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Opinion: Engineering standards are not red tape

By Paul Wynnyk, [Calgary Herald](#)

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De Havilland Aircraft of Canada has partnerships with other educational institutions to train new engineers and mechanics from the ground up. SUPPLIED

An engineer educated and trained in Ukraine, the Philippines, or India lands in Calgary, ready to work. How quickly can they put their experience to use?

Not fast enough, according to a recent [opinion column](#) by Windmill Microlending in the Calgary Herald.

The concern is understandable—internationally trained professionals are essential to Alberta's future, and every step in the licensing process should serve a clear public-interest purpose. However, an important

distinction is missing from that column: Alberta is efficiently welcoming talent and protecting the public at the same time.

The fact is, international engineers can work right away. They do not need to wait to be licensed before contributing to Alberta's prosperity. They can begin working immediately under the supervision and responsibility of a professional engineer while completing the licensure process.



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Having a licence means the engineer has the necessary education and experience to practise independently and take accountability for their work. It means they understand the required codes and standards, and the local conditions, such as cold weather, that can affect the success and safety of a project. It means Albertans can trust the roads and bridges, schools and hospitals, and power lines and pipelines that engineers design.

Every engineering applicant, whether educated in Canada or abroad, must meet the same standards. Depending on their educational background, their credentials are either accepted or assessed by an international evaluation service. If gaps are identified, applicants may write technical exams to demonstrate they meet the requirements instead of needing to pursue further post-secondary education.

This rigour is not red tape — verified competence protects the public.

Consider the facts. For the past three years, the number of engineers and geoscientists in Alberta has consistently increased. Internationally trained applicants are a strong part of that growth, making up half of last year's applications to the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA). Once an application is complete, a decision is shared within six months, as required by provincial legislation. For professional engineers moving from another Canadian province or territory, this decision is made in an average of three business days.

Regulators must advance with the professions they oversee — APEGA is no different. Earlier this year, it shortened the licensure process by removing a Canadian work experience requirement, meaning applicants can now use their international experience to show how they meet Canadian-equivalent standards. APEGA was also the first engineering regulator in Canada to have an employee dedicated to helping internationally trained applicants through the application and licensure process.

The Government of Alberta projects a shortage of 10,000 engineers by 2030. Closing that gap will require professionals from around the world. It will also require investment in Alberta classrooms, which is why the government recently announced an additional 750 engineering seats at post-secondary institutions to help build the next generation of skilled professionals, and why post-secondary institutions are launching engineering transfer programs.

As Alberta evolves into a global hub for energy, technology, and infrastructure, engineering standards will matter more than ever.

Paul Wynnyk is the registrar & CEO of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta.