

**ACOTRO**

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY REGULATORY ORGANIZATIONS



**ACORE**

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ORGANISMES  
DE RÉGLEMENTATION EN ERGOTHÉRAPIE

## 2018 Annual Report



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What does excellence mean? At ACOTRO, we define it as courageous unified regulatory leadership. That's our new vision. We also developed a new mission in 2018: working together for public protection by advancing effective regulation of occupational therapists (OTs) in Canada.

We updated our mission and vision to be even clearer about what we do and why we exist. To move forward in 2018, we also developed a three-year strategic plan, did some organizational tune-ups, and worked on enhancing Board governance. All of these efforts will help us deliver on our articulated commitments.

One focus of improvements is SEAS, the Substantial Equivalency Assessment System. This is the harmonized process for assessing internationally educated occupational therapists (IEOTs) across Canada. Our goal is to ensure that people move through the process as efficiently as possible, and we made some improvements to our tools, based on evaluation. We increased staffing, and these changes add up to a smoother SEAS.

I was proud to represent ACOTRO at the international CLEAR conference (Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation), where I talked about developing our competency model. For regulators, high and consistent standards are essential. That's why one of last year's priorities involved OTs' competencies. We worked closely with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs. A goal was to secure federal funding needed to develop one set of competencies for the profession across the country. I'm pleased to report that we're very close to hearing an answer about the funding.

During the past year, ACOTRO was a partner in a research study funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The study is looking at evidence-based practice and how OTs maintain their skills post-graduation, which is another aspect of advancing competence.

We're working with partners to better clarify the role of OTs when working with occupational therapy assistants (OTAs), and how OTs and OTAs work together in the delivery of client service. As regulated health care professionals, OTs are accountable for their service delivery.

As do OTs, organizations need to constantly learn. Last spring, we hosted the registrar from the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (the country's regulatory authority) at our Board meeting in Victoria, BC. We each gained from hearing about our respective goals and initiatives.

As we continue to work to meet our ultimate goals, as expressed in our vision and mission, I want to thank our staff and Board colleagues and the ACOTRO Executive. My fellow regulators offer the leadership that supports regulatory excellence and public protection.

**Elinor Larney**  
**President, ACOTRO**  
**Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario**



## 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 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.

ACOTRO also administers the assessment process for internationally educated occupational therapists (IEOTs). This process assesses the extent to which an OT’s education obtained internationally is substantially equivalent to the 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

Courageous Unified Regulatory Leadership

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## MISSION

Working together for public protection by advancing effective regulation of occupational therapists 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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## GOVERNANCE

All occupational therapy regulatory organizations across Canada belong to ACOTRO and contribute to its 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 2018

**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*

**Governance Resource Officer: Jonathan Belbin**

*Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia*

**Communications Resource Officer: Sherry Just**

*Executive Director, Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists*

**Philippe Boudreau:** February–December

(Louise Tremblay: January)

*Secrétaire générale, Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec*

**Kathy Corbett**

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

**Kim Doyle**

*Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Therapy Board*

**Catherine Pente**

*Registrar, New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists*

**Peter Portlock (Interim Registrar):** July–December

(Maggie Fulford: January–July)

*Registrar, Alberta College of Occupational Therapists*

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 2018

During 2018, ACOTRO provided presentations, attended learning events, implemented process improvements, worked towards labour mobility standardization, and provided national exam oversight. Together, these efforts help ACOTRO to meet its vision and mission.

### Strategic Planning

With the guidance of a facilitator, ACOTRO members participated in a collaborative strategic planning process to develop a new vision, a new mission statement, and an ambitious three-year strategic plan.

### Governance

To assist in strengthening the association, the Board approved a governance framework that articulates ACOTRO's governing structure and how decisions are made. Included in the framework are a governance philosophy, roles and responsibilities of directors, Board functions, and committee and working group structure. In addition, new rules of order were adopted to improve Board efficiency.

Consistent with good governance principles, the Board approved a Board assessment process to assist with continuous improvement. An assessment will be completed in the upcoming year and areas for improvement identified.

Over the past year, the Governance Committee has turned its attention to reviewing policies and procedures required for effective governance of ACOTRO. This led to the development of three new policies: procurement of goods and services, participation in research activities, and policy and procedure development. Consistent with the strategic plan, the Governance Committee will be conducting a comprehensive review of ACOTRO's policies and procedures to ensure operational efficiency.

### Risk Management Presentation

ACOTRO members attended a presentation by fellow member Kathy Corbett titled "Risk Management: A Tool for Managing and Monitoring the Organization."

### Labour Mobility Support Agreement

The president of ACOTRO completes an annual review of the Labour Mobility Support Agreement. In 2018, a more thorough review was undertaken by the Board in order to achieve the commitment to Board review every three years. This review resulted in the following key amendments: recognizing that this agreement now operates under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement rather than the Agreement on Internal Trade, acknowledging the acceptance by all regulators of a maximum of three attempts at the national exam in jurisdictions where the exam is a registration requirement, restating a common currency requirement to support mobility, and reaffirming the commitment to strategies to enable

mobility in the areas of language policy and objective member assessment as part of provincial quality assurance or continuing competence programs. Signing of the revised agreement is expected to occur in 2019.

### **Occupational Therapy Competencies—A National Collaboration**

ACOTRO, the CAOT, and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs have continued to work 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. The Foreign Qualification Recognition Office of Prince Edward Island provided the financial support to bring these three groups together in 2017. The group’s focus in 2018 was to obtain funding for the project, and the group is currently awaiting funding approval.

### **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.

The Exam Oversight Committee, first established in 2017, is made up of a representative from each regulatory organization, the director of standards for CAOT, a CAOT Board member, and members of the Certification Exam Committee. The Exam Oversight Committee met twice this year by teleconference to discuss and approve guidelines and policies related to the exam and its administration. A provincial regulator (member of ACOTRO) chairs this committee.

### **SEAS: Substantial Equivalency Assessment System**

SEAS is the first step in the assessment process for all IEOTs applying to register anywhere in Canada outside of Quebec.<sup>1</sup> SEAS is a program operated by ACOTRO and is 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 determines the extent to which an IEOT’s education and competencies are substantially equivalent to those of Canadian-educated OTs. Its components address both qualification recognition and competence verification:

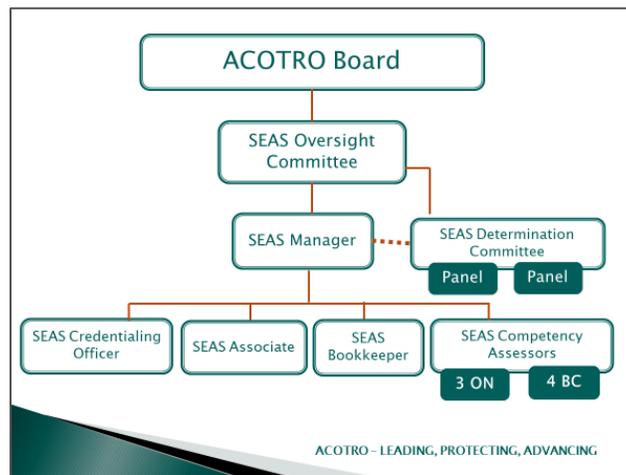
- Academic Credential Assessment (ACA);
- Profession-Specific Credential Assessment (PSCA);
- Competency Assessment;
- Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test (JKAT); and
- Language Readiness Assessment.

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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 IEOTs 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.

This past year represented the third full year of operations. The number of IEOT applicants in 2018 remained fairly consistent with 2017, with applicant numbers nearing the forecasts expected for the program. SEAS is funded through applicant fees. 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.

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



### *2018 Highlights of the Program’s Activities*

We expanded our British Columbia SEAS competency assessor roster to four, improving the capacity to respond to the demand for Competency Assessments. A three-day SEAS Competency Assessment training workshop was conducted.<sup>2</sup> The training session provided the opportunity for the new assessors to learn from and work alongside the experienced assessors (British Columbia and Ontario) and for all the assessors to participate in a quality check. The competency assessor training manual was also updated.

Continuous quality improvement is important for SEAS. The number of applicants who went through the system allowed for a review and refining of the Competency Assessment Tool. Item analysis, a review of the scoring, and an additional interrater reliability project was completed to ensure that our assessment continues to be fair and objective. The tool was enhanced, with changes confirmed in a pilot test and two post-pilot test webinars with the assessors.

Succession planning for Determination Committee panel members was initiated, as terms will be expiring for some members.

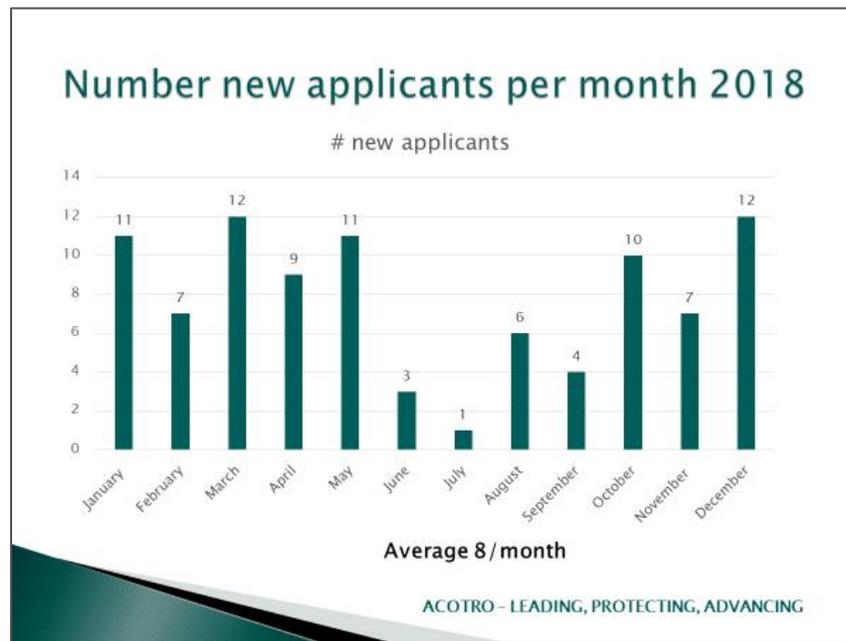
<sup>2</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology.

In June 2018, the annual “SEAS Update” webinar was held to provide provincial occupational therapy regulators and their registration committees and staff with an update on the program and respond to any questions or feedback from those regulators receiving IEOT applicants. The webinar also serves to assist ACOTRO with its continuous quality improvement activities for the program.

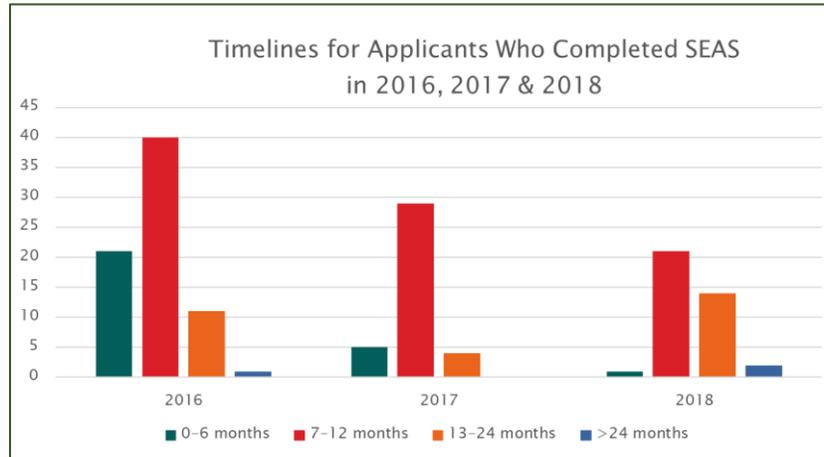
*SEAS Applicant Statistics for January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018*

In 2018, there were 93 new applicants to SEAS compared with 108 new applicants in 2017. By December 31, 2018, 38 applicants had completed the process compared with 60 in 2017. An increase in the number of applicants requesting to re-sit the Competency Assessment affected the completion rate for 2018. SEAS is applicant driven, and statistics show that most applicants continue to complete the program within 7 to 12 months of their initial SEAS application date. Over the lifetime of SEAS, 56% have completed 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 and reconsiderations to re-sit the Competency Assessment. Figure 2 shows the applications by month for 2018, Figure 3 shows the timelines for completing SEAS, and Figure 4 shows the provinces in which applicants intend to practise.

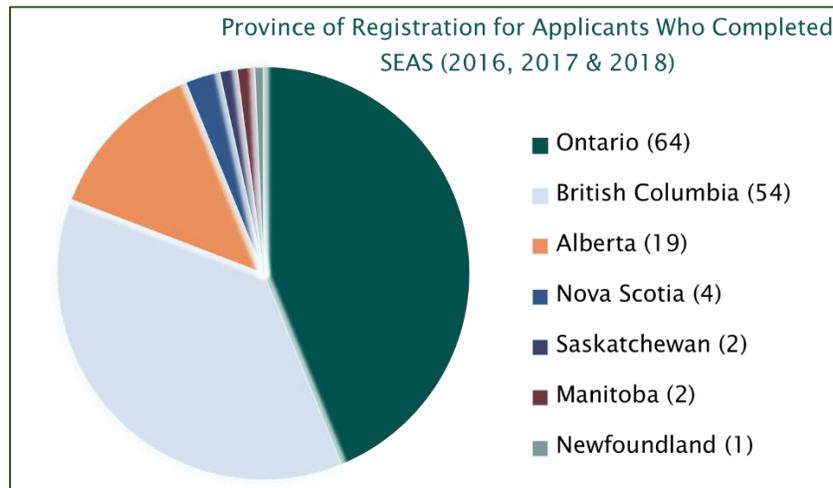
**Figure 2: Number of New Applicants per Month in 2018**



**Figure 3: Timelines to Complete SEAS**



**Figure 4: Intended Province of Registration**



**OTA/PTA Steering Committee**

ACOTRO has been a member of the Vision OTA/PTA Steering Committee, along with other key stakeholder groups: the CAOT, Canadian Physiotherapy Association, National Physiotherapist Assistant Assembly, Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada, and the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program.



In the fall of 2018, two online discussions were held to respond to topics from a national survey completed in 2017. The online discussions focused on the current and future state of issues such as competency profiles, consistency of title, regulation versus registration or certification, and membership in professional associations. Next steps are still to be determined.

### **OT Canada Reflection Day 2018**

The theme of the OT Canada Reflection Day held on June 20 was Disrupting “Business as Usual,” with an emphasis on how the leaders of the five occupational therapy national organizations strive to implement the reconciliation envisioned in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. The participants were approximately 20 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 the registrar of the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand and Alycia Fridkin and Michelle Buchholz from the Provincial Health Services Authority (<http://www.phsa.ca/>). Participants were guided through a variety of challenging exercises by facilitators Alison Gerlach and Gayle Restall. The day was held in Vancouver, BC, on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations; attendees were welcomed to the territories by Elder Roberta Price from the Coast Salish Snuneymuxw (SNA-NEIGH-MUH) and Cowichan Nations. The full Reflection Day title was Disrupting “Business as Usual”: Enhancing the Provision of Culturally Safe Occupational Therapy with Indigenous Communities, Families and Individuals through Organizational Leadership. A summary of the day and some key resources can be found at [https://www.caot.ca/document/6335/OTNow\\_SEPT\\_18.pdf](https://www.caot.ca/document/6335/OTNow_SEPT_18.pdf).

ACOTRO’s commitments are evolving as we work towards reconciliation as part of the ACOTRO strategic plan.

### ***Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action***

Embedded in the Board’s strategic priorities related to influencing systemic change, ACOTRO has created the goal of establishing principles and strategies to integrate Indigenous cultural safety into ACOTRO as an organization and influence member regulatory organizations and stakeholders. Some of the key objectives include

- reviewing and revising regulatory processes to support Indigenous cultural safety;
- participating in efforts regarding Truth and Reconciliation Committee recommendations;
- influencing occupational therapy practice;
- revisiting the calls to action to confirm ACOTRO priorities (2018);
- providing leadership to, and participating in, the OT Canada 2018 Reflection Day (June 20, 2018), as discussed above;
- exploring the manner in which regulatory organizations in other professions are evaluating and changing their regulatory processes (2019); and
- participating in CORECOM work to support Indigenous cultural safety into this initiative (2019–2020).



### ACOTRO-Sponsored Presentation at CAOT Conference

ACOTRO members completed a presentation at the CAOT conference in Vancouver, BC, on June 21, 2018, titled “Complaints: Realities, Myths, and Practical Advice.” Information was shared about the regulator’s role, complaint statistics across Canada, common types of complaints, and common complaint outcomes.



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