundtable. Others are involved in discussions with the BC College of Family Physicians.

Capacity Canada: the ITP network grows

ITP groups in BC and Ontario are now developing a new, national forum for professional associations across Canada. Capacity Canada, a partnership of BCITP Net (www.bcitp.net) and Ontario’s PROMPT (Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades - www.promptinfo.ca), aims to build and connect strong provincial ITP networks to form a unified national voice. Co-ordinators Jane Cullingworth and Patrick Coady are working to identify and contact ITP organizations throughout the country. They completed a survey of Alberta’s ITP associations in November, meeting nine groups and generating great interest in their work. They are now turning their attention to groups in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

To add your organization to the survey, please contact Patrick at bcitpnet@sdiss.org, or phone 604-729-6598.

News of BCITP Associations

Vancouver Island:

The group in Nanaimo is continuing to meet to assist ITPs in the central Vancouver Island area. For information on this group and the work happening in Victoria, please refer to the BCITP Net website at www.bcitp.net.

Okanagan:

The group in the Okanagan has been very active over the last year. Currently the media committee is publicizing the availability of qualified professionals in dozens of fields. The group has also been active in meeting with MLAs in the Okanagan. For more information, please refer to the BCITP Net website at www.bcitp.net

Feds promise funding to integrate IMGs

Just before Christmas the Minister of Health promised in Parliament to provide funds to bring IMGs into the Canadian medical system.

His statement, as follows, appears in Hansard at http://www.parl.gc.ca/38/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/041_2004-12-08/han041_1445-e.htm.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.):

“Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House before, we arrived at an unprecedented health care accord with the provinces and territories, and we will put \$41 billion into health care over the next 10 years.

A significant amount of that money will be used to train our new doctors and nurses, and other health care professionals in this country. It will bring into our health care system all of the doctors and nurses who are here from other countries, who need to be re-skilled and retrained, and will be integrated into our system, so that we can deal with the wait times.

...As I said earlier, a significant amount of that money will be used to retrain, re-skill and integrate international medical graduates into health care work here, so that there are no wait times for Canadians.”

*Do you have news for BCITP Net?
Contact Patrick Coady: bcitpnet@sdiss.org*