

## MOBILITY OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS IN CANADA

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Well before the creation of geoscience regulatory bodies in Canada, Canadian geoscientists were able to practice across the country without constraints other than their own experience and knowledge. Some would say that geology had no borders! Recently, however, the majority of Canadian provinces and territories have regulated the practice of geoscience by law for the protection of the public. Today, professional geoscientists cannot ignore this legal reality and so must change the way they practice the profession when outside their home province or territory.

Recently, some practitioners have outlined the lack of efficient, flexible mechanisms to facilitate mobility between jurisdictions for geoscientists working at the national level. The goal of this communiqué is to inform the CCPG membership on the latest developments concerning professional mobility

The Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG) is a national coordinating body created in 1997 by the provincial and territorial geoscientist associations of Canada that deals with professional geoscience issues on the national and international scenes.

In Canada, professional registration of geoscientists falls under the legal jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. The CCPG is not a licensing body and cannot license individuals, and it has no legal authority over the various associations. The CCPG is responsible to its ten constituent associations only. These provincial and territorial associations are our only members.

### **Definitions and considerations**

Due to the many different realities of professional practice, the widely used term "mobility" is understood by professional geoscientists to mean many different things. Some of these are defined below.

**"Transferability"** refers to the capability of a professional geoscientist registered in one jurisdiction (province or territory) to be transferred and registered in other Canadian jurisdictions. Transferability is influenced by several factors such as similarities in the admission criteria and administrative procedures of the governing associations.

**"Exemption"** refers to the capability of a professional geoscientist registered in one jurisdiction (province or territory) to practice (with or without some limitations) in other jurisdictions without necessarily being fully registered in the host jurisdiction. Exemption is applicable in the case of short-term periods of assignment that arise on an irregular basis and without much prior notice. This type of mobility requires a fast and effective authorization procedure.

However, there is an important reality that must be considered when dealing with the issue of mobility. Professional registration in Canada is a provincial and territorial responsibility. Every professional association defines its own admission criteria and modus operandi. An association cannot under any circumstances delegate or abandon its legal responsibilities as defined by its legislators.

### **Updates and examples on mobility**

Since the creation of the CCPG, the issue of mobility has been discussed on numerous occasions and several actions have been taken by the CCPG board of directors. Some actions dealt with the transferability issue and others dealt with exemption.

In 2001, a mobility agreement dealing mainly with the issue of transferability, known as the Inter Association Mobility Agreement (IAMA), was signed by all the constituent associations of the CCPG. However, the application of this mobility agreement was extremely variable from one jurisdiction to another. The lack of uniform academic requirements across the country was one of the impediments encountered.

A concept called “Multi-Jurisdictional Registration” (MJR) was recently discussed at the CCPG. This concept addresses the needs of the professional geoscientist who regularly practices in several jurisdictions across the country, and would allow the professional to obtain a valid licence to practice in all Canadian jurisdictions with one single application. The economic impact and legal feasibility of a multi-jurisdictional registration was evaluated by a preliminary study, but more work is required.

The concept of a temporary practice and incidental practice has been discussed by the CCPG since 1998. Despite being strongly supported by practitioners, this type of mobility is the most complex one to implement in Canada. Most of the professional associations have no tools in their acts to manage this kind of practice. A global implementation of a temporary and/or incidental practice agreement would require a change of the engineer/geoscientist acts for most Canadian jurisdictions.

In 2003, the two professional associations of Ontario (APGO) and Quebec (OGQ) signed a bilateral mobility agreement covering temporary and incidental practice. Why were these two associations successful in implementing fast and efficient mobility mechanisms? The answer is twofold. Firstly, the Quebec Profession Act already possessed mechanisms which allowed for mobility of professionals. Secondly, the Ontario association used this window of opportunity to modify their act to include similar mechanisms.

An important CCPG committee, the Canadian Geoscience Standards Board (CGSB) has just begun to review the existing agreement of Canadian academic requirements used as the basis of the IAMA signed in 2001. One of the goals of the CGSB is to define uniform academic requirements for admission of equivalency across the jurisdictions. If reached, these new standards will improve the 2001 mobility agreement and should lead to new agreements.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that any future mobility agreements will involve changes in administration procedures for most of the provincial and territorial associations. Among other things, these changes would require mutual trust and sharing of legal responsibilities.

Accordingly, any national agreement on mobility will have to be in accordance and agreement with the legal acts governing the provincial and territorial associations so as to permit them to fulfill their respective missions to protect the public.

In a general way, the differing norms of admission, transfer and management of legal responsibility and internal structures of each association hinder professional mobility. The CCPG continues to promote the need to have efficient mechanisms for managing all forms of mobility across the country. .

The CCPG Board of Directors continues to serve and represent the Canadian Geoscientists nationally and internationally, and is constantly looking for new ways to better represent and inform its members. For more information please consult your provincial or territorial association or visit the CCPG website at [www.ccpq.ca](http://www.ccpq.ca).