



March 18, 2004

The Right Honourable Paul Martin  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Martin:

We listened with interest to your "town hall" meeting on CBC's *The National* on the evening of February 4, 2004, and commend you for your desire to listen to and address the concerns of Canadians from all walks of life.

One of the statements you made in responding to a question from an internationally-trained doctor was of particular interest. You indicated that his particular dilemma – being unable to find a residency space so he can get a licence to practise medicine – was not restricted to doctors. You explained that this challenge is being faced by other professions as well, and engineers were specifically mentioned.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) is the advocacy body for engineers in Ontario. Our organization agrees that internationally-trained professionals deserve respect and fair evaluation of their credentials and experience. Indeed, the engineering profession in Ontario is exemplary in this regard. According to our regulator, Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), over 60% of internationally-trained applicants in Ontario receive credential recognition sufficient for licensure without the need to write a single technical examination – something few, if any, regulated professions can claim.

Prospective immigrants can even have their credentials reviewed and approved by Professional Engineers Ontario **prior to immigration**. Once their credentials are accepted, applicants are granted a Provisional Licence to practise while they gather the required 12 months of Canadian experience. The Canadian experience year is a minimal and necessary requirement for the protection of the public, to ensure that all licensees are aware of the laws, codes, standards and business norms applicable to their professional practice here in Canada.

Why, then, do we continue to hear about recent-immigrant engineers driving taxicabs, or working in other similar jobs that do not make proper use of their skills and experience?

The answer is simple: supply and demand.

Taking the year 2001 as an example, about 10,225 internationally educated engineers settled in Toronto alone – **a number greater than Canada's entire graduating class of engineers combined**, in a city with only 17% of Canada's jobs! According to data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, engineers represent 70-80% of all the regulated professionals immigrating to Canada. This was before the 2002 reforms to the *Canadian Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act*, which removed any notion of demand-matching controls for immigration. Combined with a jump in university engineering enrollments to take

care of the "double cohort" in Ontario, the IRPA changes ensure that the supply of engineers will likely continue to outstrip demand for the foreseeable future.

One potential solution to this growing problem in our profession is to provide incentives to businesses to hire recent engineering graduates and recent immigrants registered in the Engineering Internship Training Program of PEO, so that they can gain the most valuable type of experience: that which is gained on the job, under the direct supervision of experienced, licensed professional engineers. Without adequate access to entry-level opportunities, the crisis of under-utilization in our profession will not improve, and the potential of our immigrants and graduates will continue to be wasted.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers is currently working with the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), the national organization of the 12 provincial and territorial associations that regulate the practice of engineering in Canada, to address these issues. Paul Martin, P.Eng., a member of our Board of Directors, is a member of CCPE's *From Consideration to Integration* Project Task Force. The goal of the Task Force is to help international engineering graduates integrate as quickly and efficiently as possible into the engineering profession in Canada as licensed professional engineers.

Another approach would involve aligning the goal of providing employment opportunities for Canada's engineers – key innovators in the Canadian economy – with the Federal Government's Innovation Strategy. Properly targeted and coordinated investment on the part of all three levels of our government would yield maximum benefit for Canada's economy.

Immigration enriches our country culturally and other ways too numerous to mention, but we **must** be honest with prospective immigrants to Canada about their job prospects and professional/regulatory requirements **before they choose to come** .

Uncontrolled supply to our profession is also unjust to the thousands of students who are turned away yearly from entry into Canadian engineering programs, and to the approximately 9,000 young women and men who graduate from those programs annually. The voice of this segment of our profession is not heard in the media as clearly as it should be, and the universities, which profit from their unregulated tuition fees, are less than receptive to their plight.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers believes that all levels of government have a responsibility to ensure that each individual can reach his or her full human potential by playing an active role in society. OSPE will continue to advocate for the interests of the 66,000 licensed professional engineers in Ontario, as well as those seeking licensure. We're committed to supporting and encouraging the interests of engineers and engineering students, wherever they received their education. We view the potential over-supply, under-employment and under-utilization of professional engineers as some of the most serious issues facing our membership, and look forward to working with your government in our efforts to address them.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "Y".

Daniel J. Young, M. Eng, P. Eng.  
President and Chair, OSPE

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