

CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT FOR INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED ENGINEERS



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President

ENGINEERS CANADA is seeking to be designated by the department of citizenship and immigration's Express Entry Program as the agent to perform preliminary credential assessments of applicants for engineering work in all Canadian provinces and territories, although PEO will perform the final evaluation of who will be licensed to practise engineering in Ontario.

Council is divided in their opinions concerning this new initiative,

which commenced operation in January of this year.

Engineers Canada is seeking to be designated by the federal government to provide preliminary education credential assessments. Engineers Canada's CEO Kim Allen, P.Eng., FEC, PEO's five Engineers Canada directors, plus our own councillors, have been present for three full council discussions on the subject. Paul Amyotte, P.Eng., FEC, Engineers Canada president, was present for one of these council meetings and a luncheon discussion.

All nine of the other provinces and territories in Canada have tentatively endorsed the Express Entry Program, in which Engineers Canada is seeking designation as the initial preliminary credential assessment agency for engineering applicants, just as the Medical Council of Canada has been appointed for doctors.

Personally, I have asked for and received assurance in writing from Engineers Canada that the following issues listed below are correct and protect PEO's position as having the final say on who is granted a licence to practise engineering in Ontario. A copy of this letter answering my 12 questions defining the program, can be found at: www.engineerscanada.ca/sites/default/files/adams_eca_-_20150112.pdf.

I am detailing nine of the controversial issues below so that our members will be knowledgeable and aware of these issues as we progress to implement this ongoing government initiative.

These issues include:

1. There is debate on the need for more engineers in Ontario from abroad at this time.

While there is substantial confusion as to the effect of the current low price of oil on the market for engineers across Canada, Engineers Canada plans to address this situation with a new, more comprehensive, labour/market review in the near future.

2. The fact that a similar immigration program established more than 15 years ago created the misconception for some applicants that Engineers Canada's preliminary approval of credentials meant that they had already received approval for licensure caused some consternation.

In this new program, it will be made clear that the provinces have the sole responsibility for licensure and the final say on who will be licensed, a provincial prerogative.

Under the new program, Engineers Canada will also provide extensive information about practising engineering in Canada and provide free tools to do self-assessment of the applicants' academics. Engineers Canada will also help to identify suitable applicants for engineering work under the national occupational classification codes used in the Federal Skilled Worker Program, providing the applicant early feedback on how their credentials compare to credentials obtained in Canada.

If an applicant chooses to proceed, he or she would be informed by Engineers Canada if they are eligible to apply for a licence. This may help the applicant in finding a job, or in deciding to come to Canada in the first place.

3. Being assessed does not guarantee that a newcomer will get a job in their field, or at a certain level, or their work experience and professional credentials would be automatically recognized in Canada, or they will be licensed to practise in a regulated profession in their province of choice.
4. The applicant must acknowledge their understanding of the requirement to obtain a provincial licence to practise engineering in the province of their choice before they are permitted to apply for Engineers Canada's initial educational credential assessment (ECA). They must also acknowledge that the preliminary assessment will determine only if they are eligible to apply for a licence. This will rectify the past misconception of not needing a provincial licence to practise, which was encountered 15 years ago in that particular immigration program.
5. Engineers Canada will also advise the applicants to apply to the provincial regulator (PEO), where, in addition to education and experience requirements, PEO will also assess knowledge of engineering law, ability to com-

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municate, good character, and other factors. It would be emphasized that only the regulator can confirm that academics meet the requirement for licensure, noting that some regulators take engineering experience into consideration to waive some or all of any assigned exams.

6. Engineers Canada would also acknowledge that regulators can give an applicant specific information about the process for being licensed, including steps the applicant can take before leaving their home country.
7. Engineers Canada will inform the applicant that the documents used in their preliminary educational assessment that have been translated will be available to the engineering regulators for a period of 10 years.
8. Should the applicant want points for express entry, Engineers Canada will have available "fast track progress," at a reduced cost, to facilitate the assessment to be performed by a provincial engineering regulator, to gain points in the Express Entry system.
9. If the applicant does not likely meet the minimum to be successful, Engineers Canada will suggest that the individual apply as a technologist or technician, or pursue alternative careers that do not require a licence to practise engineering.

Newcomers are eager to contribute to the labour market in Canada. They want the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and experience. Hiring and integrating newcomers will have a positive impact on business and the Canadian economy.

The top two challenges to integrate newcomers into the labour market are difficulties in acquiring international credential recognition and obtaining Canadian work experience. Engineers Canada will try to ensure a newcomer makes an informed decision regarding coming to Canada and then help them on their path to full employment more quickly.

I struggle to understand why council is divided on this important, helpful issue.

This is my final president's message, in that council has prevented me from running again for at least two to three years by way of a change to Regulation 941/90. This, in my opinion, runs contrary to the democratic right of every member to choose and elect whomever they want to be their president.

I say goodbye and thank all PEO members for having elected me to serve you. We have accomplished a good deal but could have done more for our profession.

This is especially true in the area of preventing catastrophic failures, such as occurred at Elliot Lake. You should be made aware that some nine months before the roof collapsed in the mall, Michael Hogan, P.Eng., and I had proposed to council the establishment of an "engineer of record" for each discipline on the job and a "coordinating engineer" to ensure that the work of all disciplines worked satisfactorily together. Yet none of these approved motions were ever put into effect through practice standards.

We can do better.

Since graduating as a mechanical engineer in the McGill power and design option and being licensed as a practising engineer since 1957, later obtaining a master's degree in business administration at Western University under the Harvard case method of study, I have volunteered in the PEO chapter and committee systems for over 25 years, serving lately as president for three terms.

My experience in engineering and business was with international firms manufacturing and mining overseas in England, the US, Brazil, South Africa, the European countries of France, Italy, Spain and Turkey, as well as in Canada, before acquiring my own manufacturing firm of 140 employees.

Since this experience has been extensive and multi-faceted, it behooves me on leaving PEO as president to inform you that, in my opinion, PEO has a fundamental problem as a self-regulating authority with so large a council of 29 seats, with 15 of them, that is 52 per cent, appointed by the provincial government, plus an overly cautious committee system that seeks peer review on most subjects.

Where are our decision makers? I am sure they are out there because they stop me and speak of this problem. Ability to act should be a prime function of council members. Personally, I have struggled to change this environment of government involvement over my time on council and in the office of president, to no avail.

It is widely recognized in management studies in universities and in business that 12 to 15 members on a governing council or board make the most effective and timely decisions.

We fail as a progressive, self-regulatory body with 29 on council, about 800 committee volunteers, and a staff of over 100, choosing extensive peer review on most issues instead of timely, well-thought-out information from staff and committees, LEADING TO DECISIONS!

We have lost our focus on the fundamentals of self-regulation, being distracted and crushed by well meaning, but less than important subjects, long, drawn out reviews and a reticence to make decisions at all levels, while Rome burns.

Thank you and goodbye. Σ