

# Certification Task Force Newsletter

Winter 2007

## *The CTF - "Here and Now"*

The end of a long and arduous process is upon us! For over three years, the certification task force, composed of representatives from almost all Canadian provinces and territories (please refer to CTF Contact information), has been evaluating the feasibility and ramifications of a Canadian certification program in therapeutic recreation. These three years have been quite informative. The process has led us to what we feel is a comprehensive understanding of the situation of therapeutic recreation in Canada across the board leading us to make an informed decision, which will encompass endeavours carried out at a provincial level through professional associations as well as the general feeling of recreation therapists.

**In light of this exhaustive three-year process, it is with confidence and optimism that we are recommending an affiliation (still needing to be formally defined and subsequently accepted by membership) to the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC).**

The following aims to be an abridged version of this process, with the knowledge that many questions and opinions are sure to arise. We remain available to discuss our position.

### *NEW "CTF Setting Proposed Course for Canadian Certification"*

**The Motion:** "We move that the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA) membership endorse official negotiations with the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) with the intent of developing a cooperative arrangement to establish certification for Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Specialists."  
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Il est proposé que l'Association Canadienne de Loisir Thérapeutique (ACLT) entreprenne des négociations officielles avec la NCTRC (National Council on Therapeutic

*Recreation Certification*) afin de structurer un accord de coopération visant à établir un programme de certification canadien en loisir thérapeutique

#### **Tentative Timelines:**

- March and April, 2007 – Information Sharing & generating of comments, questions and answers from CTRA membership
- May and June, 2007 – Official Mail-In Vote
- June, 2007 Presentation at CTRA Conference "Raising the Bar"

**Please visit the CTRA website for past CTF minutes and a CTF presentation**

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## *Certification Task Force - End report*

### *Groupe de travail sur la certification : rapport final*

Over the years, we have explored a number of avenues in order to gain more insight as to the standing of therapeutic recreation as a profession in several provinces including Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova-Scotia, Alberta, Quebec and British Columbia. Thanks to a great many people, we have collected important documents outlining specific definitions of therapeutic recreation, classifications of practitioners, specialists and other titles, specific descriptions of theories used provincially in therapeutic recreation etc. A review of all this information has enabled us to gain a strong overall perspective of the status of TR in Canada and has led to important changes at a national level, including the revised standards of practice recently voted in. All of this information is available for consultation and review.

The committee also looked at certification methods and requirements for affiliated health care professions such as speech language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and social work. All of which required examination and membership to a professional association or professional order recognized by government.

We have read many articles and heard many voices on the topic of certification, all of which were taken into account in the deliberation of our final recommendation, along with our own research. We have also met with several researchers whose focus was scope of practice in therapeutic recreation. We concluded that more validated research is needed on this topic, but what does exist has given us tremendous assistance in the process.

In light of this exhaustive three-year process, it is with confidence and optimism that we are recommending an affiliation (still needing to be formally defined and subsequently accepted by membership) to the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC). We are recommending this path for a number of reasons.

Firstly, NCTRC has been very helpful and has provided valuable information related to the process of creation of a certification body. This process, including legal fees, time commitment required, fees related to the development of a validated and reliable exam etc. is not feasible in the current reality of the CTRA, namely in terms of membership numbers and therefore revenue. In addition, NCTRC had also been very eager to learn more about differences in therapeutic recreation practice in Canada as well as the diversity of our population, which we felt were issues that needed to be addressed before a conclusive decision could be made. The task force was able to discuss these issues at length with NCTRC thanks to the extensive previous legwork. The outcome was that NCTRC is willing to include Canadian-specific questions and remove US-based questions.

Given this flexibility and the existence of a well-established certification body, already comprising members from 4 different countries, we feel that this path is the one, which will enable a reasonable time frame in which Canadians can be certified and thus benefit from greater accountability.

We reiterate that the task force is at the membership's disposal to answer questions and clarify any points, which may be unclear. We realize that this is a very important issue in Canadian therapeutic recreation and therefore should not be taken lightly. This also explains the

length of time taken to reach a final recommendation. We thank you and look forward to hearing from you.

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**La fin d'un long et ardu processus est arrivée! Pendant trois ans le groupe de travail sur la certification, composé de membres de plusieurs provinces et territoires (SVP consulter le site Internet pour une liste complète) a étudié la faisabilité et les implications reliées à la création d'un programme de certification canadien en loisir thérapeutique. Ces trois années nous ont beaucoup appris. En effet, le processus nous a mené à comprendre globalement le statut du loisir thérapeutique à travers le Canada, nous permettant ainsi de faire un choix éclairé quant au chemin à prendre et englobant les efforts des associations professionnelles en plus des attentes générales des thérapeutes en loisir. Ce qui suit se verra d'être un bref compte-rendu du processus. Nous sommes conscients que plusieurs questions et opinions émaneront de cette lecture. Nous demeurons disponibles pour répondre à vos questions.**

**Au fil des années, dans le but de considérer diverses options de certification, nous avons exploré le statut de la profession dans plusieurs provinces, ce qui a inclut Terre-Neuve, le Manitoba, la Saskatchewan, l'Ontario, la Nouvelle-Écosse, l'Alberta, le Québec et la Colombie-Britannique. Grâce à un grand nombre d'individus, nous avons amassé des documents importants. Ceux-ci nous ont permis de faire une révision systématique des définitions importantes à la profession : par exemple le loisir thérapeutique en tant que tel, spécialiste/praticien ainsi que différentes théories adoptées. Au bout de cet exercice, nous avons tous acquis une perspective globale du statut du loisir thérapeutique à travers le Canada. Cette information a également été utile dans la révision des normes de pratiques récemment adoptées. Toute cette information est disponible pour consultation.**

**Le groupe de travail a aussi regardé ce que d'autres professions de la santé (physiothérapie, travail social, orthophoniste et ergothérapie) utilisent comme méthode d'homologation. La réussite d'un examen semble être le tronc commun, ainsi qu'être membre en règle d'une association ou d'un ordre professionnel reconnu par le gouvernement.**

**Nous avons beaucoup lu, recherché et avons entendu plusieurs voix sur le sujet de la certification. Toutes ces sources ont été considérées dans la délibération menant à notre décision finale. De plus, nous avons consulté des chercheurs qui s'intéressent au champ d'exercice du loisir thérapeutique. Leurs études et leurs conseils nous ont beaucoup aidé, mais il est clair que davantage de recherche est nécessaire à ce sujet.**

**Donc, à l'issue de ce cheminement de trois ans, c'est avec confiance et optimisme que nous recommandons le développement d'un accord de coopération (devant être précisé et par la suite accepter par les membres) avec la NCTRC (National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification). Nous encourageons cette option pour plusieurs raisons.**

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**Continue-** D'abord, la NCTRC s'est avérée être une aide précieuse quant à l'explication des étapes requises dans la création d'un corps de certification. Ce projet n'est pas raisonnable à envisager pour nous à cause des coûts élevés relatifs au développement d'un examen valide et fiable et aux aspects légaux nécessaires au cours du processus. Dans le contexte actuel de l'association canadienne, le nombre de membres dûment inscrits et donc le revenu ne sont pas assez élevés pour que cette option soit réalisable dans une période de temps raisonnable. De plus, la NCTRC est motivée à en apprendre plus sur les différences associées à la pratique du loisir thérapeutique au Canada ainsi que la diversité de la population canadienne, deux aspects que nous jugeons importants à adresser avant d'en arriver à une décision finale. Le groupe de travail a pu discuter longuement à ce sujet grâce à plusieurs rencontres. Le résultat en est que la NCTRC est ouverte à inclure à son examen des questions à saveur canadienne et à enlever les questions portant exclusivement sur le contexte américain.

Étant donné cette flexibilité et en reconnaissant qu'il existe un corps de certification structuré comprenant des membres de 4 pays différents, nous croyons que cette avenue est la meilleure à prendre pour que les Canadiens puissent bénéficier d'une plus grande aise à rendre compte.

Nous réitérons que le groupe de travail demeure à votre disposition pour répondre à toutes vos questions et clarifier les notions qui pourraient ne pas être claires. Nous sommes conscients de l'importance de cette question pour le loisir thérapeutique canadien et qu'une décision ne doit pas être prise à la légère. Ceci explique aussi pourquoi une décision finale a mis du temps à être arrêtée. Nous vous remercions et espérons recevoir vos commentaires bientôt.

## About Certification

**1. When and why did Canada decide to start a certification process for Therapeutic Recreation?** CTRA started to think about TR certification in the late 1990's. It managed to collect some basic information about most provincial TR associations and published a brief article about their findings.

In June 2002, CTRA membership, deemed certification to be a priority, and mandated that they develop a task force to investigate a system of Certification for Canada. One major problem was that CTRA did not have a Certification Director at the time. CTRA recruited a person to the position officially in November of 2002. At that time CTRA really began to investigate certification and the possibility of a National Certification program for Canada and the Certification Task Force (CTF) was developed. As TR is a relatively new profession, CTRA believes investigating and researching a certification process is part of advocacy and standardization of the profession.

**2. How do you see certification helping the T.R. profession in Canada?**

**Certification in itself defines and measures the competency of individuals. It would ensure that those certified, have met minimum entry-level standards of education, knowledge and skills to practice Therapeutic Recreation.** If done on a National level, it would ensure that a person graduating in British Columbia and meeting the requirements of national certification program would be equivalent to a person graduating in Nova Scotia meeting those same requirements. Those individuals would have the competency to be Recreation Therapy Professionals practicing in the field. And hopefully would provide an equivalent service to their clients.

**3. What are the necessary components of a certification program?** A comprehensive certification program should include:

- Identified Scope of Practice
- Job Analysis
- Examination Development
- Standards Setting
- Credentialing Operations
- Policy and Procedures
- Test Administration
- Recertification Process
- Disciplinary Monitoring

(NCTRC, 2004)

**4. What are the costs associated with setting up and administering a Certification Process?** When examining the costs associated with developing a certification process with an exam, it was estimated that it would cost between \$50,000 to \$100,000 minimum, but in all likelihood the cost would probably be \$150,000. We also need to consider the cost of annual fees, so exam management and developing a computerized version of the exam would cost between \$50,000 to \$100,000. As well, one needs to consider the cost for administrative staff, equipment, etc.

The NCTRC (2004) identified initial certification costs to be \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 in annual activities to maintain the examination.

**5. What are the motivating factors for developing a certification process?**

The main reason for developing a certification program is **Consumer Assurance**. It is important that TR practitioners throughout Canada have met specific standards to practice in the field. **Consumer Protection** is important in developing programs like licensure and certification. It is imperative that TR identify **practice standards** that need to be met by all practicing TR practitioners. And lastly, certification would provide the professional with a particular level of **Prestige** in that they have attained the elevated standard. (L. Early & NOCA, 1998)

**6. What are the differences between Certification, Registration and Licensure?**

**Certification** is a voluntary process which defines and measures the competence of individuals. It is usually based on meeting standardized eligibility requirements and passing an examination. It is a non-governmental process of regulation within a profession. (L. Early & NOCA, 1998)

**Registration** is self regulation for a Professional Association. A list of all those persons considered to be qualified to practice the profession based on some criteria. In Canada, criteria vary from province to province and nationally. CTRA and various provincial TR associations offer voluntary registration status. (M. McDonald, n.d.)

**Licensing/Regulation** is a mandatory process, established by a college of professionals or governmental agency to earn eligibility to practice. It is usually developed for the explicit purpose of consumer protection. (L. Early & NOCA, 1998)

**7. What is the next step?** You, CTRA membership needs to vote on the future of certification in Canada. The Certification Task Force has investigated certification for four years now and believes the best choice is endorsing the NCTRC certification program. NCTRC has indicated that they are willing to meet Canadian needs and modify their certification program (See NCTRC minutes).

If CTRA membership vote **'YES'** to the motion **"We move that the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA) membership endorse official negotiations with the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) with the intent of developing a cooperative arrangement to establish certification for Canadian Recreation Specialists."** CTRA will continue to advance the profession of Therapeutic Recreation (See Yes vs. No Document)

If you have any questions or comments regarding this vote, please e-mail the CTF at [trcertification@yahoo.ca](mailto:trcertification@yahoo.ca). We want to hear from you and bring to light all concerns that CTRA membership might have in taking this next step.

## NCTRC

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Council (NCTRC <http://www.nctrc.org/>) provides three methods of entry into practice, the academic route and two equivalency paths for the professional route. The equivalency option provides an opportunity for current practitioners to become eligible for certification. The new applicant brochure for NCTRC (<http://www.nctrc.org/newapplication.htm>) provides insight into this option (NCTRC, 2006, 7). The requirements for Equivalency Path A and B are,

### Equivalency Path A

"The eligibility requirements to take the CTRS exam are a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited college or university verified by an official transcript and the following:

1. A minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter hours of therapeutic recreation and general recreation content coursework with no less than a minimum of 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in therapeutic recreation content. Each course must be a minimum of 3 hours; *[Note: A change in this standard will go into effect 12/31/07. See Standard Changes on page 35 for details.]* AND
2. Supportive courses to include a minimum of 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours from three (3) of the following six (6) areas: adaptive physical education, related biological/physical sciences, human services, psychology, sociology or special education; AND

3. A minimum of five (5) years of full-time, paid experience in therapeutic recreation services that uses the therapeutic recreation process as defined by the current NCTRC Job Analysis Study. (NCTRC 2006, 7)"

### Equivalency Path B

"The eligibility requirements to take the CTRS examination are a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited college or university verified by an official transcript and the following:

1. A minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter hours of therapeutic recreation and general recreation content coursework with no less than a minimum of 9 semester or 12 quarter hours in therapeutic recreation content. Each course must be a minimum of 3 hours; *[Note: A change in this standard will go into effect 12/31/07. See Standard Changes on page 35 for details.]* AND
2. Supportive courses to include a total of 18 semester hours or 27 quarter hours of support coursework with a minimum of: (i) 3 semester hours or 3 quarter hours coursework in the content area of anatomy and physiology; (ii) 3 semester hours or 3 quarter hours coursework in the content area of abnormal psychology; and (iii) 3 semester hours or 3 quarter hours coursework in the content area of human growth and development across the lifespan. The remaining semester hours or quarter hours of coursework must be fulfilled in the content area of 'human services' as defined by NCTRC; AND
3. A minimum of one (1) year full-time, paid work experience in therapeutic recreation services that uses the therapeutic recreation process as defined by the current NCTRC Job Analysis Job

Skills, under the supervision of a CTRS. (NCTRC 2006, 7)"

The courses required for Path B currently are (these will change 12/31/07) three therapeutic recreation courses as well as three general recreation course as well as supportive course work of abnormal psychology, anatomy and physiology and Human growth and development.

Depending upon your academic background you may have some of these courses and missing other courses. These courses can be taken via distance education while you continue working at a variety of institutions across Canada. Dalhousie currently offers the Foundation of Therapeutic Recreation thru distance education. Universities that offer Therapeutic Recreation courses across Canada , if approached by interested practitioners, will provide distant education courses if the numbers are sufficient to offer such as 10 students (this may vary from institution to institution).

If you are considering meeting the NCTRC criteria for Path B review the criteria posted on the NCTRC web page <http://www.nctrc.org/newapplication.htm>.

## "Make Your Vote Count"

### What do we do if the members vote yes for NCTRC or no?

#### If the vote is **yes**.

- If the members vote yes the CTF will have to have a plan together for next steps.
- CTRA will need to contact all Educational institutions to help provide distance education courses for CTRA members to be able to obtain course work to sit for exam.
- CTF will need to begin negotiations with NCTRC to find out how we can create this partnership and address our concerns, ie. Creating exam in French, deleting US legislation questions, etc.
- CTRA and NCTRC will need to create a time frame for members to become certified.
- CTRA will need to contact all provinces and educate and help the various groups on why they should adopt NCTRC as there certification as well.

- We will have to have NCTRC create marketing material that we can give employers to educate them on certification and why it is important for organizations to hire CTRS's
- Expand the marketing plan from why vote yes to NCTRC to what members need to do to become certified.
- Create presentations that will be done to educate members on courses, times exam is offered, basically all the logistics of the NCTRC process.

#### If the vote is **no**.

- CTRA and the CTF need to find out what the members want.
- Do a survey or an analysis on why they did not want to have NCTRC as the certification body for Canada.
- Go back to square one and start to

develop a Canadian model.

- Look into companies that CTRA could hire to create a certification exam.
- Create a budget to create an exam and set time frames to have a Canadian Certification process created.
- Look for help from other provincial organizations to help in the creation of a Canadian Certification process. ie. TRO (Ontario) is looking at presenting the NCTRC model and a Canadian model to it's members at the June Conference.
- Need to make members aware that if we vote no for NCTRC then we have lost a lot of time that we have been talking and dealing with NCTRC.

For further information please see CTF Minutes and Updates that are posted on the CTRA Website [www.canadian-tr.org](http://www.canadian-tr.org)