

WHO CAN CALL THEMSELVES A CONSULTING ENGINEER?

PEO's consulting engineer designation promotes recognition of engineers in independent practice, but specific criteria must be met before a professional engineer or firm can use the title.

By Marika Bigongiari

The consulting engineer designation is a reserved title that identifies a subset of practitioners who provide engineering services to the public. Consulting engineers are confident in their abilities, accept their responsibility to serve the public and are often highly qualified or at the forefront of their fields of practice.

PEO's consulting engineer designation was established in the 1984 *Professional Engineers Act* (PEA) and was later formalized in Regulation 941/90 of the PEA. The designation promotes a further recognition of engineers who are specifically engaged in independent practice, but it doesn't, on its own, allow practitioners to provide professional engineering services to the public. A consulting engineer may only provide services to the public in accordance with a certificate of authorization (C of A).

However, holding a C of A does not entitle professional engineers to call themselves "consulting engineers" or to advertise their services as consulting engineers. The designation is a distinction that is conferred upon existing licensees who meet specific criteria, and despite holding a C of A, individuals must be designated by PEO to be able to use the restricted title of "consulting engineer." C of A firms also require permission to use the notation "consulting engineers" or a variation of the title in their corporate names.

GETTING DESIGNATED

Granting the consulting engineer designation is a regulatory function of PEO Council, acting on the recommendations of the Consulting Engineer Designation Committee (CEDC). The CEDC is guided by Regulation 941/90, and it engages with PEO staff and Council to promote awareness of the designation. Through its regional subcommittees, the CEDC reviews applications for new designations and re-designation of candidates, along with requests for permission to use the notation "consulting engineers" in the corporate names of engineering firms. The CEDC subsequently makes recommendations to Council on whether to approve the applications and requests for permission to use the notation. "The CEDC ensures that the applicants meet PEO's high standards for designation or re-designation as a consulting engineer," says Cliff Knox, P.Eng., FEC, PEO's division manager, licensing and registration. "They are a dedicated committee of professionals that complete their regulatory tasks efficiently, with a minimum of guidance from staff or Council. CEDC is a model for the effective administration of regulatory duties."

To be designated as a consulting engineer, an individual must be:

- A member of PEO;
- Have five or more years of engineering experience after becoming licensed; and
- Have continuously and be currently engaged in the independent practice of professional engineering in Canada for at least two years.

A member is considered to be in the independent practice of professional engineering if they either hold a C of A or are a partner or employee of a firm that holds a C of A and they are primarily engaged in providing professional engineering services to the public. Applicants must either derive at least 50 per cent of their earned annual income from consulting engineering or spend at least 50 per cent of their working hours in consulting. Applicants who are partners or employees of C of A firms must be designated in the certificate application or renewal form as a person who, on behalf of the holder, will assume responsibility, supervise and be primarily engaged in the professional engineering services that are offered or provided to the public.

Only a member who has been designated or re-designated as a consulting engineer may use the title consulting engineer, and the designation expires every five years. On the recommendation of the CEDC, Council re-designates individuals who:

- Are members of PEO;
- Are currently engaged in the independent practice of professional engineering in Canada; and
- Have satisfactory professional engineering experience during the five years since the date of issue of the applicant's most recent designation.

A candidate requesting designation or re-designation as a consulting engineer must complete and submit PEO's application form, which can be downloaded from PEO's website. The application requires each candidate to outline:

- Current employer and status of employment;
- Academic qualifications;
- Membership in professional associations, technical societies, etc.;
- Disclosure of any prior findings relevant to the candidate's professional practice;
- Current engineering activities and anticipated activities until their next five-year renewal;
- A minimum of two representative engineering projects per year for which they have had active involvement over each of the last five years; and
- Professional engineer and client references who can confirm their work experience, one of which must be a designated consulting engineer.

For information on the consulting engineer designation program, contact PEO Registration Officer Ian Daniels, P.Eng. The consulting engineer designation application form can be found at peo.on.ca/sites/default/files/2020-09/ApplicationCED.pdf. [e](#)

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