



Mobility agreement puts P.Engs in the express lane

The Inter-Association Mobility Agreement (IAMA), for professional engineers, signed by the 12 provincial and territorial associations/ordre in 1999, is intended to enable engineers who are licensed in one jurisdiction in Canada to obtain a full licence in another—without having to have their qualifications for licensing reviewed again in detail. The IAMA does not apply to professional geoscientists, who in many provinces are licensed by the engineering licensing body, or to those engineering licensees holding temporary or limited licences in the provinces where they exist. *Engineering Dimensions* asked CCPE's Director of Professional and International Affairs, David Lapp, P.Eng., to share CCPE's views on the IAMA and surrounding issues.

ED: *What requirements must a professional engineer meet to take advantage of the agreement?*

Lapp: The engineer must first be registered or licensed by one of the constituent associations. If he or she is in good standing with the home association, and has no disciplinary action pending, information will be exchanged between the home association and the association in which the engineer wishes to become additionally licensed. The engineer must also agree to meet the continuing competence assurance requirements for the association to which he or she is applying. After all these requirements are met, the associations can still reserve the right to review the qualifications of any applicant from another Canadian jurisdiction to ensure that the requirements of their admission procedures have been met. All the associations except Quebec require that engineers have four years of experience; Quebec requires only three years. Licence applicants must also meet the

language requirements of the associations to which they're applying.

ED: *What is the average length of time required to process applicants?*

Lapp: Depending on the situation, most applicants under the IAMA are processed within a few weeks. However, if the "notwithstanding clause" (NWC) is invoked, the processing time would depend on the individual case.

ED: *Engineering Dimensions reported in its March/April 2002 issue ("Labour ministers' report says mobility now easier," p. 10) that critics of the "notwithstanding clause" (NWC) of the IAMA say the clause gives the regulator the right to deny the applicant. According to Richard Furst, P.Eng., PEO manager, licensure, the clause is used sparingly, mainly to prevent the circumvention of important legislative requirements. Can you comment on this?*

Lapp: CCPE's April 2002 report on the IAMA supports that the "notwithstanding clause" (NWC) is used sparingly. The 12 associations reported that in 2001 the total number of people who applied for licensing under the IAMA was approximately 2177, representing an increase of approximately 17 per cent over the previous year. The NWC was invoked in 55 instances, or just 2.5 per cent of the total number. This compares to 4.1 per cent in 1999, the first year of the agreement. The most common reason for invoking the NWC was that the applicant had not written the Professional Practice Exam (PPE) in the home jurisdiction. The second reason was the applicant not having enough practical experience, fol-

lowed by engineers wishing to be licensed in a different discipline to the one in which they were originally licensed.

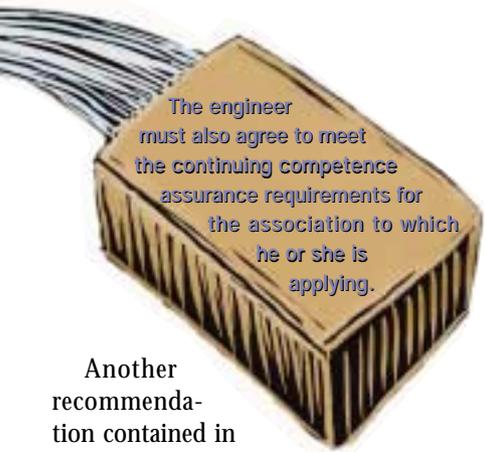
ED: *In its annual report on the economy, the Conference Board of Canada stated that Canada needs to focus on innovation and freer movement of workers within the country. What is being done to improve inter-provincial mobility of engineers further?*

Lapp: The 12 associations who signed the agreement are discussing ways to further reduce the use of the Notwithstanding Clause. Each year, CCPE surveys the associations on their use of the IAMA and the NWC. Included in the survey results are the reasons why the NWC was invoked.

In 2002, CCPE, through the Canadian Engineering Qualifications Board, facilitated a review among the 12 associations that signed the agreement on whether to retain the NWC. There was a requirement to conduct this review within three years after the agreement was signed in June 1999. The results showed there was agreement among the associations that the NWC must be retained to indicate the local provincial/territorial authority and that its use would be monitored and reported.

CCPE will continue to track the statistics on the number of times the NWC is used and why, and publish the data in an annual report on the IAMA. As the body of data grows over time, its results will go toward resolving the issues that have led to the use of the NWC, so that its use can be reduced.

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The engineer must also agree to meet the continuing competence assurance requirements for the association to which he or she is applying.

Another recommendation contained in the 2002 report on the IAMA is that associations consider removing the “grandparenting” of P.Engs whose applications for licensing were in progress when the four-year experience requirement was instituted, and who were consequently licensed with two or three years of experience. This would reduce the incidence of insufficient experience for transferring from one association to another. (The 1996 legislated changes to the experience requirement in Ontario were graduated, depending on the date of application for licensure. Applicants who applied before August 1, 1996 require two years of experience; those who applied between August 1, 1996 and June 30, 1998, require three years of experience, and those who applied after June 30, 1998 require four years of experience.)

Another initiative to increase mobility is discussion to streamline applications for registration so as to facilitate consideration and acceptance by more

than one jurisdiction. This was one of the five recommendations contained in the May 2001 CCPE Relevancy Report to the CCPE Board of Directors. The Executive Directors/ Registrars of the 12 associations have formed a National Registration Task Force to determine how this could happen. It is believed that streamlining would increase multi-jurisdictional practice and mobility between jurisdictions.

ED: In your experience, how do professional engineers perceive the mobility agreement?

Lapp: The 17 per cent increase in applications for licensing under the agreement in 2001 compared to the previous year suggests that there is an increased awareness of the agreement and comfort with its use. Most members have been informed of the IAMA via newsletters, websites and application guides.

Consultation with association admissions officials have suggested several ways the use of the NWC might be reduced, including wider acceptance of the PPE, having all associations use the four-year experience requirement, encouraging greater uniformity of admissions requirements to prevent the use of the NWC, uniform guidelines for EIT programs, uniform reinstatement policies, and a consistent approach to assessing academic qualifications (interview vs. exams). ❖

PEO says NWC recognizes provincial differences

PEO sees the NWC as important for the application of the Inter-Association Mobility Agreement (IAMA). The inclusion of the clause serves to recognize the authority of the provincial/territorial associations/ordre to carry out their respective licensing processes.

Interprovincial agreements only work by recognizing regional differences and making reasonable accommodations that need a degree of flexibility, says Richard Furst, P.Eng., PEO manager, licensure. Ontario and Quebec, for example, have a predominantly foreign-educated membership and the membership numbers are 10 times greater than in other provinces. Engineer-In-Training (EIT) programs, interview vs. exam policies, and reinstatement policies must relate to the demographics of the legislative regions and an effort to be fair to immigrant engineering graduates. The NWC is crucial to provide that degree of flexibility and, as a result, helps facilitate the national mobility of professional engineers.

Professional engineers in good standing with their provincial/territorial association/ordre qualify for reciprocity under the IAMA, says Norm Williams, PhD, P.Eng., deputy registrar, admissions. Professional civil engineers transferring from another province/territory are admitted to practise in British Columbia under this agreement, but that province plans to introduce the passing of an examination as a requirement for transferees to British Columbia who wish to take responsibility for structural engineering work in that province. They will be required to obtain the special title of “Structural Engineer of Record” (SER).

For work involving the Ontario Building Code, there will be a requirement for professional engineers who wish to practise in this area in Ontario to pass the relevant code-knowledge exam(s). When these exams are introduced, professional engineers who wish to practise in this area will be required to pass them.

New national registration initiative in the works

In the interest of national mobility, the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers is proposing a streamlining of the application process for professional engineers looking to work in other jurisdictions.

Under a proposed multiple licensure program, an applicant would apply for a P.Eng. licence with one provincial/territorial governing body and indicate—on the application—other jurisdictions in which the applicant wishes to be licensed to practise. The applicant must fulfill the licensure requirements of those respective jurisdictions, but need only go through the application process with one governing body, saving time and promoting ready mobility for work projects in other regions.

“This is an effort to use the existing legislation more efficiently for our members,” says PEO Registrar/CEO Roger Barker, P.Eng., who sits on the CCPE task force that is doing the preliminary legwork for the proposed program.

“The aim is to streamline the administration process of applying for licensure in more than one jurisdiction,” says Barker.

The Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists is also on board with its own task force and the two bodies joined forces to form a National Registration Task Force in 2001.

The National Registration Task Force is pursuing funding from the federal government to undertake a feasibility study of such a national registration program and suggest a working model.