



NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT IN REGULATED PROFESSIONS: PROCESS, SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

STUDY BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

In February 2022, the City of Saskatoon (the City) in collaboration with Immigration Partnership Saskatoon (IPSK) contracted Insightrix® Research Inc. (Insightrix) to conduct research to assist with supporting newcomers with applying for licensure / registration within a regulated profession in Saskatchewan.

This research includes two phases:

- A. Automated web extraction (web scraping) was used to search online information about the processes and requirements for accreditation in 74 professions identified by IPSK (results summarized in a separate document).
- B. A total of fifteen **30-minute online Zoom video- or telephone-based in-depth interviews** with newcomers and regulatory organizations to further understand successes and challenges related to the process of accreditation in Saskatchewan. This report summarizes the findings from the 15 interviews.

A list of seven newcomer contacts and eight regulatory bodies was provided by IPSK. Interviews were conducted between May 16 to August 16, 2022. The following table summarizes newcomer participants' professions and the list of interviewed regulatory bodies. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to validate the information and provide feedback on the database where relevant to their profession.

<i>Participant Profession</i>	
Newcomers (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accounting (1)</i> • <i>Education (2)</i> • <i>Engineering (1)</i> • <i>Logistics / transportation (1)</i> • <i>Nursing (2)</i>
Regulatory Bodies (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Chartered Professional Accountants Saskatchewan</i> • <i>College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan</i> • <i>College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan</i> • <i>College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan</i> • <i>Law Society of Saskatchewan</i> • <i>Saskatchewan Association of Architects</i> • <i>Saskatchewan College of Psychologists</i> • <i>Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board</i>

Newcomer participants were compensated with a \$50 honorarium in appreciation of their time. An interview guide was developed by Insightrix with input and approval from IPSK to achieve the following research objectives:

- Validate and understand the processes and requirements for accreditation for internationally trained newcomer applicants
- Understand newcomer and regulator challenges experienced during the application and registration processes

- Identify opportunities to support newcomers and regulators throughout the registration and application processes
- Gather feedback and suggestions from newcomers and regulators to better assist future newcomers on the path to registration / licensure

KEY FINDINGS

INITIATING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- Interviews with newcomers and regulators reveal early research and initiation of the application process is key for setting expectations and preparing newcomers for a smooth transition to employment in Canada.
- Newcomer interviews suggest few are aware of the requirements or extent of the process for registration / licensure in Saskatchewan in advance of arriving.
 - Some aspects of the application process can often be initiated while individuals are still in their home countries while planning for immigration to Canada.
 - Research suggests individuals who wait to initiate the application until arrival are likely to experience prolonged waiting periods prior to becoming eligible for employment.
 - Increased frustration, stress and financial burden
- Newcomers describe experiences with competing priorities and responsibilities as they navigate immigration.
 - Often balancing family, personal and employment-related responsibilities.

*My suggestion would be start building resume, CV and **apply for certificate / licence once you get the Saskatchewan nomination**. There is about six to eight months or sometimes nine months between confirming nomination to landing. **Get yourself ready for the market.***
- Logistics / Transportation

*We should have **a target plan** for newcomers, 'you will need to pass these many exams, processes to start working.'*
- Accounting

*I think with my experience, I'm in a much better place to talk to a newcomer and **guide them so that they will not waste the number of years [3] I wasted.***

- Education

*I just started that [registration] process, **because my first priority is to get my kids settled.** Because it [immigrating to Saskatchewan] was such a big change for us.*

- Education

*I have two young kids at home. So, it is unrealistic for me to pick up eight hour, nine hour shifts. I did reach out to social services looking for day-care facilities. **Everything is wait-listed.** The person on the line was rude and said, 'Oh well, if you needed childcare subsidy, everybody would just sit at home and not get a job.' That's not my priority. We are hardworking people. **We are here to work. we don't want to sit at home.** But if everything is wait-listed.*

- Education

- The path to licensure / registration is not always clear to newcomers who report often having to **filter through multiple, sometimes competing, information sources:**
 - Word of mouth – friends and family
 - **Regulatory body website**
 - Other newcomers with similar experience applying for registration / licensure
 - **Government immigration websites (e.g., IRCC)**
 - Regulatory body staff / representatives
 - Registration consulting agencies
- Newcomers report receiving inconsistent information from various sources, including regulatory bodies.
 - Leads to inefficiencies, adds time and effort to the process
 - Causes confusion, frustration and increased financial burden to newcomers
 - There is a **need for clarity and direction** about which regulatory body to contact and steps to follow before newcomers start the registration process.
- When presented with the regulator database compiled in phase one of this research, feedback from newcomers is very positive:
 - **Helping** newcomers to plan for employment in Saskatchewan.
 - All mention the database would have been helpful if they had access to it during their immigration process.
 - Empowers consulting professionals with **accurate and clear direction** on the official registration process.

Yes, definitely. Because it [the database] **has all the information**, including links that would be quite beneficial for a newcomer to get through his or her research.

- Accounting

If I had this sheet when I first landed, **my life would have been so much easier**.

- Education

If the counsellors [back-home] can expand the scope of knowledge about the processes involved in the teaching organization in here [Saskatchewan / Canada], **it would be much easier to get back-home teachers channelled that direction** without that teacher wasting years searching for the right channel, you know? Everything has to do with information.

- Education

- Regulators note some international applicants have a **misconception** that attaining accreditation for employment in Saskatchewan would improve opportunities for immigration, which is not the case.
 - Registration in the profession without a predetermined plan for immigration could be a waste of time and resources for newcomers and regulators.

If you haven't figured out the immigration piece, or not knowing whether you are coming to Canada or not, then I would hold off the registration application. I think there's a misunderstanding or a myth out there, that 'if I am certified in that profession, so that means that I should be able to immigrate easier. Well, **immigration happens first**, right?

People often contact us and say, 'I've already been approved by SINP or I have this NOC code. People seem to be referencing immigration questions to us. So we've actually developed another communication that spells out that our job is the registration licensing. **We don't actually have any interaction with the immigration process**. We can only reroute them to the appropriate sources, such as SINP and IRCC.

Our job is to regulate licensed [professionals] and to protect the public. This is not pejorative, but we're not interested in helping people qualify for licensure. We provide the information on our website for any potential licensees to know what it takes to get a license and what you have to do if you're not qualified for licensure.

- Some professions require **both national and provincial accreditation**
 - Requirements are not always clear to newcomers and can be confusing

- Lack of clarity leads to missteps and slower progress through the application process.

I have sent the documents to NNAS, then why do I need to send [the same documents] again to the Saskatchewan [regulatory body]?
 - Nursing

We do use documents sent to NNAS so there's not a lot of duplication of requirements between us. The only time there might be something duplicated is to just verify the changes that have happened. [e.g., new work experience during application period]
 - Nursing

PATH TO APPLICATION

- Language barriers and lack of familiarity with local systems / processes lead some newcomers to require additional supports during their application process.
- Newcomers express a desire for **in-person interactions and connections**
 - Some feel a lukewarm reception when they contact regulators for assistance / information via phone calls.
- Partially due to COVID-19, in-person meetings have been restricted / unavailable in recent years placing additional stress on newcomers who may require or prefer in-person supports

*Whenever you talk to any of the of the representatives, **they just tell you what has already been mentioned on their website.** However, some queries and questions are so confusing that we cannot answer by myself, **so my question remains unanswered.***
 - Accounting

*People were so good and warm when I went to in-person meetings. **But when we're on helplines, it's usually very frustrating.** When you go to a place in-person, they'll be like, 'Oh, you know, this is not my area. Why don't you go to this place?' And then **you get those direct answers to pursue immediately.** But if you're on the phone, it's really frustrating because you're like, 'oh I'm wasting my time because I'm just on hold'.*
 - Education

*Every time you call in it was obviously a different person, **but the information given keeps changing.** It's something I always need to double check. So because I have made calls to them four or five six times, just to make sure that I'm on the right track, am I doing the right thing.*
 - Education

*You do need a valid English test score to register. Every course cost a lot, and you have to study for two years in order to finish your bridging program. And **when you finish your courses for sure your English expires again.***
 - Nursing

- Gathering original documents can be time-consuming and challenging for newcomers, especially for those living in Canada at the time of application.
 - At times, newcomer applicants have to depend on family / connections in their home country to access and transfer documents.
- Many cite challenges in communicating with intermediates and home institutions, such as academic institutions, previous workplace, etc. due to:
 - Time zone – difficulty to access home country work hours
 - Uncontrollable circumstances in home country organizations, e.g., war, strike, etc.
- Newcomers may face lack of streamlined service in some home country institutions.
 - Document availability – Does the organization provide such document?
 - Document accuracy / standards – is the document provided high-quality, original and in English, does it meet regulatory body standards?
 - Timeliness – can the document arrive on time?
- **Regulators are aware of the challenges around gathering documents** and have been looking into ways to **accommodate special cases**. Common mentions are:
 - Shortlist required documents to only request the absolute-needed.
 - Streamline process and clarify overlapping processes and documents if multiple organizations are involved to avoid asking newcomers to re-send documents.

Since **I don't have much family back home**, it's difficult [to gather documents] but I'm trying to get my university to send it directly to us.

- Education

All those processes in my absence were very costly. I had to ask one of my friends to run all the errands. It is complicated because my education and experiences were **not just from one province or region.**

- Education

Spend some time going through and getting familiar with the list of required documents. So that you can **collect and make sure you've got all documents ready before you start the application.**

Certainly **we are looking at different ways to streamline processes.** With the English language, for example, it is a national standard cross country so that is also being looked at.

There's a cost associated to collecting documents, which can be a bit of a burden depending on which jurisdiction you're coming from. For example, Russia or the Ukraine right now, there could be very significant challenges, so **we have to look into accommodating that.**

Getting some of those high-quality original documents provided straight to the assessment agency can be very problematic and challenging but **they're so critical to be able to perform the assessment correctly.**

If they're already in Canada or have been in Canada for a period of time, **getting some of those reference letters from their employers** who are in other jurisdictions can be challenging.

For every applicant, we require the same information. So if someone is coming from a **war-torn country, getting those verifications that they were licensed or educated in that country is tough.** Sometimes just getting documents in general is challenging and then probably obtaining the required English language proficiency score for some is a challenge as well.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- Newcomers experience **financial hardships** because of the registration, which can be **unattainable and discouraging for some**.
- The application process can be costly and depends on the profession, applicant eligibility, preparedness and total timeline to complete the application.
- Some report having worked **survival jobs** to pay bills and support family, usually accompanied with **feelings of being de-valued, stress and frustration**.
- Newcomers typically **rely on previous savings** to bridge the registration application period, because the registration / licensure is usually the gateway to work opportunities in the trained profession.
- Common applicable costs to newcomers are:
 - Application fees
 - Examination fees
 - Language
 - Occupational / profession qualification test(s)
 - Cost of requesting and mailing original documents
 - Cost of upgrading or taking additional courses to attain accreditation if required
 - Living cost during the application process – inevitably, the longer the application process takes, and / or the more additional courses newcomer applicants are needed, the pricier it gets to register for their profession.
- Almost all costs above are **non-refundable**, regulators advise applicants to make sure they are eligible before applying.

Make sure you have the degree required for certification before you apply. Because **application fees are non-refundable**, and it's really heartbreaking, disheartening for us when somebody applies and don't even check the first box - which is asking whether you have the required degree or not.

- Most newcomers have some knowledge about the fees associated with the registration process, but lack awareness / preparedness for the full extent of the investment.
 - Lack of clarity of the process may lead to newcomers paying repetitive fees due to mixed timelines, expiration period / dates of exams and work experiences.
- **Newcomers call for financial support**, such as career loans, to help ease financial burden brought by the application.

I've **almost exhausted my savings** to a desperate level right now. But still, I want to continue pursuing this because teaching is my passion. I think it's my right to follow my passion. **Why should I be stuck in a dead-end-job when my passion is to teach and I'm good at it?**

- Education

The process could be discouraging for people. I'm lucky that I have the support of my family. But for a person who really needs to start working the first day of landing, I mean all of us do need to start working the first day we arrived, **because we don't want to spend all of our savings.**

- Education

The overall qualification process does require approximately 12,000 plus dollars. **That's a considerable amount that I am going to have to save up for.** It won't be right now, maybe in the foreseeable future, or as soon as and I get a job I will definitely go through these this application process.

- Accounting

A newcomer sitting at home alone applying for registration and jobs is difficult to cope. Because you get frustrated sometimes when **you are spending money while not earning.** The opportunity cost you are losing.

- Transportation / Logistics

Only people who are **really financially strong** and **really determined to do it** can get through the applications.

- Accounting

Unless an internationally trained individuals **actually do their research about living and working in Canada, we're setting them up for failure.** Why should a dentist, a physician be delivering Doordash, working at Walmart because they can't qualify? So, either they should not emigrate with the expectation that they will easily practice their profession or they need to be prepared to switch careers.

I have so many friends **just working as a phlebotomist to get food for their family and pay all the bills.** They **are not financially strong** and don't have anyone to take care of their kids. So, they just call it too much and just left it [registration to become a nurse].

- Nursing

[The registration process] **is very expensive and it takes time.** If applicants can't work while going through the process, it can be difficult to support themselves, on top of that the programs.

Some of the applicants that we see, **finance probably is a barrier for them to able to move forward.** Sometimes that's why they go in and apply to be an LPN first so that they can support themselves and families, while they continue their registration journey.

INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS & FINDING EMPLOYMENT

- Lack of industry connections is a **pain point for most** and limits newcomers' access to industry knowledge, trends and career opportunities.
 - More detrimental in registrations that require Canadian work experience / internship.
 - For example, to pass the bar, a law student must have 12 months of articling experience. However, **finding articling position in Saskatchewan is difficult for** internationally trained law students.
- Though not all registrations require Canadian work experience, lack of it and the resulting **lack of exposure to Canadian corporate culture is a barrier** for newcomers to finding employment in their chosen fields.
- Regulators call out common concerns from local employers: that they are
 - **Unsure of newcomers' intention to stay in Saskatchewan**
 - **Applicability of newcomers' internationally trained experience**, even knowing that the applicant has Canadian or provincial registration.
- When internship is required, regulators advise newcomers to look into positions with less competition, such as those in rural regions, smaller firms, etc.

*Second most challenge **was getting references in Canada.** Because most of my references got sent back. Employers said, 'no, we want references here [from Canada]. So, **I sacrificed one year doing volunteer work, creating connections.***
- Education

Employers assume that if you're from Saskatchewan maybe you're going to stay longer.

*The biggest issue that internationally trained lawyers face is finding an article in position in Saskatchewan. And they can't practice law until they complete their article in period. Not all of them, but certainly a lot of them have a tough time finding those [articling] positions, [because] they don't have connections here. **They didn't go to school here, you know? They don't have any of those supports or connections really.***

SUCCESS CASES

Newcomer Registration Success Story

Newcomer in Engineering

Application Time: < 6 months

Profile:

- From India, Master's degree, 10 years' industry experience in engineering
- Successfully received registration to practice engineering in Saskatchewan
- Currently working as a civil engineer in Saskatoon
- Advice newcomers to apply

Approach to Application

- Proactive – researched, planned and applied before coming to Canada
- Positive, confident of
 - His eligibility
 - APEGS procedures, professionalism, and willingness to help
- Organized – thorough planning

Application Information Sources

- IRCC, federal government website, directed to APEGS website
- APEGS website
- Word of mouth – friends, colleagues in field

Challenges

- No significant challenges with the application process
- Job hunting was difficult, initially
 - Not getting responses, despite accreditations
 - Often over-qualified for entry-positions

*Not much trouble [during job hunting], I got my job in March so within two months after I landed. **Because I already have the engineering in-training license.***

***When I was in India**, I was made aware about it by my community that I need a certification to get a civil engineer job in Saskatchewan. **So I applied when I was in India** and now I am working.*

*When I **searched my NOC code on IRCC**, **they directed me to APEGS**. Basically, saying if you want to work in Saskatchewan [as an engineer], then you must be registered as an engineering in training.*

***It was a quick process.** Within six months, I got a reply from APEGS saying, 'your license has been approved, and you are eligible as an engineering in training in Saskatchewan'.*

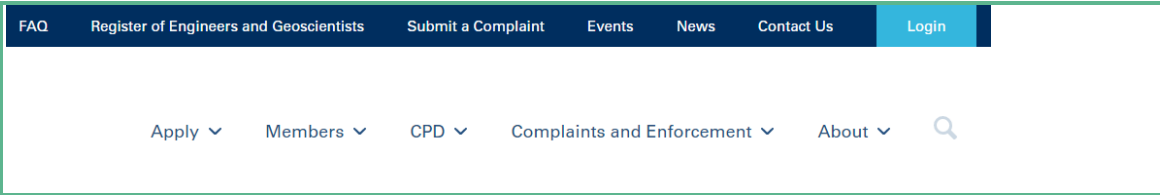
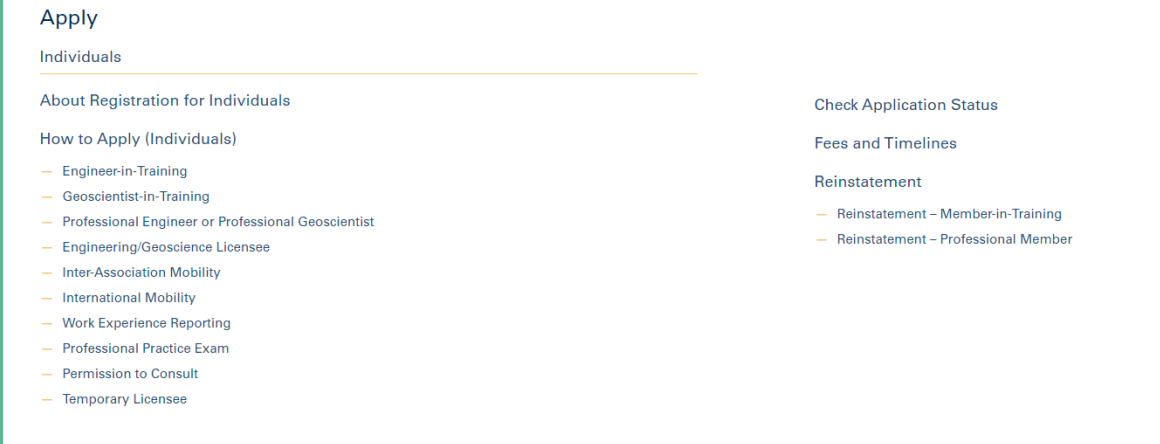

*If possible, they [newcomers] **should apply for certification from their home countries**, or plan to so as soon as they landed here. So they have that certificate on their hand to apply jobs.*

*I have never contacted APEGS [helpline during my initial application]. **But I'm a hundred percent sure that if I contact them [APEGS] or send them emails, they will definitely guide me.***

*Recently I have renewed my license, it was super quick. I just called them on that customer number, and they were ready to help. **I think they are encouraging more engineers to work here in Saskatoon.***

Regulator Success Case – APEGS

- Regulator websites showcase different strengths. Based on newcomer participant testimonials, **the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS)** is highlighted below:
 - Easy to find / access
 - Clear
 - Organized
 - Detailed
 - Step-by-step instructions

<i>APEGS Website Layout (https://www.apegs.ca/)</i>	
<i>Front Page Top Banner</i>	 <p><i>Action-oriented home page with easy to understand tabs and information for potential applicants</i></p>
<i>"Apply" Drop-down Menu</i>	 <p><i>Lists all accreditations offered by APEGS, as well as application status, fees and timelines, and other services.</i></p>
<i>Application Routes (e.g., Engineer-in-training)</i>	 <p><i>Clearly outlines the application process, WES (education assessment) details, and what to expect after submission.</i></p>

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- ✿ Thorough and early planning is suggested by both newcomer and regulator participants to effectively navigate the registration process. Advise newcomers to research, plan, collect documents and apply for registration early in the immigration process for a smooth transition to employment in Canada.
- ✿ Newcomers need consistent, accurate and accessible information (i.e., up-to-date requirements database, regulator contact information, available support services, etc.). Resources including the regulator database produced in phase one of this research are the first step to assisting newcomers with gaining employment in their chosen fields. Clearly laid out online information on regulator and other service provider websites provides valuable resources for potential newcomer applicants (e.g., APEGS website). Promote consistent communication / information about the registration process to minimize confusion.
- ✿ Assist newcomers with planning, especially in understanding the process / requirements and financial planning. A list of self-check questions, such as those listed in Appendix I, might be helpful for newcomers during the planning stage.
- ✿ When multiple levels of registrations (provincial, federal) are required, advise regulators to clarify the role of each organization and map out the registration steps. Also, clarify potentially overlapping documents and processes to help applicants navigate and plan for their application.
- ✿ Since regulators are not equipped to answer immigration related questions, advise newcomers to only reach out to regulators on registration related issues and help direct newcomers to appropriate organizations to answer immigration inquiries.
- ✿ Offer personalized services to assist newcomers who are having difficulty navigating the application process. Make sure to use compassionate, solution-driven communication. Take time to understand inquiries to ensure newcomers feel heard and valued.
- ✿ Highlight resources (e.g., settlement, social, career, etc.) available to newcomers throughout the immigration process to help with transitioning to life in Canada. General social and career events are helpful for newcomers to build local connections and engage with employment networks. Help promote regulatory bodies in-person events to connect newcomers to local industry professionals.
- ✿ Opportunities exist to help local employers recognize the value of internationally trained and currently registered newcomers. If possible, look into strategies to encourage local employers to hire registered newcomers.

APPENDIX I: NEWCOMER CHECKLIST QUESTIONS

1. Is your intended profession regulated in Saskatchewan? I.e., do you need a registration or licensure to work in your intended field?
2. Do you have previous education and training in your intended field?
3. Are the proof of your identity, education and work experience documents accessible? (Regulatory body might require other documents)
4. What is the regulatory body for your profession? Do you have their contact information?
5. Are there multiple registrations (federal, provincial) applications for your profession?
6. How do you plan to support yourself and your family if applicable during your registration process?
7. Are you aware of resources available to you in Saskatchewan to support you throughout your application?