



AIT update: June 2009

There have been recent changes in the Canadian Massage Therapy environment. I would like to update you on them and share with you how OVCMT is responding to them.

In 1994 the Provincial Premiers entered into discussions with the Federal Government with the intent to eliminate labour mobility barriers and achieve mutual recognition of qualified workers across Canada. Soon after, the **A**greement on **I**nternal **T**rade was signed. Governments at first did not set a deadline and allowed a reasonable period of time for compliance. They also provided funds to support the efforts of professions.

In 1999 Governments recommitted to this objective, this time setting a deadline of July 1, 2001. While this threshold date brought about much achievement, barriers remained for many professions. A similar pace continued into 2008. Up until this time government had supported "process" rather than "outcomes". A renewed commitment by provincial ministers and the Federal Government in 2008 has brought about an April 1, 2009 change that requires full mobility and full reciprocity for qualified (regulated) workers in Canada.

Implications for the Massage Therapy profession.

Registered massage therapists in Newfoundland and Ontario now have direct access to becoming a registered Massage Therapist in BC, without further education or examination. Also, the Alberta Government has just announced its intention to regulate Massage Therapy. Once regulated, Albertan RMTs will be included in this group.

At present, the education for Massage Therapy in Newfoundland and Ontario is competency based and can be completed within a two year diploma program. In BC, Massage Therapy programs must be 3000 hours (27-30 months) in length.

In summary, the existing guidelines allow for two ways to become a registered massage therapist in BC:

- 1) a two year route – graduating with a two year diploma , challenging the board exams in Newfoundland or Ontario or potentially Alberta and registering in that province. You then would have direct access to BC.
- 2) a three year route – graduating from a BC college and challenging the BC board exams.

Here are some common questions that have been raised in regard to this somewhat confusing topic.

"If I don't take the third year, what am I missing?"

Mostly advanced techniques such as counterstrain, muscle energy, craniosacral, visceral, ROOD – for neurological disorders, and some advanced spinal orthopedics.

Supporters of the two year model have long considered these topics to be advanced competencies that lend themselves to post grad study. BC has included them in their undergraduate requirements. An additional 250 supervised practicum hours are part of a third year of education.

Can I develop the above mentioned advanced competencies after I graduate from a two year program?

Yes. These courses can be studied post graduate while you are practicing professionally. It is possible to choose the advanced techniques you prefer and omit the ones you are not interested in.

Can I still take the third year?

Yes. At this moment we offer it in the traditional full time presentation. Year three runs from September to the end of March. In the future if BC changed their requirements, we would create post grad offerings that would allow RMTs to get the equivalent of a third year in a manner that is compatible with the schedule of a working therapist.

Does this jeopardize the Bachelor of Health Science option?

NO- If you do two years of MT college you receive two years of credits (57-60). If you do three years, you receive three years of credits. (87-90)

How is OVCMT adapting to this new environment?

Ideally, there would be a national standard across Canada where the provinces unite in creating high standards and excellence in post graduation specializations and educational opportunities. Since that is not the present reality, we will create what could be called a **Canadian Massage Therapy model** that is a model which reflects the diverse standards across the country.

For the September 2009 class, we will offer three graduation options.

1. After one year: Spa certificate
2. After two years: A two year Massage Therapy Diploma - competencies required by Ontario, Newfoundland and Alberta will be included therefore potentially preparing the graduate to challenge these board exams. (57-60) credits towards BHSc at TRU.
3. After three years: A 3000 Massage Therapy Diploma – competencies required by BC, therefore preparing the graduate to challenge the BC boards. (87-90) credits towards BHSc at TRU.

Our intention is to continue to offer the highest level of Massage Therapy education while respecting the diverse options open to all Canadians. We want to share our school and beautiful Okanagan Valley with people from across Canada who are committed the becoming part of the Massage Therapy profession.

Call or e-mail me if you would like to discuss any of the above.

Regards,
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