

# Labour Mobility in Canada

## The engineering profession's position

- Global demand for engineering services requires the establishment and regulation of internationally recognized qualification and practice standards. Within Canada, most professional regulation is under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, which includes recognition of foreign credentials or their equivalent and facilitating interprovincial mobility.
- To ensure public safety and welfare, as well as to protect the environment and prevent serious economic damage, international and Canadian engineering graduates must meet the same high standards to practise in and across Canada. It is through becoming licensed with a provincial or territorial engineering regulatory body that there is assurance that all engineers meet this standard, regardless of the country where they obtained their degree.
- It is also through the provincial and territorial regulatory bodies that international and Canadian engineers can be held accountable for their practice in Canada, thereby addressing the public interest in such matters.

## The challenge(s)

Despite the increasing globalization of markets, it can be hard to move goods and services across provincial and territorial boundaries within Canada, damaging Canada's economic productivity and harming our global competitiveness. For this reason, governments of all stripes have sought to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade in addition to reducing barriers across international borders.

An important aspect of international and interprovincial trade is the mobility of labour. In regulated professions, labour mobility can be especially challenging. Canadian-based engineers must be able to practise in other countries, while meeting the host country's requirements. Engineers in Canada who are working on international projects are still accountable to their provincial or territorial regulator. Internationally trained engineers who wish to practise in Canada must also meet the provincial and territorial requirements for licensure, which have been established to protect the public. The regulators have identified several areas where harmonization of requirements for licensure is important to address existing challenges related to conflicting requirements for licensure, and have committed to ongoing collaboration to enhance labour mobility.

## How Engineers Canada has contributed

Engineers Canada has developed a public guideline on admission to the practice of engineering in Canada, which outlines current admission requirements throughout the country and fosters

harmonization of admission practices.<sup>1</sup> While each regulator is mandated to develop its own admissions practices, Engineers Canada has outlined that applicants for engineering licensure:

1. Must be academically qualified;
2. Have demonstrated acceptable work experience, including an understanding of local practices and conditions;
3. Be able to communicate in the language of their jurisdiction of practice;
4. Be of good character;
5. Understand and apply the laws and ethical principles that affect the practice of engineering both directly and indirectly, and the professional standards to which they are held accountable.

These admission requirements apply generally to all applicants for licensure, whether they were trained in Canada or in another country. Engineers Canada has provided national leadership on behalf of the regulators to advance labour mobility in Canada, by providing guidance and coordination for engineers licensed in Canada who wish to practise across jurisdictions, by assessing the substantial equivalency of international engineering credentials, by supporting the development of Mutual Recognition Agreements that recognize substantial qualifications toward engineering licensure, and by entering into bilateral and multilateral Mutual Recognition Agreements that recognize Canadian engineering credentials for practice in other countries.

In May 2024, the 12 provincial and territorial engineering regulators signed a historic [National Statement of Collaboration](#) which reflects regulators' renewed commitment to proactively work together to address national and international barriers to mobility for engineers and engineering entities, further advancing public safety and increasing regulatory efficiency. This agreement will serve as a basis for collective efforts to improve labour mobility for engineers in Canada.

### ***Pan-Canadian Mobility***

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) governs certain aspects of labour mobility in Canada, and generally, with some exceptions, requires that workers in regulated professions be able to work anywhere in Canada without undergoing additional training, assessments or evaluations.<sup>2</sup>

Within Canada, the engineering profession has been repeatedly recognized by federal officials as having one of the most advanced internal mobility regimes. In 1999, Engineers Canada and the engineering regulators signed the *Inter-Association Mobility Agreement*. This agreement, which was renewed in 2004, allows engineers who are licensed in one jurisdiction in Canada to register in another province or territory with minimal administrative requirements and processing delays.

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<sup>1</sup> Engineers Canada. 2017. Public guideline on admission to the practice of engineering in Canada. (<https://engineerscanada.ca/guidelines-and-papers/public-guideline-on-admission-to-the-practice-of-engineering-in-canada#background>)

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA). Chapter 7: Labour Mobility. (<https://www.cfta-alec.ca/labour-mobility/>)

## ***International Mobility***

Engineers Canada is also the signatory to two international agreements:

- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Engineers Agreement for the member economies of APEC.
- The International Professional Engineers Agreement (IPEA), which includes the United Kingdom, Ireland, India, and South Africa, as well as many of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Agreement countries.

These two multinational agreements recognize the “substantial equivalence” in professional competence in engineering and are intended to help streamline the review of professional credentials for engineers wishing to practise in another member country.

Each signatory maintains a national register listing those engineers who meet the international standard of professional competence. Most national registers are online and can be readily searched. As part of this commitment, Engineers Canada maintains the [Engineers Canada Mobility Register](#). By joining the mobility register, Canadian engineers may use the APEC or IPEA designations to signify that they have met the academic and competence standards and are prepared to conduct engineering practices internationally. The registration process comes at no cost to the engineer and uses a self-assessment process whereby Canadian engineers declare that they meet and will maintain the qualifications to be on the provincial and territorial registers. To maintain their status on the register, members must annually declare that they continue to meet these qualifications.

Educational agreements that improve international mobility by recognizing the substantial equivalency of engineering education programs in each signatory country are also in place. Engineers Canada is a signatory of the Washington Accord, which facilitates the expeditious review of academic credentials.

The provincial and territorial regulatory bodies routinely review the qualifications of internationally trained engineers who are practising within provincial or territorial jurisdictions to ensure that only those who meet the appropriate standards for licensure are granted registration.

## **Recommendations to the federal government**

To reduce, and to ultimately eliminate, barriers to labour mobility, the federal government should consult and collaborate with regulated professions to achieve the desired outcomes for professional mobility in Canada and the international community.

The federal government should:

- Consult regulators when making national and international policy and legislative decisions that could affect the regulators’ ability to protect the public interest and ensure public safety.
- Work with regulators and provincial and territorial governments to identify ways to strengthen the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

- Support the maintenance of high standards already in place while enhancing inter-provincial and inter-territorial mobility.
- Facilitate the development of appropriate agreements towards the mobility of qualified engineering professionals between jurisdictions nationally and internationally.
- Ensure that those international engineers who come to Canada to practise engineering in or for the federal government or in federally regulated industries meet Canadian standards through becoming licensed with a provincial or territorial engineering regulatory authority.
- Consult with Engineers Canada when considering new free trade agreements that impact the mobility of engineers.

## How Engineers Canada will contribute

Engineers Canada and the engineering regulators play a leadership role in addressing several challenging mobility issues by actively engaging government officials. We have fully supported agreements that enhance maximum mobility between provinces and territories and with the international community.

Engineers Canada will:

- Work together to address national and international barriers to mobility for engineers and engineering entities as part of our commitment to national collaboration.
- Continue to work with government officials to monitor the regional and bilateral trade discussions undertaken by the Government of Canada.
- Continue to monitor changes and additions made to national and international free trade agreements.
- Continue to follow the ongoing negotiations for a global agreement on trade in services within the World Trade Organization.
- Be available to provide expertise and to facilitate consultation to ensure that Canada's engineering education, standards of practice, and admission qualifications are maintained.
- Facilitate the development of appropriate agreements towards the mobility of qualified engineering professionals nationally and internationally.