

Office of the
fairness
commissioner

Bureau du
commissaire à
l'équité



Study of Registration Practices of the

**ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS
OF ONTARIO, 2007**

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The Office of the Fairness Commissioner is an arm's-length agency of the Ontario government, established under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006. Its mandate is to ensure that certain regulated professions have registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background of the Regulatory Body.....	3
A. Legislation.....	3
B. Protected Titles	3
C. Definition of the Profession	4
D. Labour Market/Economic Trends.....	4
E. New Developments Within the Profession.....	5
F. Staffing	5
3. Registration Practices	5
A. Registration Requirements and Application Process.....	5
B. Documentation Required from Internationally Trained Individuals	6
C. Credential Assessment (Third Party and/or Internal)	7
D. Academic/Program Requirements	7
E. Work Experience Requirements	8
F. Examinations	9
G. Language Requirements.....	10
H. Fees.....	11
I. Third Parties	12
J. Typical Length of the Registration Process.....	12
K. Accredited Programs	13
L. Internal Review/Appeal Process	13
4. Bridging Programs.....	14
5. Mutual Recognition Agreements.....	14

6. Applicants' Interactions with Regulatory Body	15
A. Nature and Frequency of Communication	15
B. Backlogs	15
C. Complaints Regarding the Registration Process	15
7. Changes Since the 2005 Survey	15
8. Registration Information and Statistics	15
9. Sources	21

1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) undertook a study of registration practices of Ontario's regulated professions during the fall and winter of 2007–2008. The purpose of the study was to understand each regulated profession's 2007 registration practices and to establish baseline data and information to enable the OFC to measure progress as it fulfills its mandate under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006.

This report reflects the registration practices of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario as of December 31, 2007. Information in this report was gathered from

- face-to-face meetings with registration staff of the regulatory body
- additional documentation provided by the regulatory body
- relevant websites
- career maps for the profession posted on the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's website (where applicable).

The Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario also provided registration information and statistics for 2005, 2006 and 2007 through a standard spreadsheet designed by the OFC.

An analysis and summary of the findings for all of the regulated professions are contained in the OFC's *Ontario's Regulated Professions: Report on the 2007 Study of Registration Practices*.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE REGULATORY BODY

A. Legislation

The Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) operates in accordance with the Professional Geoscientists Act, 2000.

B. Protected Titles

“Professional geoscientist” (P.Geo. in English or G.P. in French) is the protected title regulated by APGO.

C. Definition of the Profession

The Professional Geoscientists Act defines a professional geoscientist as someone who performs any activity that requires the knowledge, understanding and application of the principles of geoscience and that concerns the safeguarding of the welfare of the public, life, health or property, including the natural environment, and who meets the requirements of membership in APGO.

The range of job titles that a professional geoscientist may use includes but is not limited to geoscientist, geologist, geomorphologist, geophysicist, geochemist, earth scientist, hydrogeologist, environmental geologist, environmental geoscientist and vice president, director or manager of exploration. The use of any job title that suggests to the public that an individual is trained in the geosciences and is holding himself or herself out to be a professional geoscientist is illegal unless the job title is used by an individual who is registered to practise as a professional geoscientist in Ontario.

APGO considers that an undertaking requires application of the principles of geoscience if it includes, but is not limited to, “advising, planning, designing, collecting, sampling, mapping, logging, surveying, acquiring, examining, investigating, interpreting, processing, analyzing, reporting, evaluating, opining, consulting, certifying, directing, supervising, administering or managing either

- activities aimed at discovery, development or production of metallic or non-metallic minerals, rocks, nuclear or fossil fuels, precious stones and water resources

or

- activities relating to geoscientific properties, and conditions or processes that may affect the well-being of the general public, including those pertaining to preservation of the natural environment such as, but not limited to, assessing potential impacts of activities and developments on groundwater and other natural systems, and investigating, evaluating, remediating groundwater, soil, overburden sediment and bedrock conditions.”

D. Labour Market/Economic Trends

Professional geoscientists currently have little difficulty finding employment as there is a high demand for their skills. Generally speaking, the labour market for professional geoscientists correlates with the overall state of the mining industry, which is determined by the global demand for metals, materials, and fossil fuels.

A long downturn in the mining industry deterred people from entering the profession of geoscience. However, since the mining and metals markets rebounded in the last decade or so, the supply of geoscientists has not kept up with the demands of the industry.

Environmental geoscientists are also in great demand, due to increasing government regulation in the area of the environment and public concern over drinking water and the environment.

E. New Developments Within the Profession

Over the last 20 years there has been rapid growth in the field of environmental geoscience.

F. Staffing

APGO's staff consists of three full-time employees. Two of those employees are involved in the registration process.

3. REGISTRATION PRACTICES

A. Registration Requirements and Application Process

i. Registration Requirements

To be registered with APGO, applicants must comply with all of the following criteria:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be of good character
- Meet established academic requirements
- Meet stipulated work experience requirements
- Submit three references¹ that confirm the Work Experience Report

¹ Of the three references, two must be registered as professional geoscientists (P.Geo.) or professional geologists (P.Geol.) or professional geophysicists (P.Geoph.) in an association that is a constituent association of the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG), or they must be registered in a self-regulatory organization of geoscientists outside of Canada that (after December 2006) that is recognized by the CCPG or is acceptable to the Registration Committee; or at least one P.Geo. (as per the preceding criteria) and one professional engineer (P.Eng.) must be registered in a Canadian jurisdiction that regulates the practice of geoscience under an engineering regulatory body.

- Successfully complete a Professional Practice & Ethics (PPE) Examination (which may be written any time after submitting the application and application fee)
- Demonstrate a reasonable fluency in English or French in the PPE examination.

Unlike many regulatory bodies in Ontario, APGO does not require that its applicants be permanent residents to be considered for registration.

ii. Classes of Membership

The following are classes of membership assigned by APGO:

- Practising Member
- Temporary Member
- Limited Member
- Non-practising Member

Two other designations used by APGO are Geoscientist-in-Training and Student.

B. Documentation Required from Internationally Trained Individuals

i. Standard Documentation

In addition to the documentation required of applicants educated in Canadian institutions (see the application package at www.apgo.net), the internationally trained applicant must also submit an original university transcript that has been assessed, preferably on a course-by-course basis, by an academic credential evaluation service such as World Education Services (WES) or the University of Toronto Comparative Education Service.

If the transcript is in a language other than English or French, it must be translated by a certified translator who is a member of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) or be translated, signed, stamped and dated by a professional geoscientist, or equivalent, who has competent knowledge of both the other language and English or French. The original transcript, the translation and the evaluation must all be submitted to APGO by the evaluation service.

ii. Options for Applicants with Unavailable/Destroyed Documents

Applicants whose transcripts are completely inaccessible may have to write an examination(s) set by APGO, and their work experience record and referees will be even more important to the registration process. Under certain circumstances, an internationally trained geoscientist can apply as a 10-year practitioner. A 10-year practitioner must have a credential acceptable to the Registration Committee and 10 years of qualifying geoscience work experience obtained within the previous 15 years.

C. Credential Assessment (Third Party and/or Internal)

APGO uses the services of third-party credential assessment agencies to assess the equivalency of an international applicant's degree to the relevant Canadian degree and to assess the validity of transcripts.

Upon receipt of all documents, including the equivalency-assessed transcript, the Registration Committee reviews an applicant's course of study in geoscience to ensure that he or she has attained all courses that are required to practise the profession.

D. Academic/Program Requirements

Applicants are required to arrange for their university to send directly to APGO a certified copy of their full academic transcript(s), including, where possible, a list of courses completed and marks achieved.

If the transcript is international and requires an equivalency evaluation, the original should be sent directly to World Education Services (WES) with directions to send it together with any translation and the equivalency results directly to APGO. When an original transcript cannot be sent directly from the institution to WES, a certified true original transcript or certified true copy of the original transcript should be sent to another equivalency evaluation institution (such as the University of Toronto Comparative Education Service), with directions for the equivalency evaluation institution to send the certified true original transcript or certified true copy of the original transcript, translation and equivalency results directly to APGO.

Eligible applicants must have attained one of the following:

1. a four-year bachelor of science degree or its equivalent, awarded by a Canadian university, in an area of geoscience and have at the time of applying at least four years of qualifying geoscience work experience obtained within the previous 10 years

or

2. an equivalent credential, as determined by the Registration Committee/Registrar, from another institution, and at least four years of qualifying geoscience work experience obtained within the previous 10 years

or

3. a credential acceptable to the Registration Committee/Registrar that shows knowledge in an area of geoscience and at least 10 years of qualifying geoscience work experience obtained within the previous 15 years.

APGO reviews the content of all academic credentials on a course-by-course basis, if possible, to determine if the minimum knowledge requirements for admission to professional practice have been met.

Technical or confirmatory examinations may be arranged for applicants who are deemed to be deficient in an area of study (see section 3.f). Other options open to the Registration Committee for those applicants who are deemed to be deficient in an area of study are:

- having members of the committee familiar with the appropriate field of practice interview the applicant to ascertain whether he or she does possess the minimum required knowledge
- requesting that the applicant obtain the courses required
- denying the application.

There are specific minimum knowledge requirements that applicants must meet in order to be registered with APGO. The Canadian Geoscience Standards Board has revised the current minimum knowledge requirements and the revised list awaits approval by the Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG) board. This list includes all the courses and areas of study that an applicant must have in order to practise the profession of geoscience. If approved, this list will be made public some time in 2008.

The revised minimum knowledge requirements will not be applied retroactively. The current minimum knowledge requirements, available at www.apgo.net, are in effect until the revised requirements are approved by the CCPG board. The current criteria will continue to be in force for five years after the CCPG approves the revised minimum knowledge requirements, on an overlap basis, until applicants in their four-year work experience period have been registered.

E. Work Experience Requirements

APGO assesses an applicant's work experience in geoscience, as presented in the applicant's Work Experience Record form, against the following five criteria:

- practical experience in the application of geoscience theory
- practical experience in the understanding of geoscience processes and systems
- management of geoscience projects

- communication skills
- awareness of societal implications of geoscience.

An applicant who is applying under criterion 1 or 2 outlined in section 3.d is required to demonstrate at least 48 months of verifiable and acceptable geoscience work experience within the last 10 years. Applicants may be granted up to 12 months credit for geoscience work experience gained after year 2 of an undergraduate degree and prior to receiving a B.Sc., up to 12 months additional credit for geoscience work experience gained while completing an M.Sc. program (with thesis) and a further 12 months credit for geoscience work experience gained while completing a Ph.D.

An applicant who applies under criterion 3 of section 3.d must have at least 10 years of qualifying work experience in an area of geoscience that was obtained within the previous 15 years.

All applicants must confirm that at least 12 months of the work experience has been obtained in Canada or in a work environment deemed to be equivalent by the Registration Committee.

F. Examinations

i. Professional Practice and Ethics (PPE) Examination

All applicants must write and pass the national Professional Practice and Ethics (PPE) examination within two years of filing an application and prior to being issued a licence. The exam may be written any time after the submission of the application and application fees. The PPE examination is a general examination that covers ethics, professional practice, business law, professional liability and responsibilities to the public. The three-hour examination consists of two parts: 120 multiple-choice questions and a short essay. One hundred questions are standard across Canada² and the remaining 20 questions are based on Ontario acts and regulations governing geoscience. The exam is available in English and French.

The PPE examination is scheduled four times a year, in January, April, July and November. Applicants must send in their application to write the exam at least 60 days before the exam date. Information on the PPE examination and on suggested textbooks and study material is posted on the APGO website.

Once the application to write the PPE examination has been accepted, the applicant will be advised of the nearest examination location, along with the date and time. Arrangements can be made to sit the exam anywhere, including at overseas locations requested by the candidate, subject to identifying a suitable proctor.

² This set of 100 standard questions from the PPE examination is also written by professional engineers in several jurisdictions.

A passing grade of 65 per cent must be attained in the multiple-choice section of the examination. The essay question is graded on a pass/fail basis. If the applicant passes the multiple-choice portion of the exam but fails the essay question, the essay question only may be written again on any subsequent examination date. Should the applicant fail the multiple-choice portion of the exam, the entire exam, both multiple-choice and essay question, must be written again, on any subsequent examination date.

A breakdown of the PPE examination and sample questions are available from APGO. Previous exams are not provided to applicants waiting to write the PPE examination.

ii. Technical/Confirmatory Examinations

The Registration Committee may assign technical or confirmatory examinations to applicants whose academic credentials, with regard to the minimum knowledge requirements, are determined to be deficient. An applicant may take a university course(s) to satisfy any deficiency noted by the Registration Committee.

An applicant may be exempted from writing technical or confirmatory examinations if he or she

- has successfully completed a four-year undergraduate degree in geoscience (or possesses an equivalent or acceptable credential) outside of Canada, which fulfills the minimum knowledge requirements as determined by the Registration Committee
- or**
- is an experienced practitioner with 120 months (10 years) or more of qualifying geoscience work experience, obtained in the last 15 years, as determined by the Registration Committee.

G. Language Requirements

Although APGO requires a reasonable fluency in written and spoken English or French, it does not separately test language skills. Language testing is incorporated into the essay component of the PPE examination, and applicants must pass this part of the exam to be considered for licensure.

H. Fees

The fees listed do not include GST.

Fee	
Application Fees	
Application fee to be a professional geoscientist (P.Geo.)	\$275
Temporary application fee	\$275
P.Geo. temporary certificate in Ontario fee	\$100
Geoscientist-in-Training (GIT) application fee	\$100
Transfer from another Canadian jurisdiction	\$275
Certificate of authorization fee	\$175
Technical/Confirmatory exam fee	\$210
PPE exam fee	\$210
PPE exam rewrite fee — essay portion only	\$100
Change of designation fee	\$75
Reinstatement fee	\$175
Annual Membership Dues	
Membership (practising members)	\$400
Temporary Member	\$400
Limited Member	\$175
Temporary certificate in Ontario	\$200
Non-practising Member	\$75
Geoscientist-in-Training	\$140
Student	\$25
Certificate of Authorization Annual Dues	
One practitioner	\$250
Two practitioners	\$400
Three or more practitioners	\$1000
Other	
Appeal deposit	\$100

I. Third Parties

Name of Third Party	Relationship to Regulatory Body
World Education Services (WES)	APGO accepts documents from WES (among others) to assess the equivalency of international transcripts in relation to the standards of Canadian universities.
Comparative Education Services (University of Toronto)	APGO accepts documents from CES (among others) to assess the equivalency of international transcripts in relation to the standards of Canadian universities.
Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG)	The role of the CCPG, which is made up of the constituent provincial and territorial regulatory bodies, is to develop consistent, high standards for licensure and the practice of geoscience, to facilitate national and international mobility, and to promote Canadian professional geoscientists around the world.
Canadian Geoscience Standards Board (CGSB)	The CGSB is a subcommittee of the CCPG that was established to provide guidance to the constituent associations of the CCPG on matters relating to professional qualifications and practice.

J. Typical Length of the Registration Process

Applicants must submit all required documents and pass the PPE examination prior to being considered for registration. The PPE examination is offered every three months. Once the applicant has met all the requirements and submitted all the required documents and fees, the applicant's file is passed onto the Registration Committee, which meets every six weeks. Some applicants file their application and write the PPE in the interim, in order to be able to begin practising immediately upon acceptance by the Registration Committee and upon passing the PPE exam. Therefore, an applicant who meets all of the requirements can be registered in as little as two to four months.

However, if the Registration Committee deems the applicant's course of study to be deficient in certain areas and if technical or confirmatory exams are assigned (or if university courses are taken), the registration process will take considerably longer.

Currently, there is no time limit to the registration process. The only limit is placed on the writing of the PPE examination. The examination must be written no later than two years after the later of the following:

- the date of submission of the application for membership
- the date of successful completion of all other examination requirements or of the final determination that no examination is required.

K. Accredited Programs

APGO does not have a policy of accrediting specific university programs; it assesses the course of study of applicants on a course-by-course basis to ensure that all academic requirements have been met.

L. Internal Review/Appeal Process

The Registration Committee evaluates the application package of applicants to ensure that all requirements have been met. Evaluations regarding the content of degrees are made by the Registration Committee. The committee consists of three or more members of Council; two or more practising members of APGO who do not sit on Council; the Chair of the Council of University Departments of Geoscience Ontario (CUDGO) or a designate appointed by CUDGO; and the Registrar of APGO (ex officio).

If an applicant feels that his or her application has not been assessed appropriately, the applicant may appeal the decision and pay the appeal deposit. An Appeal Panel, a distinct and separate body from the Registration Committee, made up of members of Council not familiar with the applicant, would then be struck. The applicant is given the opportunity to present his or her case to the Appeal Panel, which makes a new registration decision. The original decision is not reviewed, as this is a separate panel which makes its own decision. This new decision is final, and the applicant's only recourse is to appeal the decision in the Ontario court system (which is charged to review it on the basis of protocol, not geoscience).

4. BRIDGING PROGRAMS

A. Geoscientist-in-Training Program

An applicant who holds an undergraduate degree in geoscience from a Canadian university, or an equivalent degree from an international institution, and meets the minimum knowledge requirements as determined by the Registration Committee, but does not meet the work experience requirements, is eligible to register in APGO's Geoscientist-in-Training (GIT) program.

An applicant who needs to obtain qualifying Canadian geoscience work experience is also eligible to be registered as a GIT.

B. Professional Access and Integration Enhancement (PAIE) Program

The PAIE program was established by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to improve access for internationally trained persons to the fields of professional environmental planning and geoscience. The 12-month program has been designed to facilitate the integration of internationally trained geoscientists by providing them with three months of classroom upgrading and nine months of full-time volunteer placement with a host organization.

This program was available in 2007. Applicants should contact PAIE to find out about current availability.

5. MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS

The Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists (CCPG) was established in 1997 by the provincial and territorial professional geoscientists' regulatory bodies. One of its main tasks is to facilitate the mobility of professional geoscientists within Canada and internationally. To this end, the constituent associations of CCPG in 2001 signed the Inter-Association Mobility Agreement. This agreement permits a geoscientist licensed in any Canadian geoscience association to become licensed in any other Canadian geoscience association quickly and with a minimum of inconvenience.

On June 19, 2003, the Ordre des Géologues du Québec (OGQ) and APGO signed the Quebec–Ontario Inter-Association Mobility Agreement, which allows for the reciprocal recognition of professional geoscientists from Quebec and Ontario to facilitate incidental and temporary practice between the two provinces.

6. APPLICANTS' INTERACTIONS WITH REGULATORY BODY

A. Nature and Frequency of Communication

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all documents, including referee forms and transcripts, have been received by APGO. APGO will contact an applicant if there are problems with the application process and if clarification or further information is required. An applicant will also be contacted when the Registration Committee makes its decision concerning registration.

B. Backlogs

There is currently no backlog of applications in APGO's registration process.

C. Complaints Regarding the Registration Process

Some internationally trained persons have had complaints about the third-party transcript evaluation process. APGO is remedying this situation by putting more information on its website and revising its transcript request documentation.

7. CHANGES SINCE THE 2005 SURVEY

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration conducted a survey in 2005 to collect information about occupational regulatory bodies in Ontario. Some of the changes to APGO's registration practices since 2005 include a revision to registration regulations to allow for more flexibility when reviewing references and a new website, with a section devoted to the internationally trained, that was still undergoing construction as of December 2007.

8. REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

Definitions used in these tables:

Alternative class of licence: a class of licence that enables its holder to practise with limitations; additional registration requirements must be met in order to be fully licensed. Alternative classes of licence granted by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) are specified under the tables below.

Applicant: an individual who has applied to start the process for entry to the profession.

Applicant actively pursuing licensing: an applicant who had some contact with APGO within the year specified.

Inactive applicant: an applicant who had no contact with APGO within the year specified.

Member: an individual who is currently able to use the protected title “professional geoscientist.”

Languages in which application information materials are available

Language	2005	2006	2007
English	Yes	Yes	Yes
French	No	No	No
Other(s)			

Countries where internationally educated applicants were initially trained in professional geoscience

Applications Received	2005	2006	2007
Largest number	United Kingdom	United States	United States
Second-largest number	United States	India	South Africa
Third-largest number	India	China	Pakistan
Fourth-largest number	Germany	Australia	United Kingdom
Fifth-largest number	Brazil	Russian Federation	Russian Federation

Staff employed by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario

Number of Staff	2005	2006	2007
Involved in registration process	2	2	2
Involved in appeals process	1	1	1

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in professional geoscience (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)

Members	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL
Total members	847	251	46	214	1,358
Non-practising members	6	1	0	3	10

Applicants processed by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario in 2005

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in professional geoscience (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)					
In 2005 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL
New applications received	78	28	6	40	152
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	77	25	6	39	147
Inactive applicants	1	3	0	1	5
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who became members	66	23	6	32	127
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence	13 ¹	8 ²	0	3 ³	24

¹ Geoscientist-in-training (12); Limited member (1)

² Temporary (Quebec-6); Limited member (1); Geoscientist-in-training (1)

³ Geoscientist-in-training (2); Temporary (1)

Applicants processed by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario in 2006

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in professional geoscience (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)					
In 2006 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL
New applications received	85	28	6	37	156
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	84	28	6	36	154
Inactive applicants	1	0	0	1	2
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who became members	66	28	4	29	127
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence	13 ¹	6 ²	1 ³	5 ⁴	25

¹ Geoscientist-in-training (10); Limited member (3)

² Geoscientist-in-training (4); Temporary (2)

³ Geoscientist-in-training

⁴ Geoscientist-in-training (5)

Applicants processed by the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario in 2007

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in professional geoscience (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)					
In 2007 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL
New applications received	64	27	7	41	139
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	64	27	7	41	139
Inactive applicants	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who became members	33	16	4	17	70
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence	4 ¹	5 ²	1 ³	2 ⁴	12

¹ Geoscientist-in-training (4)

² Geoscientist-in-training (4); Temporary (1)

³ Temporary

⁴ Geoscientist-in-training (1); Temporary (1)

9. SOURCES

Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario website. <http://www.apgo.net>. Last accessed: January 3, 2008.

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Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists website. <http://www.ccpge.ca/> Last accessed: January 3, 2008.

“Inter-Provincial Mobility Agreement,” Ordre des Géologues du Québec: http://www.ogq.qc.ca/membres/entente_eng.htm. Last accessed: January 3, 2008.

“Licensing of Geoscientists in Canada to December 31, 2001,” Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists: http://www.ccpge.ca/news/licensing_geoscientists_canada.html. Last accessed: January 3, 2007.

“Professional Access and Integration Enhancement: PAIE Program” brochure. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority website: www.trca.on.ca. Last accessed: January 2, 2008.

Representatives of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario met with staff of the Office of the Fairness Commissioner on November 26, 2007, to provide further information for this study.

[To Contents](#)

