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The future of professional regulation: business as usual or a growing proactive role? *Examples from the Ordre des géologues du Québec.*

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Regulation of the geology profession is done in a number of jurisdictions with differing legal frameworks. Nevertheless there is a common thread of progression from burgeoning associations advocating for the interests of their members to the present general model of organizations with varying legal mandates to regulate the profession. The present prevailing model sees organizations tasked with two mandates: first, acting as gate keepers to the practice of the profession with a selection process based on set criteria; second, investigating complaints by the public and handing out sanctions of variable severity. This model is being challenged for a number of reasons and new models are being developed both by the profession and in response to public pressure. Two different responses or trends can be observed: on one hand there is pressure to dismantle the professional bodies in order to encourage free markets; on the other hand, there is pressure for the professional bodies to become more transparent and demonstrate that they are effective in protecting the public.

Under the unique legal framework of Québec's Professional Code, the Ordre des géologues du Québec (OGQ) has undertaken proactive initiatives aimed at ensuring competency of members at admission and in ongoing practice.

With available means, OGQ has developed competency criteria for admission to the profession. These competency criteria are the basis for a new system of guided apprenticeship for graduates of accredited geology programs wishing to become licensed geologists. Under recent regulations [1], a geologist-in-training (GIT) is granted authorization to practice under the supervision of a professional geologist who registers as tutor. The system provides guidance to the GIT and tutor with respect to objectives in terms of competency and personal qualities and calls for regular evaluation of progress by the tutor with regular reporting by the GIT.

In another area, OGQ is expanding a regulated system of professional inspection to provide a greater degree of control on the practice of its members while disciplinary investigations are run at arm's length. Professional inspection involves two processes: general surveillance of the profession and investigation of the competency of selected members. The surveillance program calls for review of the practice of members on a regular basis, whereas a number of members are inspected each year. Surveillance allows for continued improvement of the practice while allowing the detection of inadequate practices outside of any potential complaints.

The presentation will provide an overview of various aspects of the organisation and focus on the guided apprenticeship program.

References:

[1] Regulations governing the profession in Québec can be found at <http://www.ogq.qc.ca/>

