

Engineers Canada Testimony to the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce

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Questions concerning this request for proposals should be directed to:

Eric Scharf
Practice Lead, Government Relations
Engineers Canada
Eric.scharf@engineerscanada.ca
613-232-2474 x224

Introduction

On April 21, 2016, Kathryn Sutherland, P.Eng., FEC, LL.B., Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs of Engineers Canada, testified and answered questions in front of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce.

The Standing Senate Committee was examining and reporting on issues pertaining to internal barriers to trade, including:

- existing internal trade barriers, the reasons for their existence, and their economic, social and other effects on Canadians, Canadian businesses and the country's economy
- variations in regulatory requirements across provinces/territories, and the ways in which such variations may limit the free flow of goods and services across Canada
- measures that could be taken by the federal and provincial/territorial governments to facilitate a reduction in — if not elimination of — internal trade barriers in order to enhance trade, as well as to promote economic growth and prosperity.

Ms. Sutherland spoke about the leadership and forward thinking of the engineering regulators which has helped facilitate the labour mobility of the profession from coast to coast to coast. You can read her testimony below and find more information about the study on the [Standing Senate Committee's website](#).

Testimony

Kathryn Sutherland, Vice-president, Regulatory Affairs, Engineers Canada: Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today, Mr. Chair. As the Vice-President of Regulatory Affairs for Engineers Canada, I am very pleased to be here to discuss how the engineering profession is reducing barriers to internal trade.

Engineers Canada has long recognized the importance of interprovincial and interterritorial labour mobility to ease internal trade barriers and ensure that engineers can best serve Canada and protect the public. The mobility of professionals is important for career advancement and to ensure that engineering skills and knowledge are available where they are needed throughout the country.

Canada's engineering regulators license 280,000 engineers across the country. It is a very diverse group of people and qualified professionals from all backgrounds. It includes women, men, new Canadians, indigenous people, individuals at every stage of their career, from recently graduated engineers in training to mid-career professionals balancing work and family, to engineers that are

approaching retirement. They build our bridges and our roads, they design aircraft, build robots, invent new digital technologies, discover new medicines, create medical devices and more. They do this in every province and every territory, and they do it with the highest priority on the protection of the public.

Engineering is a self-regulated profession. Each of Canada's 12 engineering regulators set high professional and ethical standards, establish codes of conduct, and administer regulatory processes and standards of practice to assure protection of the public. This protects and enhances public health, safety, welfare and the environment for all Canadians.

Engineers Canada is the national body that represents the provincial and territorial regulators of the engineering profession. We also accredit undergraduate engineering programs, develop professional practice and qualification guidelines as they relate to the public interest; we facilitate international and interprovincial labour mobility, and we act as the voice of Canada's engineering profession on the international stage. We track labour market trends, own the official marks on the terms relating to the profession such as engineer, engineering, professional engineering, 34 more, and we promote diversity in the profession.

To perform engineering work in Canada, the engineer must be licensed in the province or territory where the work is being completed, with a few exceptions. Recognizing how mobile engineers need to be across Canada to share their expertise on projects in other provinces, the engineering regulators have worked very hard to facilitate seamless movement of professionals from one province or territory to another, and these arrangements have created one of the most straightforward interprovincial and interterritorial systems among the regulated professions in Canada. The engineering profession has long recognized the need to smooth the mobility of engineers across the country.

In 1999, 16 years ago, and about 10 years before the agreement on internal trade came into place, Engineers Canada facilitated the signing of the Inter-Association Agreement on Mobility by all of the engineering regulators. This agreement allowed professional engineers who are licensed in one jurisdiction in Canada to register in another jurisdiction, with minimal administrative overhead and without processing delays. The final decision for licensure always remains with the new jurisdiction but it certainly was a good start to the process.

In 2015, over 4,500 engineers who were licensed in one province or territory applied for licensure in another province or territory. The provinces and territories are using innovative approaches to have swifter, efficient, trusted mobility processes. This protects the public interest by ensuring that engineers are held publicly accountable, remain in good standing and are available to move and practice anywhere in the country.

The Inter-Association Mobility Agreement was in many ways the Canadian engineering profession's forerunner to chapter 7 of AIT. It is important to facilitate the mobility of professional engineers, but at the end of the day, the most important concern of the engineering regulators and Engineers Canada is

public safety. It is not about balancing efficiency and safety; safety is paramount. And the efficiency of mobility is sought without risking that vital intent.

All of the provincial and territorial regulators are committed to facilitating mobility while protecting public health, safety and the environment. As an example, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta have created an online interprovincial mobility application that streamlines the process of moving from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It enables applicants to apply for a licence with the Alberta association without going through the same application process as someone who is applying for their initial licence. It takes about three to five days to process that application; so if you are licensed in Ontario, for example, in five days you can be licensed in Alberta.

The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia are also doing excellent work. In 2015, they reported a 93 per cent success rate for professional members who apply each year to transfer from provinces and territories across Canada into B.C. Individuals are licensed within three business days.

Collaboration among engineering regulators to facilitate internal mobility is the norm. As an example, in late 2015, Engineers Nova Scotia and Engineers P.E.I. launched a dual application form that allows engineers licensed in one jurisdiction to apply to both jurisdictions at the same time. This year at the Engineers Canada's May annual meeting, all other engineering regulators who are interested in doing it at this time will sign the agreement, and that will further facilitate the movement of professional engineers across Canada.

So far, the British Columbia association and the Association of Professional Engineers of the Yukon have indicated that they're going to sign, as well.

Also, just last week, the Alberta and B.C. regulators announced that they will collaborate on the evaluation of refugee applicants, relying on resources from both provinces toward the eventual recognition of these applicants in both jurisdictions.

Mobility doesn't start simply with the licensing of engineers; it is also very important that the educational credentials of applicants meet the standards of our engineering regulators. That's why Engineers Canada established an accreditation system for Canadian post-secondary engineering programs in 1965. The accreditation of engineering programs helps to support mobility by ensuring that the engineering education an individual receives at an accredited institution in Canada is recognized as equivalent all across the country. There are currently 279 accredited programs at 43 higher education institutions that are accredited by the Engineers Canada accreditation board.

Degrees from these institutions are also recognized internationally through our membership in the Washington Accord, an international mutual recognition agreement among engineering-degree accrediting bodies in 17 countries. As well, Engineers Canada has several memorandums of understanding, both academic and at the full professional level, with engineering accrediting,

certification and licensing organizations in other countries. A degree from an accredited Canadian engineering program prepares the graduate to practise anywhere in Canada and in 24 countries around the world, representing over 62 per cent of the world's economy.

Canada's strong accreditation process ensures that studying at an accredited institution allows engineering graduates to have their academic qualifications recognized in all provinces and territories. Helping internationally educated and trained individuals who have attended accredited institutions is just another way that Engineers Canada works to facilitate smooth mobility.

Knowing market trends across the country, as well as the make-up of the provincial and territorial regulators' membership, is vital to tracking and supporting labour mobility. For that reason, Engineers Canada conducts both labour market studies and membership trends research and makes this information publicly available.

We are currently finalizing the development of an online labour market portal known as EngScape. It will present labour market trends for the Canadian engineering profession, from employment rates and salaries to university enrolment to immigrant employment. We will make this information available by engineering discipline or by province or territory. Right now, they're working on drilling it down even more into different cities. With that, you can look at a city and see how many engineers there are there, how many in what discipline and how many jobs might be available, so you can make informed decisions about where you want to move and where your skills are going to be needed. The online tool would be dynamic, easy to use and timely. It will assist engineering students, licensed engineers and foreign-educated engineers who are looking for work and ready to move to find.

Internal mobility is greatly supported by provincial and territorial engineering regulators, as they work tirelessly to break down barriers to trade while ensuring that they're safeguarding the economy, the environment and Canadians.

To close, Engineers Canada believes that the provincial and territorial regulators have prioritized internal mobility and put in place successful initiatives to promote and facilitate labour mobility. With their leadership and transparent self-regulation of the profession, Canada's engineering regulators have been at the forefront of labour mobility, which allows for the movement of professional services from coast to coast.

Engineers Canada does not believe that the current licensing processes create unjust internal barriers to trade or mobility across the country. The provincial and territorial regulators consistently strive to ensure that their admissions and licensure practices are timely, transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

As noted earlier, interprovincial licensure can be achieved in as quickly as three business days. Engineers Canada believes in the need to maintain self-regulation of the profession and to always work to improve the interjurisdictional licensing process.

We encourage the government to actively consult and collaborate with the regulated professions to achieve the desired outcomes for professional mobility in Canada. These professions are regulated in Canada with the sole intention of protecting public health, wellness and the safety of Canadians. The engineering profession is always ready and willing to work with the government to achieve their goals and best serve Canadians.

Thank you very much for your time and the opportunity to contribute to this.