

Engineers Canada's Submission to the Government of Canada on Immigration

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Background information

Engineers Canada is the national organization of the 12 provincial and territorial associations that regulate the practice of engineering in Canada and license the country's more than 290,000 professional engineers. Together, we work to advance the profession in the public interest.

Engineers drive much of Canada's economy. Natural resources, manufacturing, technology and other sectors rely upon the expertise of engineers. As one of the top five exporters of engineering services in the world, the expertise and skill of Canada's engineers contributes to the Canadian and global economies. Engineers work tirelessly in Canada and abroad to keep the public safe and to contribute to strong, prosperous communities.

Engineers Canada is ready and willing to help the government build a better Canada. Among Canada's more than 290,000 members of the engineering profession, there are countless experts prepared to assist the government in strengthening the middle class, tackling innovations and improving the resilience of the country's infrastructure.

Strengthening our Canadian Fabric

1. *How can we best support newcomers to ensure they become successful members of our communities?*

Newcomers play a very important role in Canada's economic growth and prosperity. Canada's newcomers are dedicated to their new home country; they bring innovative ideas, enthusiasm and the required skills to quickly fill regional labour-market gaps. Unfortunately, there are several circumstances that prevent newcomers from adequately sharing their skills and knowledge to the fullest. For example, newcomers to Canada often do not have information available to them prior to their arrival to Canada. The federal government must work with regulated professions and industries across the country in order to develop and promote pre-arrival services that are specific to regulated professions; this works towards informing newcomers and will enable them to begin contributing to their communities and the Canadian economy quickly upon arrival.

Recommendation #1: Making licensing information available pre-arrival

In order to ensure that newcomers better meet the economic needs of Canadian communities and workplaces, it is imperative that visa offices, embassies, pre-arrival services and constituency offices are better equipped with the most accurate information about regulatory licensing requirements and the labour market needs of Canada's provinces and territories. From an engineering perspective, Engineers Canada has developed an online tool known as the [Roadmap to Engineering in Canada](#); a one-stop online tool that provides up-to-date information for international engineering graduates and newcomers. The information provided includes licensing procedures in Canada, required academic qualifications to work as an engineer, as well as resources that are available prior to their arrival to help guide them through the licensing process in Canada. Engineers Canada has also developed [EngScope](#); an online portal providing information about the engineering labour market across Canada. From employment rates and salary, to post-secondary enrolment and immigrant employment, this

information is available by province and engineering discipline. Newcomers can browse the portal to determine where in the country their skills might be most needed, and they can use the site's job search tool to view hundreds of engineering job postings from across the country.

These portals are accessible, objective and transparent in order to ensure that newcomers and all Canadians receive the best information to help them become contributing members of the engineering profession and Canadian society. The information provided by these portals assist newcomers in making informed decisions that work for them, their families and the Canadian economy. Engineers Canada believes these tools should be shared with and actively used by all employees of visa offices, embassies and pre-arrival services who could be interacting with prospective newcomers to Canada.

Recommendation #2: Funding for equivalency testing abroad

Government funding to make equivalency testing for regulated profession available (abroad) prior to arrival would also greatly support an effective transition of newcomers into Canadian society. The tests, which would need to be evaluated by the provincial and territorial regulators, should be available in countries that produce the highest quantities of applicants to regulated professions. Newcomers arriving in Canada with their credentials pre-assessed and mandatory testing completed would be able to speed up the licensing process, removing a frequent barrier for the integration into the Canadian workforce

Recommendation #3: Engaging with the regulated professions

It is also imperative that the federal government continues to actively engage with regulated professions, like engineering, while they consider policies that could affect the ability of provincial and territorial regulators to effectively integrate qualified internationally trained engineers into the profession. With the ability to effectively integrate qualified newcomers, we strengthen our society, culture, and economy while simultaneously supporting newcomers in their desires to contribute professionally to Canadian communities.

Unlocking Canada's Diverse Needs

1. How can immigration play a role in supporting economic growth and innovation in Canada?

Newcomers are one of the keys to innovation in Canada. They bring with them knowledge, enthusiasm, distinctive ideas and unique cultural perspectives that encourage innovative thinking. Research outlines that Canadian businesses and professions witness an increase in innovative thinking and performance with the arrival of newcomers. For example, "[Immigrants as Innovators Boosting Canada's Global Competitiveness](#)" (2010) outlines that immigrants and newcomers to Canada were directly linked to increased innovation performance that benefitted Canada; specifically when analyzing research, culture divisions, business and international business.

However, according to the Conference Board of Canada's 2015 [report](#), Canada currently ranks 14th out of 17 industrialized countries in terms of innovation. Countries throughout the international community are increasingly productive and innovative, which consequently has a large impact on the Canadian workforce and economy.

Innovation is vastly important in the protection of the natural environment, the achievement of high-performing education systems, and the maintenance of a strong and sustainable health care system. Engineers are at the forefront of this innovation and of enhanced productivity throughout countless professional sectors and industries in Canada that are essential to economic growth. Telecommunications, mining, construction and manufacturing, among others, depend on engineering and innovative thinking to remain productive and to uphold public safety. The engineering profession in Canada supports the successful integration of newcomers into the profession as these individuals have a direct link in supporting economic growth and innovation in Canada.

Immigration not only plays a large role in encouraging innovative thinking within Canadian businesses, but it also supports economic growth within Canada; specifically in terms of increased foreign direct investments and trade levels. The Conference Board of Canada outlined in their 2015/2010 report entitled "Immigration is Critical to Canada's Prosperity," that foreign direct investment into Canada is greater from those countries that are well represented through immigration. Immigration also positively affected economic growth through trade investments between Canada and the immigrants' countries of origin.

However, despite the innovative thinking that newcomers bring with them to Canada, as well as their indirect support for Canada's economic growth, there continue to be several barriers that hinder their ability to effectively contribute to Canadian society. Specifically, newcomers experience a lack of access to many opportunities due to various barriers, including insufficient acknowledgment of their experience abroad and of their foreign qualifications. In order to address these barriers, employers across Canada should create and maintain policies that support the inclusion and retention of immigrants in order to strengthen their innovation agendas.

From an engineering perspective, Engineers Canada has been working diligently to lead the way in order to address these barriers to provide support for new Canadians and prospective newcomers looking for successful employment within the profession, as well as to promote innovative thinking throughout the profession, to the benefit of both Canada's economy and society as a whole.

Engineers Canada continuously works with the federal government to ensure that Canada's immigration system is rigorous, fair and responsive to the economic needs of communities across the country. We also work with the provincial and territorial regulators across Canada to ensure that licensing procedures are transparent, objective and impartial, while simultaneously protecting the public interest. The engineering profession promotes practices that open avenues for newcomers to actively contribute to the labour market, specifically by encouraging diversity within the workforce. Employers who mirror the diversity of their staff to the diversity of the population from which they are chosen are better positioned to meet diverse client or market needs. This can encourage economic growth by strengthening the relationship with diverse international markets and clients.

2. How can immigration fill the gaps in our demographics and economy?

Filling a skills gap as senior engineers retire

From an engineering perspective, there is a growing need to replace retiring engineers, specifically in the civil, mechanical, electrical/electronic and computer engineering disciplines. Engineers Canada's

report [Engineering Labour Market in Canada: Projections in 2025](#) delineates that Canada will see more than 100,000 engineering job openings between now and 2025 as senior engineers retire and the economy continues to grow. However, as senior-level engineers retire or leave the workforce, it ultimately causes the engineering profession to face a skills gap. The experience of senior-level engineers cannot be replaced by students and early career engineering professionals.

In order to address this gap, experienced internationally trained engineers and international graduates from recognized institutions are two principal groups that could fill the void left by retiring engineers. The introduction of internationally educated and trained engineers will be of great importance for Canada's economic growth as retirement creates tight labour markets in various engineering fields across Canada. Federal government policies, such as the Express Entry program, will most likely help to streamline the international migration of engineers to meet future workforce requirements.

Hiring newcomers at all levels

When addressing the skills gap it is vastly important for employers to hire newcomers for every level of the organization, including senior-level leadership positions. By hiring newcomers at all levels of the organization, it will help them gain senior experience in areas where companies are lacking. It also showcases a company's commitment to diversity and the value they place on their employees' professional advancement. In turn, employees remain motivated and are more likely to remain within the workplace, thereby improving the retention of newcomers.

Modernizing our Immigration System

1. *Currently, immigration levels are planned yearly. Do you agree with the thinking that planning should be multi-year?*

Yes, Engineers Canada believes immigration planning should be multi-year. Long-term planning will enable much better use of labour-market forecasts and allow decision-makers to develop the most appropriate and effective policies. It is important to have multi-year planning that properly reflects labour market needs and how newcomers can help the economy flourish. However, there should be flexibility in this planning to allow for extreme humanitarian crises abroad that could see a sudden influx of newcomers to Canada.

2. *What modernization techniques should Canada invest in for processing applicants?*

Work experience and education are valuable attributes that newcomers bring with them when they move to Canada. [Statistics Canada](#) (2010) articulated that one in five newcomers is selected to come to Canada for their labour market attributes and skills. Many newcomers possess the required knowledge, motivation, experience and skills that are valuable in growing Canada's economy and supporting community needs.

However, newcomers to Canada face many barriers that ultimately halt the recognition of their foreign credentials and professional work experience. Some of these factors may include provinces and territories having varying standards or norms when evaluating an individual's foreign education credentials; employers being unfamiliar with foreign educational degrees and qualifications; or the

content of foreign education being deemed less relevant to the needs of Canada's domestic labour market. With these barriers in place, it becomes evident why newcomers face the highest rate of unemployment when compared to established immigrants or native-born Canadians.

Recommendation #1: Invest in a foreign credential recognition system

The federal government should invest in a nationally consistent foreign credential recognition system for regulated professions in order to effectively address existing barriers. Newcomers should be recognized for their previous professional experiences and education. Non-recognition of their credentials leads to an underutilization of those individuals' talents, experiences, and abilities that are beneficial in growing Canada's economy and society. Prospective immigrants deserve access to credible evaluations of their qualifications and credentials prior to making the important decision to move to Canada.

A framework for a nationally consistent foreign credential recognition system for regulated professions could include:

1. Guiding principles that regulatory bodies, as well as federal, provincial and territorial governments, are all in consensus with will guide the recognition of foreign credentials;
2. A standard established for the timely review of individuals' credentials and qualifications before they arrive in Canada; and
3. A consistent approach that will see applications for licensing and credential assessment processes increasingly begin in the individual's country of origin.

Success story: Recognizing foreign qualifications in the engineering profession

The engineering profession in Canada has gone to great lengths to support and recognize newcomers' foreign qualifications and experiences. Engineers Canada believes that it is a best practice to direct all prospective newcomers interested in practising engineering towards the appropriate professional regulatory body for qualifications assessment prior to immigrating to Canada. Engineering licensing bodies are uniquely qualified to provide the most accurate information to governments during the immigration process of international engineering graduates. Accurate information will also help the graduates be prepared to join the workforce in Canada and will ensure that Canada is in fact getting the skills that it needs to support economic growth.

For more than a decade, Engineers Canada has implemented a project entitled *From Consideration to Integration*. The goal of this project was to ensure timely licensure for international engineering graduates from when they start considering moving to Canada until the moment they are integrated into both the profession and workforce in Canada. Many initiatives are underway as a result of the success of *From Consideration to Integration*.

a) The Competency-Based Assessment Project

The Competency-Based Assessment Project is designed to develop a competency-based assessment system for the evaluation of engineering work experience. The proposed assessment system will help to simplify the licensure process by creating a core set of competencies. These competencies will

determine whether Canadian-educated and international engineering graduates have the necessary qualifications to meet the work experience requirement for licensure.

b) International Mobility

Canadians benefit from the skills, experience and diversity offered by international engineering graduates who are qualified to practice engineering safely and competently in Canada. Engineers Canada promotes rigorous examination of substantially equivalent international engineering qualifications and standards of practice.

Engineers Canada has developed two international registers of engineers that work to provide a common basis for participating countries to negotiate mutual recognition of qualifications. These registers include:

1. The International Engineers Register, in cooperation with several Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Agreement members; and
2. The International Professional Engineers Agreement (IPEA) Registry, which includes the United Kingdom, Ireland, India and South Africa, as well as many of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Agreement countries.

The intent of these registers is that participating countries, which have different accreditation, regulatory and/or licensure systems, are able to recognize the credentials of engineers listed on the registers as being substantially equivalent.

c) Roadmap to Engineering in Canada – Academic Tool

Engineers Canada has developed an online resource, known as the [Roadmap to Engineering in Canada](#); a one-stop online tool that provides up-to-date information for international engineering graduates and newcomers. The information provided includes licensing procedures in Canada, required academic qualifications to work as an engineer, as well as resources that are available prior to their arrival to help guide them through the licensing process in Canada. The academic tool provides a comparison of an individual's undergraduate engineering education to Canadian undergraduate engineering education. The sole purpose of this tool is to provide newcomers with information about their undergraduate engineering education in order to assist them in making a decision about immigration to Canada. It is not a part of the formal immigration selection process, nor is it part of the engineering licensure process. This available and accessible information can create a smooth application process for newcomers as it directly outlines what individuals need in order to work in their desired field *prior* to making the decision to immigrate to Canada.

The federal government must continue to support the maintenance of high standards already in place while enhancing international mobility. They must consult regulators when making policy and legislative decisions that could affect the regulators' ability to protect the interests of their stakeholders and ensure public safety. And the federal government should support professions in developing tools that enable the integration of internationally trained newcomers into their desired profession in Canada.

What should Canada do to ensure its immigration system is modern and efficient?

Recommendation #1: Develop, promote and maintain pre-arrival services

Inefficiencies that may exist within the Canadian immigration system, specifically during the process of determining an individual's admissibility in permanent categories, may lead individuals to use temporary categories to gain entrance when in reality their intention is permanent residence. In order to ensure that Canada's immigration system is modern and efficient, and supports the desires of newcomers, it is important that the federal government work in collaboration with regulatory bodies to develop, promote and maintain pre-arrival services that are specific to regulated professions. This enables newcomers to begin contributing to the Canadian economy quickly upon arriving in Canada.

Pre-arrival services for regulatory bodies should include information for an individual on obtaining a professional license from the specific regulatory body in Canada, information comparing foreign education credentials to Canadian educational requirements for that field of interest, immigration information and resources for successful and long-term employment in the Canadian workforce.

Recommendation #2: Modernize the Federal Skilled Worker Program selection process

The federal government should work towards modernizing the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) selection process to ensure that applicants receive an open and comprehensive assessment of their experience and professional education credentials. A standard and reasonable time frame should be set for processing applicants without lowering national standards and a level of efficiency should be in place to withstand fluctuations in volume. To reduce waiting times and backlogs for applicant processing, and to maintain efficiency, it is important to ensure that there is an adequate number of personnel available to file, review and process applications.

The FSWP system should also facilitate and support the express entry of skilled and experienced immigrants in order to support industries and professions that are facing skills gaps. This will promote economic prosperity for domestic industries and support Canada's overall economy.

Leadership in Global Migration and Immigration

1. *Is it important for Canada to continue to show leadership in global migration? If so, how can we best do that?*

The international community has witnessed many dramatic changes to global migration patterns; specifically with the rise of humanitarian crises and natural disasters that have displaced millions of individuals. It is important that Canada continue to show compassion, dedication and leadership in global migration as doing so strengthens Canada's diversity profile—a cornerstone of Canada's national identity—as well as supports our growing and changing economic needs. By supporting global migration Canada is able to:

- (1) Fill job vacancies and skills gaps that have been left by retiring Canadians;

- (2) Sustain economic growth as newcomers are able to quickly fill regional labour market gaps, bring in foreign direct investment and increase trade levels;
- (3) Remain a leader in the international community in innovation; and
- (4) Maintain the cultural diversity that defines our country.

Recommendation #1: Modernize Federal Skilled Worker Program and express entry programs

In order for Canada to continue to show leadership in global migration, it is important for the federal government to continue to modernize their immigration policies by introducing changes to the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) and express entry programs aimed at economic immigrants. This would ensure that applicants receive an open and comprehensive assessment of their experience and professional education credentials. A standard and reasonable time frame should be set for processing applicants without lowering national standards and a level of efficiency should be in place to withstand fluctuations in volume. The FSWP system should also facilitate and support the express entry of skilled and experienced immigrants in order to support industries and professions that are facing skill gaps. This will promote economic prosperity for domestic industries and support Canada's overall economy.

Recommendation #2: Engage with the regulated professions

The federal government should also continue to engage with the regulated professions, such as engineering, as they consider options and implement policies that could affect the ability of provincial and territorial regulators to protect the public and to integrate qualified internationally trained engineers into the profession.

Recommendation #3: Fund bursaries, mentorships and apprenticeships for underrepresented groups

In order to serve the free market economy as well as Canadian society at large, governments should support the engineering profession's efforts to attract and retain talented individuals from the diverse ethnic and religious mosaic which is the Canadian population. The government should continue to take initiative in funding bursaries, mentorship and apprenticeships that encourage members of underrepresented groups to pursue careers in engineering and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects in order to provide Canada with a competitive and innovative edge in the international community.

2. How can Canada attract the best global talent and international students?

Recommendation #1: Fund and support training for students and recent grads

The government must work with industry and post-secondary institutions to fund and support the training of undergraduates and graduates in the first five years of their career path. Students and recent graduates are now entering a labour market that requires candidates to have greater experience. Therefore, these individuals need to receive better and more frequent opportunities for on-the-job training in order to gain work experience and to be better prepared for their future employment. The government should finance a mixture of programs that include government subsidies for a portion of the salary to encourage employers to hire and train new staff, internship opportunities in in-demand

fields and bridging programs. Individuals who are prepared to enter the workforce will contribute greatly to Canada's economic growth.

Recommendation #2: Fund bursaries, mentorships and apprenticeships for underrepresented groups

One of the most effective ways for Canada to retain global talent and skilled international students is to eliminate cultural and employment barriers for newcomers. The federal government should remain active in taking initiative towards funding bursaries, mentorship, and apprenticeship programs that encourage members of underrepresented groups to pursue careers in engineering and STEM-related disciplines. Employers that blend diversity management and inclusiveness in their workforce can successfully attract foreign talent and encourage home-based employees to embrace diversity. Companies and organizations should have a process in place to effectively assist employees and students through the transition process to Canada.