

2026 APEGA Council Election Biographies

2026 Executive

President-elect

Ken Hawrelko, FEC, FGC (Hon.), P.Eng. (one-year term)

Ken Hawrelko, a professional engineer, graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1986. He earned his master's degree in civil engineering at the University of Calgary in 2005.

An energy and utilities executive with more than 35 years of experience in the utilities, consulting, contracting, regulatory, and education sectors in North America and South Asia, Hawrelko is currently working as an independent consultant providing management and technical support to the electric utility industry in Canada and the United States. His years of experience have given him extensive knowledge of utility operations, engineering, project management, and regulatory strategy.

Hawrelko has served as a volunteer in various capacities with APEGA, including the Mentorship Committee, Practice Review Board, Joint Appeal Board, and Appeal Board.

He is a fellow of Engineers Canada and an honorary fellow of Geoscientists Canada.

YouTube: [Watch Ken Hawrelko's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Vice-President (one-year term)

Natasha Avila, P.Eng.

Professional engineer Natasha Avila graduated from the University of Waterloo with a bachelor of applied science in chemical engineering in 2009.

Avila began her career with Procter & Gamble, working in process engineering roles focused on chemical safety, risk assessment, and regulatory compliance. She later joined Cenovus Energy in Calgary, where she has held several engineering and innovation roles and currently serves as manager of upstream innovation.

She also serves as a director and Responsible Member with Cogeneration Canada, where she provides engineering oversight for industrial energy projects and ensures compliance with APEGA's Permit to Practice requirements.

As a volunteer, Avila has contributed to the profession through several leadership roles. She served on APEGA Council from 2016 to 2019, including as chair of the Bylaws Subcommittee, and previously served as chair of APEGA's Lakeland Branch. From 2021 to 2024, she served as a director with Engineers Canada.

YouTube: [Watch Natasha Avila's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Re-elected councillors (three-year terms)

Jason Vanderzwaag, FEC, FGC (Hon.), P.Eng.

Jason Vanderzwaag, a professional engineer, is a graduate of the University of British Columbia (UBC) with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in civil engineering. After graduating with his bachelor's degree, Vanderzwaag worked with Associated Engineering in the company's Burnaby, B.C., office on various water-resource projects.

In 2005, Vanderzwaag returned to UBC for graduate studies, where his research focused on pollution control in the developing world. While a graduate student, Vanderzwaag was part of the Bridge Program, a multidisciplinary program enabling students to work with researchers in the public health, engineering, and public policy fields.

After earning his graduate degree, Vanderzwaag returned to Associated Engineering, where he worked in a variety of positions before moving to Fort McMurray in 2013 to serve as the office manager. In this role, Vanderzwaag is responsible for leading staff members to serve municipal, First Nations, and private-sector clients in a wide range of projects in the Wood Buffalo region.

Vanderzwaag has been on council since 2017 and served as APEGA's vice-president on the 2025–2026 council.

YouTube: [Watch Jason Vanderzwaag's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Geoffrey Kneller, CD, MBA, FEC, P.Eng.

Geoffrey Kneller, a professional engineer, has been an APEGA registrant for more than 25 years. He graduated from the University of Calgary with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering in 1993, followed by a master of business administration in 2001.

He is also a member of Professional Engineers Ontario, and between the two provinces, he has experience working in gas pipelines, municipal public service, civil consulting, and high-tech industries. Kneller also has extensive leadership experience through his role as a reserve force officer in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Kneller served as chair of the APEGA Enforcement Review Committee from 2012 to 2021. This is his third time serving on APEGA Council, having been first elected in 2021.

YouTube: [Watch Geoffrey Kneller's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Jeffrey Priest, PhD, P.Eng.

Jeffrey Priest, a professional engineer, graduated from the University of Southampton with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a doctoral degree in geotechnical engineering, in 2000 and 2004, respectively. He was also postdoctoral fellow in geotechnical engineering at the University of Southampton from 2004 to 2005.

Priest is currently a professor in the department of civil engineering at the University of Calgary. He has more than 20 years of experience in Canada and the United Kingdom developing and teaching civil engineering courses at all post-secondary levels. He has been awarded more than \$5 million in research funding from government and industry sources, including a Canada Research Chair (Tier II) (Geomechanics of Gas Hydrates), a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Collaborative Research and Training Experience program, an NSERC Collaborative Research and Development Grant, and a grant from Geotek Ltd.

Priest has dedicated himself to giving back to the engineering and geoscience professions, engaging in student outreach and mentoring, and has served on the APEGA Board of Examiners, the

Canadian Geotechnical Society, and the U.K. Institute of Civil Engineers. This is his second time serving on APEGA Council, having been first elected in 2023.

YouTube: [Watch Jeffrey Priest's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Eric Potter, P.Eng., CEC, ACC

Professional engineer Eric Potter graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering and has more than 25 years of executive leadership experience across the oil and gas, manufacturing, and construction industries. He is also an experienced management consultant. Potter has led successful businesses in more than 30 countries and is recognized for his people-first leadership and ability to align teams to shared values and strategic goals.

Potter was appointed to fill a vacancy and served on the 2025–2026 APEGA Council, serving on the Audit Committee and the Policy and Standards Committee.

YouTube: [Watch Eric Potter's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

Newly elected councillor

Hijab Ali Choudhary, P.Eng. (one-year term)

Professional engineer Hijab Ali Choudhary graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor of science in chemical engineering and holds a diploma in digital media and IT from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. She is also a certified project management professional.

Choudhary currently serves as co-ordinator of contract services with Defence Construction Canada, supporting procurement and contract governance for federal infrastructure projects. She previously worked as a project manager with Colliers Project Leaders, overseeing public infrastructure initiatives for Alberta Infrastructure and northern jurisdictions, including health-care, housing, and flood-recovery projects.

Her experience in infrastructure delivery, procurement governance, and stakeholder engagement brings valuable perspective to APEGA Council.

YouTube: [Watch Hijab Ali Choudhary's video for the 2026 APEGA Council election.](#)

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