



Rejean Touchette

Past President Speaks on International Mobility

On January 23, 2006, CCTT Past President Réjean Touchette addressed Members of OTPQ on the subject of international agreements.

First of all, let me define what I mean by mobility when speaking in the context of technology professionals such as you. In essence we are talking about the recognition of professional credentials by a different jurisdiction and therefore the extension of the right to practice in that jurisdiction. You are, of course, familiar with the national mobility agreement that OTPQ has in place with the other provincial certification bodies. That agreement gives you right to have your professional credentials immediately accepted by, say, British Columbia should you decide to go and work there. International mobility is the same concept applied across national borders. . For Technicians and technologists, and really for professionals in any discipline, recognition of foreign credentials must be regarded as a business critical issue.

And mobility drives the global economy. Industries all over the world are facing skills shortages or require the kind of specialized technical knowledge that many of you can offer. CCTT and similar organizations around the globe are committed to creating the legal infrastructure that will facilitate such mobility.

All this starts with certification. OTPQ serves its members in many ways, including providing access to the benefits of the international mobility agreements that I will be describing this evening. But the services can only be extended to the members of OTPQ not to those who choose to remain outside the fold. For the same reason CCTT remains committed to certification. We will continue to educate applied science and engineering technology graduates as well as non-certified technicians and technologists, about why attaining certification is so fundamentally important to their careers.

In June 2005, I traveled to the International Engineering Meetings in Hong Kong to sign the Engineering Technology Mobility Forum, on behalf of the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists. For us, this agreement is an important step towards simpler method of recognizing international designations.

With certification programs and international agreements like the ETMF, our members know that their careers can take off if they are able to move easily across borders in search of work. Our members demand that the provincial and national bodies representing them understand the importance of inter-provincial and international partnerships and do what is necessary to ensure that their Canadian credentials are recognized in as many places as possible around the world. Why? Because our members are in demand, and they have the option to go where the best opportunities exist. Endorsing standards is not just a matter of safety for business; it's also a business critical issue of survival in the knowledge-based world.

What is the ETMF? There are five international agreements that make up the framework that the world uses to govern the recognition of engineering and technology qualifications. In each of these agreements countries that wish to participate may apply for membership and, if accepted, become members or signatories to the agreement. In broad principle, each country must meet its own costs, and the body making application must verify that it is the appropriate representative body for that country/economy.

There are three agreements covering mutual recognition in respect of qualifications in engineering and technology: the Washington Accord signed which recognizes substantial academic equivalence in professional engineering; the Sydney Accord which recognizes substantial academic equivalence for technologists; and the Dublin Accord covers substantial academic for technicians.

What does this mean in practical terms? If a Canadian certified technologist and I stress, certified wish to work in, say, New Zealand, then his or her academic qualifications will be immediately recognized given that New Zealand is together with Canada signatories of the Sydney Accord.

Signatories to the aforementioned accords can participate in two other agreements that support recognition of equivalence at the practicing engineer and technologists levels. The concept of these agreements is that a person recognized in one country as reaching the agreed international standard of competence should only be minimally assessed (primarily for local knowledge) prior to obtaining registration in another country that is party to the agreement.



The Engineers Mobility Forum agreement for engineers and The Engineering Technologist Mobility Forum agreement for technologists was signed by participating economies in 2003. Canada joined in 2005. In terms of the ETMF, the parties to the Agreement have agreed to commence establishing a mutual recognition scheme for engineering technologists. Under the ETMF, each signatory creates a "international register" of those technologists wishing to be recognized as meeting the generic international standard. Other states should give credit when such a technologist seeks to have his or her competence recognized. The Agreement is largely administered between professional bodies, but there can be Government representation as well. In addition to Canada, the countries participating in the ETMF are New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong China, Ireland, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

A number of other states, particularly in South-East Asia have already signaled their interest in becoming ETMF signatories. The number of participating countries will, thus, be increasing in the very near future, including the United States which is being sponsored by Canada. The criteria required inclusion in the international register include:

- ▶ Graduation from, or holding substantial equivalency to, an engineering technology program offered by a school accredited by an organization in the Canadian instance, CCTT that is itself a signatory of the Sydney Accord;
- ▶ Certification by a recognized authority which, for Canadians, implies membership in a provincial Council;
- ▶ A minimum of seven years of practical experience since graduation of which, at least, two years must have been spent in charge of significant engineering work, and
- ▶ The maintenance of continuing professional development activities.

Those who have been admitted to the international register will be allowed to use the post-nominal: International Engineering Technologist (IntET). The first point that I mention is problematic here in Quebec. Quebec technology programs have not been accredited by CCTT. That is because the Quebec government accredits those programs. CCTT will be working with OTPQ to rectify this problem. We are also working with the ETMF Secretariat to ensure that the international community recognizes and takes account of Quebec's special circumstance.

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Once on the list, the other signatory countries are obliged to accept your credentials as well as your right to practice within their territories. Obviously, the same holds true for Canadian acceptance of those who are on the international register of the other states. Much more will be said about the International Register as provincial Councils begin disseminating information on how to submit your own qualifications and application for acceptance into the registrar.

Why bother? If you have an opportunity to work overseas, doors will open more easily for you. You will become much more valued by your employer. You will become that much more employable by companies with interests in overseas projects. In addition to encouraging the United States to sign on to the ETMF, you should know that CCTT has also taken initiative to expand the disciplines covered by an existing bilateral agreement between Canada and the United States to guarantee inter-recognition and mobility for the vast majority of Canadian and American technicians and technologists. Our discussions at this time are initial, but we have agreement from the Americans that this is a priority, and we have agreement in principle that a bilateral accord on the recognition of credentials for Technicians and technologists can be achieved in the near future.

By ensuring that immigrant professionals receive appropriate certification, we make it much easier for Canadian and American employers to manage the hiring process. Certification must be seen as a stamp of approval in the eyes of other professionals. Certification must communicate a strict and reliable code of conduct. And, certification must demonstrate that we are committed to protecting the public's safety at all times. If we can raise this level awareness and level the playing field to an acceptable level of international standards, we will also put ourselves in a better position to prove the value of certification to business.

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