

**ACOTRO**

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY REGULATORY ORGANIZATIONS



**ACORE**

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ORGANISMES  
DE RÉGLEMENTATION EN ERGOTHÉRAPIE

## 2017 Annual Report



Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Across Canada, occupational therapists (OTs) help people to learn and adapt, regain skills, and develop new ones. Each provincial regulator helps to ensure that OT professionals function at a high level, by holding them accountable for safe, effective, and ethical care.

OTs know that success is a partnership. To support positive outcomes, they work closely with their clients, and often collaborate with other health care professionals.

ACOTRO, too, understands the benefits of cooperation as the collaborative organization for all provincial OT regulators. We know that regulation is strengthened throughout the country when we all work in concert.

Regulators deal with common issues and goals. ACOTRO promotes excellence in regulation by sharing best practices, as well as resources that can be tailored to each jurisdiction.

Together, we've made progress on vital projects, like leading the drive for a common competency document for Canada. Creating a single set of competencies across the country for education, regulation, and entry-to-practice examinations will help to ensure superior occupational therapy service delivery.

Other major efforts of ACOTRO have touched on labour opportunities, like rules around mobility to enable OTs to easily move across the country, or the Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (SEAS), a harmonized process for assessing internationally educated occupational therapists (IEOTs) who want to work in Canada. SEAS is ACOTRO's only direct service delivery area. I want to thank the amazing staff who have developed and run this important initiative. We're planning to evaluate components of SEAS to make sure it's working as well as possible.

Beyond our work among regulators, we have a productive relationship with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). This helps us to make progress in areas where our interests align, like exam processes.

In this report, you'll learn about some of our major activities and achievements during 2017. Looking ahead, in 2018 we're embarking on a new three-year strategic plan. We're also focused on our governance model to seek ways to be an even more effective organization.

Along with my dedicated colleagues on the Board—my peers from across the country—I look forward to making continued progress as a national voice for occupational therapy regulators. We invite other stakeholders to call on us, as well, around issues that have a national scope.

Together, we will further our goal of regulatory excellence.

**Elinor Larney**  
*President, ACOTRO*



## WHO WE ARE

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations—or ACOTRO—is the national organization of occupational therapy regulators in Canada. Our goal is to promote consistency and excellence in regulating occupational therapy across Canada.

ACOTRO’s 10 provincial members protect the public by regulating the practice of occupational therapy in their respective provinces. We also provide guidance and information to OTs seeking information on how to register in Canada.

Through ACOTRO, regulators collaborate to promote the best regulatory practices, enhance public accountability, build consistency across the country, and support each other in our efforts to respond to changes in occupational therapy practice and regulation.

We bring leadership to our profession by

- advancing best practices in occupational therapy regulation,
- developing and promoting a national strategy for consistent regulatory practices,
- promoting interprovincial and international mobility among OTs, and
- strengthening national and international networking and information-sharing.

In practical terms, this means that we work together to streamline processes, advocate, and facilitate change in the regulatory environment.

Most recently, ACOTRO has begun administering the assessment process for IEOTs. This process assesses the extent to which an OT’s education obtained internationally is substantially equivalent to education and competencies obtained by OTs educated in Canada.

The ACOTRO Board is appointed by the occupational therapy regulatory organization in each province. Therefore, each Canadian province has one representative on the ACOTRO Board.





## HISTORY

ACOTRO was established in 1989 and incorporated in 2011. The following sections detail our vision, mission, and values.

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## VISION\*

ACOTRO is recognized nationally and internationally as an essential leader in the profession of occupational therapy from a regulatory perspective.

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## MISSION\*

ACOTRO is the collective of all provincial occupational therapy regulators, who have the responsibility to protect the public. ACOTRO advances quality occupational therapy regulation in Canada.

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## VALUES

ACOTRO embraces the following values:

- **Mutual respect:** We recognize all members as equal partners, and we welcome and honour diverse opinions, perspectives, and contributions.
  - **Mentoring and support:** We believe that shared ideas and expertise, reciprocal consultation, and new leader orientation facilitates leadership development and capacity building.
  - **Trust:** We respect confidences and confidentiality. Decisions are made by consensus, and members speak with one voice publicly.
  - **Excellence:** We use best practices and evidence-based decision-making to support effective leadership and continuous improvement.
  - **Collaboration:** We access collective wisdom by working in partnership with each other and with stakeholders. We create positive relationships and accepting environments that facilitate communication and goal achievement.
  - **Commitment:** We dedicate time and energy to fulfill ACOTRO's goals and objectives. When members cannot fulfill promises, we communicate this and support each other.
  - **Accountability:** We are responsible to each other, to the boards and members of our organizations, and to the public for setting and achieving realistic goals and activities, and for functioning in a transparent manner.
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\*ACOTRO revised its vision and mission statements in February 2018, and these will be included in the *2018 Annual Report*.



## GOVERNANCE

All occupational therapy regulatory organizations across Canada belong and contribute to ACOTRO's activities. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors composed of the registrars or ACOTRO representatives from each of our 10 provincial regulators.

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### ACOTRO MEMBERS 2017

**President: Elinor Larney**

*Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario*

**Vice-President: Heather Cutcliffe**

*Registrar, Prince Edward Island College of Occupational Therapists*

**Treasurer: Sharon Eadie**

*Executive Director, College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba*

**Jonathan Belbin**

*Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia*

**Kathy Corbett**

*Registrar & CEO, College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia*

**Kim Doyle**

*Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Therapy Board*

**Maggie Fulford**

*Registrar, Alberta College of Occupational Therapists*

**Sherry Just**

*Executive Director, Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists*

**Catherine Pente**

*Registrar, New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists*

**Louise Tremblay**

*Secrétaire générale, Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec*

There is no regulatory organization in Yukon, Nunavut, or the Northwest Territories. OTs in these regions may be registered by regulatory organizations in other provinces.

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### STAFF

Susan Domanski, SEAS Manager

Ruheena Sangrar, SEAS Credentialing Officer

Suzanne MacGillivray, SEAS Associate



## ACTIVITIES IN 2017

### Governance

ACOTRO, consistent with its strategic goals, completed a review of our bylaws, and amendments were made at the annual general meeting (AGM) in June 2017. These amendments were made to ensure consistency with the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, to improve the election of the Board of Directors, and to provide greater clarity and transparency for selecting member representatives for AGMs. In addition, the bylaws and the signing authority policies were amended to improve operational efficiency. A bylaw frequently asked questions (FAQ) document has been prepared and will be posted to the website once it has been translated into French.

In June 2017, the Board of Directors appointed a Governance Committee to develop a governance philosophy and model. This document has been initiated and work is ongoing. The terms of reference for the Board of Directors have been updated, and the Board approved a code of conduct policy in October 2017. Further work is being completed on developing rules of order and a review of the roles and responsibilities of officers.

### SEAS: Substantial Equivalency Assessment System

SEAS is the first step in the assessment process for all IETs applying to register anywhere in Canada outside of Quebec.<sup>1</sup> SEAS is a program operated by ACOTRO and used by 9 of the 10 occupational therapy regulators to confirm that an applicant in a specific province meets substantial equivalence, and as such, is eligible to apply for registration or licensure in that jurisdiction. SEAS assesses the extent to which an IET's education and competencies are substantially equivalent to those of Canadian-educated OTs. Its components address both qualification recognition and competence verification:

- Academic Credential Assessment (ACA);
- Profession-Specific Credential Assessment (PSCA);
- Competency Assessment (CA);
- Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test (JKAT); and
- Language Readiness Assessment.

While the program was launched in May 2015, 2017 represents only the second full year of operations. The number of IET applicants in 2017 increased, as anticipated, from 2016 and is nearing the forecasts expected for the program. SEAS is funded through applicant fees, partially subsidized by ACOTRO until applicant numbers achieve the cost recovery model expected in this program. Reporting to the ACOTRO Board, the SEAS Oversight Committee is responsible for overseeing the management and operations of the program. See Figure 1 for the SEAS governance and operations structure.

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<sup>1</sup> As a full member of ACOTRO, Quebec's regulatory organization, Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec, has fully endorsed SEAS and participated in its development. However, Quebec employs its own assessment system for the evaluation of IETs registering to practise in that province according to the specific regulations and competencies set out by the Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec. There is no regulation of OTs in the territories.

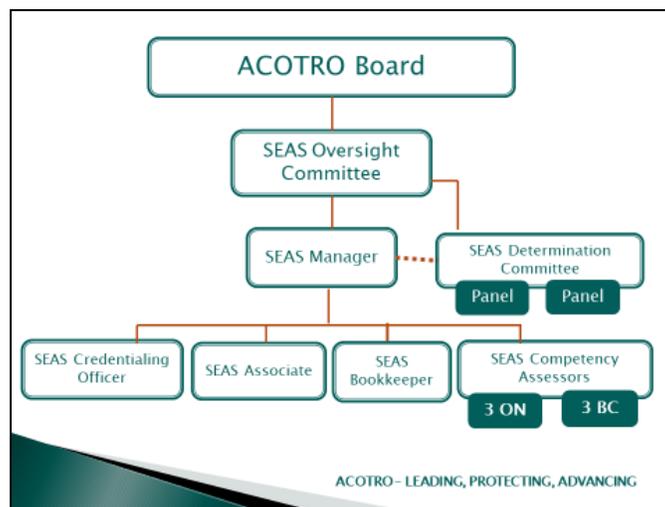
*2017 Highlights of the Program’s Activities*

Monitoring of operations resulted in some staffing changes. An administrative associate hired for two days per week provides the needed support to assist the SEAS Manager with administrative tasks such as coordinating CAs with assessors. A new part-time bookkeeper also joined the SEAS team. Recruitment of up to three new British Columbia assessors was initiated in the fall to address the need to improve timely access to CAs in BC and those provinces served by BC competency assessors. A new member was appointed to the Determination Committee.

Changes to the information system and portal for applicants were implemented, with further refinements to the applicant portal continuing into 2018.

In June 2017, a webinar was held to provide an update on SEAS for the provincial occupational therapy regulators and their registration committees and staff. The webinar also served as a forum for feedback and addressed the typical questions from those regulators receiving IEOT applicants as well as informing those regulators who have not yet had IEOT applicants. The webinar will be an annual activity and assist ACOTRO with its continuous quality improvement activities.

**Figure 1:** SEAS Governance and Operations Structure

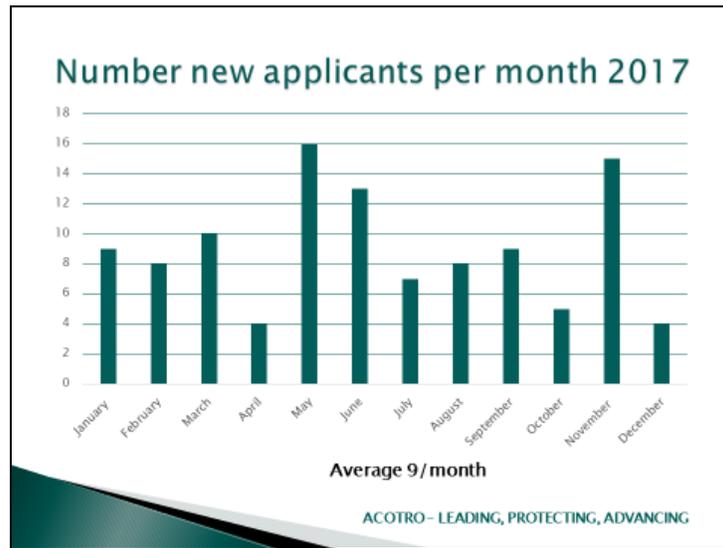


*SEAS Applicant Statistics for January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017*

In 2017, there were 108 new applicants to SEAS compared with 84 new applicants in 2016. By December 31, 2017, 61 applicants had completed the process compared with 36 in 2016. SEAS is applicant driven, and statistics show that most applicants are completing the program within 7 to 12 months from their initial SEAS application date. Improvements in completion timelines are evident for the 2017 year, with 84% completing the program well within the 1-year timeline, meeting ACOTRO’s expectations for a timely and fair process. For those taking more than our target timeline of 12 months, delays are

primarily resulting from applicant-driven requests for extensions. Figure 2 shows the applications by month for 2017, and Figure 3 shows the timelines for completing SEAS.

**Figure 2:** Number of New Applicants per Month



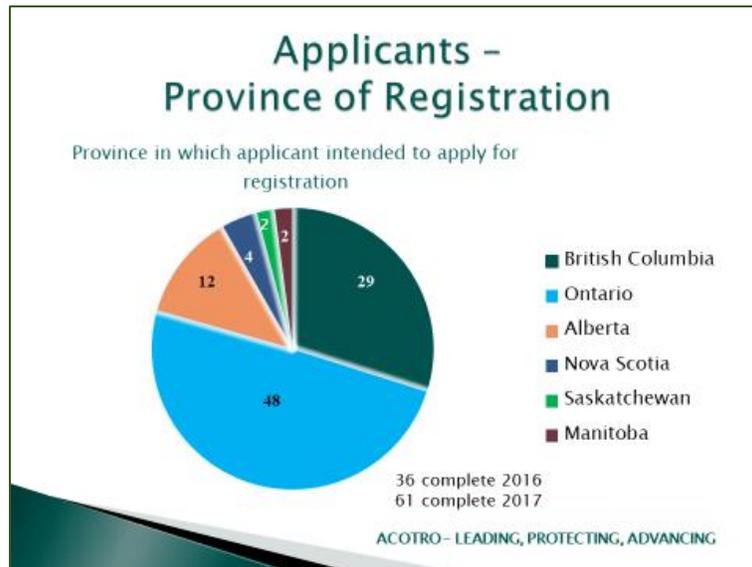
**Figure 3:** Comparison of Time to Complete SEAS



The CA is the only component that requires an applicant to attend in person. SEAS provides fair and timely access to the CA, as the SEAS competency assessors travel to the province where the applicant is applying to practise. Three competency assessors are based in BC and three in Ontario. Figure 4 reinforces that this staffing is a reasonable approach because most IEOTs are intending to practise in

either Ontario or BC. For 2016 and 2017, BC assessors completed 45 CAs in four provinces, and Ontario assessors completed 52 CAs in two provinces.

Figure 4: Applicants’ Province of Registration for 2016 and 2017



Continuous quality improvement is important for SEAS. The number of applicants through the system is now sufficient for reviewing and refining the assessment tools. Item analysis, a review of the scoring, and additional interrater reliability projects are planned to ensure that our assessment continues to be fair and objective.

Since its launch in May 2015, SEAS has successfully delivered a national assessment system that is used by 9 of the 10 occupational therapy regulators to confirm that an internationally educated applicant to their province meets substantial equivalence. SEAS supports labour mobility and labour market success by providing a fair, transparent, objective, and timely approach to assessing IEOs and confirming their ability to demonstrate the essential competencies critical for safe, effective, and ethical occupational therapy practice in Canada.

### Occupational Therapy Competencies – A National Collaboration

ACOTRO, the CAOT, and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs have embarked on a collaborative initiative (CORECOM) to develop a single competency document that will outline entry-to-practice competencies and describe competencies used throughout occupational therapy practice. We are grateful to the Foreign Qualification Recognition Office of Prince Edward Island for providing the financial support that brought these three groups together in March 2017, so that we could start this exciting initiative for the profession in Canada. Currently, the project is awaiting funding approval.



## **Labour Mobility Support Agreement**

Effective July 1, 2017, the Agreement of Internal Trade was replaced with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. The Labour Mobility Chapter of the new agreement remains essentially the same as Chapter 7 of the Agreement of Internal Trade.

Nevertheless, ACOTRO is committed to its review of the Labour Mobility Support Agreement, which facilitates the movement of registered members from one Canadian occupational therapy regulatory organization to another. The current version of the Labour Mobility Support Agreement was signed by all Canadian occupational therapy regulators in early 2016. The next major review is due by January 1, 2019.

## **National Exam Oversight**

To fulfill part of the role of regulators overseeing activities used to assess entry-to-practice requirements, one ACOTRO representative attends the Certification Exam Committee business meetings of the CAOT and ensures that the exam report is distributed to all ACOTRO members. In addition, this year ACOTRO facilitated the discussions that led to formal agreements for use of the exam delivered by the CAOT for regulatory purposes as an entry-to-practice criterion. Part of this agreement specified the establishment of an Exam Oversight Committee. Compliance with fairness legislation established by some provinces was also part of the agreement.

## **OT Canada Reflection Day 2017**

The theme of the OT Canada Reflection Day was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. The purpose of the day was to assist leaders in the occupational therapy organizations community to gain important knowledge regarding Indigenous issues. There were approximately 50 individuals from ACOTRO, the Alliance of Canadian Occupational Therapy Provincial Associations, the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs, the CAOT, and the Canadian Occupational Therapy Foundation. Along with two Indigenous OTs, two individuals from the academic occupational therapy community who are seen as allies, and a Mi'kmaq Elder, we spent a day of learning. The day was filled with many poignant moments—it was fitting that this day of reflection was being held on National Aboriginal Day. Participants were challenged to continue to be open to learning more truths about the challenges that face our country and to be prepared personally and collectively to begin the reconciliation journey. It is fitting that the topic for the 2018 OT Canada Reflection Day will focus on how to start that work.

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