

Executive Summary

When the provincial and territorial engineering licensing bodies met with representatives of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) in October 2002 and agreed unanimously to proceed with *From Consideration to Integration* (FC2I), it was against a backdrop of unflattering media reports about international engineering graduates (IEGs) working in Canada as cab drivers or delivery people or fast food attendants, and a growing awareness on the part of the profession that this was a situation that needed to be addressed.

Launched in January 2003, FC2I is a three-phase project. In Phase I, work focused on understanding the IEG experience, examining provincial and territorial engineering licensing procedures, and learning from those who work with and employ IEGs. In Phase II, the Steering Committee analyzed the information, determined where the process of integration needs improvement and began to build consensus among stakeholders on possible solutions. In Phase III, the CCPE and its partners plan to work with key stakeholders to implement the recommendations and to develop supporting communications materials (i.e. fact sheets, Power Point presentations).

The Phase II work was based on information from the Phase I environmental scan. That scan revealed: that there are few statistics available to characterize IEGs; there is little understanding of why many do not begin the licensing process and what specifically causes others not to complete it; IEGs find the licensing process to be complicated, inconsistent and difficult to navigate; many do not understand the differences among licensing jurisdictions, and do not realize that their academic background is as important as their work experience; they turn to friends, family and settlement agencies for information but these are not always accurate sources of information; many IEGs are surprised that obtaining an engineering job is difficult; detailed labour market information is not available; and many employers require that IEGs have a P.Eng. or ing. – signifying that the licensing body “approves” of their credentials. Finally, employers

reported that they did not have difficulty in assessing technical proficiency among IEGs but that their communications skills and their ability to navigate Canadian business culture often leaves IEGs at a disadvantage.

A committee structure was established to deal with each major area identified in Phase I: research; employment; information, language and culture; and licensing. The Steering Committee and sub-committees also adopted a collaborative approach to their work. CCPE – and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) – readily acknowledge that the issues faced by IEGs will not be solved by any one group. It was crucial to look at the full experience and to understand the inter-relatedness of the issues faced by IEGs.

Licensing – The Licensing sub-committee’s goal was to determine what could make the licensing process more logical, comprehensible, consistent, defensible, and transparent to IEGs and all stakeholders. The sub-committee met with the Canadian engineering licensing bodies’ Admissions Officials twice, as well as the Executive Directors, to discuss with them possible improvements to the system. The sub-committee felt that the current engineering licensing system is effective but that this did not rule out revisions that could improve the process for IEGs. The sub-committee’s recommendations are detailed in a table at the end of the Executive Summary.

Employment – In many of the studies done for this project, IEGs indicate that gaining employment is their top priority. The goal of the Employment sub-committee was to develop and implement a clear concise program for one of the major identified issues surrounding the integration of IEGs into the workforce by employers. The sub-committee decided to focus on internships, as they are handled by employers and were perceived to have benefits across the board – the work experience is necessary for licensure, and IEGs develop language skills and improve understanding of cultural issues while on the job. They consulted with a group of engineering-intensive employers to get feedback on a possible

internship model. The results are detailed in the main body of this report and the sub-committee’s resulting recommendations are outlined in a table at the end of the Executive Summary.

Information Availability, and Language and Culture – The issues examined by this group (which began as two sub-committees but was combined since they dealt with complementary issues) are crucial to the successful integration of IEGs yet fall outside the parameters of regulatory body responsibility. Consultation with settlement agencies was a crucial element of this committee’s work. A roundtable meeting in November 2003 with a group of settlement agencies was key to the committee members’ understanding of how best to communicate with IEGs, and the language and cultural issues they face once they come to Canada. Based on their consultations, and other work conducted by the sub-committee, they developed a series of recommendations which are detailed in the table noted previously.

Research – This sub-committee’s goals were to determine how and by whom data can be gathered to better understand the IEG; and to develop a clearer demographic picture of IEGs. Because the regulatory bodies do not track IEGs through the licensing process, it is difficult to determine where they leave the process and therefore to make a determination as to whether or not a particular aspect of the process is proving more difficult to achieve than others. However, the importance of labour market information had arisen in the discussions of the other sub-committees, as well as in Phase I, so this too became a recommendation arising from the Research sub-committee.

Based on this work, the FC2I Steering Committee made the following recommendations which were approved by the CCPE Board of Directors on May 14, 2004.

Recommendation	Rationale
Research	
Track all applicants – including IEGs – throughout the licensing system.	Allows profession to understand how the licensing system is being navigated and where there may be difficulties.
Conduct research to determine the factors leading to low licensure uptake.	Thousands of IEGs enter Canada but only a small percentage apply for licensure. As regulatory bodies, it is important to understand the perception and value of licensure as there may be implications for the profession as a whole.
Undertake an engineering labour market study that also develops models to provide current and ongoing labour market information, including maintenance and dissemination.	Government immigration and employment policies are based on a projected shortfall in skilled labour; the profession and other interested parties must have access to a detailed picture of the current and future labour market to adjust its own programs accordingly, and to counsel IEGs fairly and accurately.

Recommendation	Rationale
Information	
Provide accurate and consistent information about the engineering profession, licensing process, employment situation and IEG support agencies, prior to and after arrival in Canada.	Many of the negative experiences described by IEGs are due to their feeling misinformed – many have said that if they had had a clear view of what to expect once in Canada, they either would have handled integration differently, or chosen not to come. The provision of clear information pre-application is seen as an issue of fairness, so IEGs can make fully informed decisions. Further, the settlement community believes that the more information an immigrant has prior to arrival in Canada, the smoother the integration process will be.
Provide a single source of engineering information on the Internet for IEGs; do this through the Going to Canada portal which would link to constituent members' sites.	Many IEGs report sourcing information – pre-immigration – from the web. Having a single portal will make sourcing the information easier for IEGs and allow for more accurate content. It would also build the profession's profile and bring its messages to a wider audience.
Determine and implement effective relationships between immigrant serving agencies and regulatory bodies to enhance communication and information exchange.	Settlement agencies are closely involved with IEGs at every stage of their integration process, and are often their main source of information. Yet, they are chronically under-funded and under-staffed. Establishing effective relationships between the regulatory bodies and the agencies could allow for continued information sharing despite staff turnover or particular programs being discontinued.
Make information available at the regulatory body to IEGs in a simple, timely, personal, easy-to-access manner.	Some IEGs have described frustration in trying to navigate the licensing process, and in understanding how all the elements link together. Providing a clear source of information at the constituent member level – a person to speak to, number to call or office to visit – could assist with their understanding of the process.
Licensing	
Develop and set a language standard to ensure IEGs have the appropriate level of English or French proficiency to navigate through the licensing process.	Some IEGs find the licensing process difficult because of insufficient language skills. Setting a standard would help prevent this frustration.
Permit IEGs to prepare for and write the PPE at any time during the licensing process.	Removing restrictions on when an applicant writes the PPE will allow them to complete this part of the process at their convenience. Adding flexibility demonstrates the profession's willingness to enhance the licensing process.
Establish an accurate, current database of recognized non-CEAB degrees and institutions that will be used in a consistent manner in the licensing system.	This will avoid duplication of effort on the part of regulatory bodies which are often assessing the same degrees.

Recommendation	Rationale
Licensing continued...	
<p>Study the feasibility of alternative systems of evaluating an applicant’s professional competency for licensure in comparison with the current Canadian system.</p>	<p>The licensing system does not necessarily reflect current trends in assessment and accreditation. It is appropriate to periodically review the current process to ensure it is accurate, up-to-date and reflects current realities.</p>
<p>Determine and implement the elements of the licensing process that can be done pre-immigration.</p>	<p>Many immigrants spend years in the immigration process and would like to be able to use this time to prepare for their future in Canada. This will also speed the process and allow the IEG to have a better understanding of what is required upon arrival.</p>
<p>Implement an interim approval mechanism at the regulatory bodies that will indicate to employers that the applicant has met all requirements for licensure except the one year of Canadian experience (e.g. provisional licensure).</p>	<p>This kind of regulatory body approval could ease the job search process for IEGs.</p>
Employment	
<p>Create a “Working in Canada” seminar for IEGs.</p>	<p>Employers and IEGs alike acknowledge a cultural and language divide that can impede an IEG’s ability to integrate into the engineering workforce.</p>
<p>Promote the concept that cross-cultural training be taken by licensing body volunteers and staff, CCPE, IEGs, and employers.</p>	<p>Cross-cultural understanding is a two-way process.</p>
<p>Undertake a study to determine best practices in the employment area for integrating IEGs into the workplace (e.g. internship, job matching, job fairs, job boards.)</p>	<p>Getting a foot in the door of an employer is the number one issue for IEGs. Given the need for 12 months of experience to obtain the license, it is an even more important element.</p>
<p>Develop a mentoring program for IEGs.</p>	<p>IEGs and employers have identified mentors as an effective way for IEGs to learn about Canadian job culture and to network to find jobs.</p>