



For immediate release
October 14, 2022

Engineering is a regulated profession for a reason

Edmonton – APEGA supports the innovation and diversification of Alberta’s economy, including the technology and software sectors. Engineers have always been key partners in such innovation and have helped provide Albertans with their high quality of life while ensuring their safety.

The term *engineer* comes with a licensed and ethical set of responsibilities and accountabilities. This is the same for other regulated professions, such as the health and legal professions.

“You would not want someone to operate on you in the province if they are not licensed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. By that same token, you do not want someone designing your pacemaker or self-driving car if they are not a licensed engineer. That puts people’s lives at risk—something APEGA takes very seriously,” said Jay Nagendran, APEGA registrar and chief executive officer.

Software engineering is a nationally and internationally recognized discipline of engineering. Across Canada, engineering requires extensive education and training, and individuals must be licensed to call themselves an engineer. It is different from software programming and development, which are not regulated. In Alberta, major technology companies, including DeepMind (Google), Dell EMC and Cloudera Technology Inc. understand this differentiation and have changed how they title their software positions.

With the ongoing advancements of technology and with increasing delegation of decision-making to artificial intelligence and software, the risk to public safety continues to be of primary importance, and there continues to be a need for regulation of software engineering and use of the engineering title. Any exception to the use of the title *engineer* will set a dangerous precedent and put the lives of Albertans at risk.

APEGA remains committed to being a constructive partner in the conversation regarding oversight of the computer engineering profession. We look forward to working with the province and industry to find common ground to protect public safety, grow our economy and ensure professionals who use the term engineer are accountable and regulated.

As the regulator of the engineering and geoscience professions in Alberta for more than 100 years, APEGA protects the health, safety and welfare of Albertans from unprofessional and unethical practice. We are the largest regulator of self-regulated professionals in Western Canada, with nearly 70,000 registrants who safeguard the public welfare and contribute significantly to Alberta’s economic success and quality of life.

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