



The Association of Professional
Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta

BACKGROUND

For immediate release
May 11, 2026

2026 APEGA Summit Award Recipients

Akshay Saxena, P.Eng., PMP

Engineering a Culture of Service

2026 Community Service Award Recipient

Professional engineer Akshay Saxena's involvement in community service began with a simple desire to be useful where it mattered. His early efforts evolved into a journey that has brought him around Alberta, where he's given his time and expertise to communities across Alberta. For Saxena, giving back has never been an obligation—it's a privilege. It demonstrates the lasting effect of engineers who choose to lead beyond their technical roles.

Sheliza Kassam, P.Eng.

Early Engineering Excellence

2026 Early Accomplishment Award Recipient

Professional engineer Sheliza Kassam may be early in her career, but she's already received more responsibility than most peers at the same stage, and she's handled it like a professional much farther along. A field operations project manager and project engineer at Pembina Pipeline Corporation, Kassam has taken on responsibilities often reserved for more senior roles. Her achievements in operations and safety, paired with her leadership and community impact, reflect a career that is already shaping how critical infrastructure is managed and empowering the next generation of engineers.

Hassan Dehghanpour, PhD, P.Eng.

Underground Solutions for a Clean Energy Future

2026 Environment and Sustainability Award Recipient

Dr. Hassan Dehghanpour, professional engineer, is a professor at the University of Alberta whose work in sustainable energy innovation is gaining national and international recognition for Alberta and Canada. He leads Canada's first integrated program to evaluate, develop, and implement underground hydrogen storage in salt caverns, and has addressed one of the most critical challenges of the clean-energy transition: how to store hydrogen in a safe and responsible manner. The environmental impact of Dr. Dehghanpour's work is substantial. Through rigorous engineering and collaborative leadership, he exemplifies how environmentally responsible innovation can support Alberta's energy transition while contributing to Canada's climate goals.

David Nobes, BE (Mech), PhD, P.Eng.

Engineering Education Designed for Practice

2026 Excellence in Education Award Recipient

Dr. David Nobes, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Alberta, is reshaping how engineering students learn the tools and practices of modern design drawing. Through his innovations in curriculum development, assessment, and experiential learning, he has strengthened the connection between foundational engineering education and professional practice in Alberta. Through thoughtful curriculum design and sustained educational leadership, Dr. Nobes exemplifies excellence in engineering education and its lasting impact on Alberta's future professionals.



Apostolos Kantzas, PhD, P.Eng.

Transforming Medical Imaging into Energy Innovation

2026 Frank Spragins Technical Achievement Award Recipient

Dr. Apostolos Kantzas is a pioneering professional engineer whose decades of technical innovation have profoundly improved how underground resources are developed and managed, benefitting Albertans and advancing engineering practices worldwide. His innovations have supported Alberta's transition towards more responsible and sustainable energy development, and his work stands as a defining example of how engineering excellence can improve lives and shape a stronger future for Alberta.

Olugbenga Ibikunle, MBA, PhD, P.Eng.

A Legacy of Service and Guidance

2026 Outstanding Mentor Award Recipient

Dr. Olugbenga Ibikunle, a professional engineer, has mentored engineers across academia and industry for many years and helped strengthen the engineering profession in Alberta and around the world. He is the founder and managing principal of a multidisciplinary engineering, consulting, and advisory services firm where he embeds mentorship into his staff's daily routines by pairing engineers in the early stages of their careers with more experienced professionals. Guided by a leadership philosophy rooted in service, Dr. Ibikunle has created a lasting culture of mentorship—one that endures as those he supports step forward to guide the next generation.

Sundre Wastewater Treatment Project

Reimagining Wastewater Treatment for Small Communities

2026 Project Achievement Award Recipient

Facing rapidly increasing costs and stricter ammonia regulations, the Town of Sundre, Alberta, re-envisioned its wastewater treatment strategy in 2025. Rather than expanding its aging lagoon system, Sundre became the first municipality in Alberta to deploy full-scale electroflocculation—an energy-efficient process that uses minimal chemicals to remove ammonia, nutrients, and fine solids from wastewater. By challenging conventional approaches, the Town of Sundre wastewater treatment project sets a new benchmark for sustainable municipal infrastructure that redefines what small communities can achieve.

Uttandaraman Sundararaj, PhD, P.Eng.

Building a Circular Future through Polymer Innovation

2026 Research Excellence Award Recipient

Dr. Uttandaraman Sundararaj was a professional engineer, Schulich industry research chair, and professor of chemical and petroleum engineering at the University of Calgary. His research has made everyday products safer, more sustainable, and more economically viable. Dr. Sundararaj's work focused on polymers, something found in everyday items, such as household appliances and car components. By studying how polymers behave during manufacturing, he helped industry design advanced materials for electronics housings and building products, improving their strength, flame resistance, and recyclability. Through research that combined discovery, application, and education, Dr. Sundararaj's work delivered lasting benefits to the province and the engineering profession.

Dr. Uttandaraman Sundararaj passed away on March 24, 2026, so this award is presented posthumously to honour his impactful work.



The Association of Professional
Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta

Mariana Bento, PhD, P.Eng.

Advancing Inclusive Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare

2026 Women in Engineering and Geoscience Champion Award Recipient

As a professional engineer and assistant professor at the Schulich School of Engineering at the University of Calgary, Dr. Mariana Bento's healthcare research addresses the historical exclusion of women, racialized populations, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities from medical data and diagnostic tools. By integrating inclusive design into health-care AI and investing in the development of future engineers, Dr. Bento advances both equitable medical innovation and a profession better equipped to serve a diverse public. Her leadership demonstrates how engineering excellence, guided by responsibility and inclusion, can shape systems that improve health outcomes for all.

Full biographies can be found on apega.ca.

ABOUT APEGA

APEGA is the regulator of engineering and geoscience in Alberta, safeguarding the public by enforcing professional and ethical standards. Our licensed professionals and permit-holding companies sustain a century-long legacy of innovation and economic growth in our province, inspiring the next generation of engineers and geoscientists.

MEDIA CONTACT

Megan Braithwaite

External Relations Specialist

780-909-8688 | media@apega.ca | apega.ca