A report on the access to licensure in regulated professions for internationally trained professionals in British Columbia

Executive Summary
As an organization that works with immigrants and refugees, MOSAIC’s vision is “of a Canada that welcomes all people, that supports their rights to equality and choice...”. Our commitment is to working with all stakeholders, cooperatively and proactively, to identify issues affecting immigrants and refugees, and develop solutions to those issues.

We are pleased to have guided this report and deeply grateful to everyone involved in the research and recommendations for their commitment to taking a critical look at the process to licensure in regulated professions in BC for internationally trained professionals.

This report was made possible through funding from the Law Foundation of British Columbia and the Ministry of Economic Development, International Qualifications Unit. Heartfelt thanks to Veenu Saini, Law Foundation and Collin Mercer, Ministry of Economic Development for their support and commitment to solutions.

Sandy Berman and Suzu Matsuda are responsible for the on-site research and are the authors of the related analysis. A special thank you to Sandy Berman for her extraordinary work towards removing barriers of access to professions for internationally trained professionals.

Thank you to Gwen Brodsky and Kim Stanton, the authors of the legislative and legal analysis. They invested far more time than they originally anticipated in order to make the analysis as comprehensive and informative as possible.

This project wouldn’t have been possible without the commitment of the professional associations that participated on the Advisory Committee and as research sites. They are all true leaders:

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For copies of this report please go to the MOSAIC website at: http://www.mosaicbc.com/ImprovingAccessToLicensure.pdf or contact:

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1. **Introduction**

Canada is facing demographic challenges as the population ages and the labour force shrinks. Immigration, which contributes to population growth in both the short and long term, is important to address the labour shortfall. By 2011, it is estimated that 100 percent of Canada’s net labour force growth will depend on immigration. Canada has and will continue to benefit enormously from immigration. The contribution of immigrant business investment and immigrant talent and skill to the labour force has enhanced Canada’s economic prosperity and contributed to Canada’s identity as a diverse nation. Attracting and integrating skilled immigrants into Canada’s labour market is therefore essential to sustaining Canada’s social and economic interests.¹

While immigrant and refugee communities make up more than 32% of the population of the Lower Mainland, they are not in the local labour market in numbers and at levels of employment that are representative. For immigrant professionals, this lack of participation in the local labour market is even more discouraging. Unemployment and underemployment are critical problems for these immigrants. Depending on their profession, many are forced to work in “survival jobs” because they face significant obstacles in the Canadian labour market that “deny them the opportunity to use their skills and be compensated commensurate with their training and experience.”² This is devastating to the individual and a loss to society as a whole, especially in light of present and anticipated labour shortages in many professions. The Conference Board of Canada³ reported that if this major learning recognition gap in Canada was eliminated, it would give Canadians an additional $4.1 billion-$5.9 billion in income annually. Also, it is a matter of statutorily and constitutionally protected human rights that all British Columbians are entitled to live in a society that is free from discrimination. To remove the barriers to equal access to licensure and employment for internationally trained professionals, action by governments, employers and regulators of professions is needed.

Previous research has documented systemic barriers and initiatives to address these barriers. This project expands the existing research in British Columbia by analyzing the impact of provincial legislation along with the policies and practices of regulatory bodies in relation to access to licensure for internationally trained professionals. The research included a review of governing statutes for 38 British Columbia regulatory bodies and five national regulatory bodies. In addition, human rights and Charter of Rights case law were reviewed and analyzed to determine what legal obligations regulatory bodies have, particularly with regard to anti-discrimination norms as they relate to the inclusion of internationally trained professionals.

The research also specifically focused on the practices related to licensure of ten regulatory organizations and identified regulators’ promising practices for addressing barriers to access for internationally trained professionals. This research provides regulatory bodies with a mechanism for reflecting on their own policies and procedures to determine if they are free of discrimination.

2. **Methodology**

A Project Advisory Committee was set up and included five representatives from Health Regulatory bodies, four from other regulatory bodies, one representative from a non-profit agency and one Provincial government representative. Also included were two representatives from the BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network Roundtable. Representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Advanced Education agreed to review the draft report.

A research plan and tools for the legislative and case review and for the on-site policy and practices review was developed with input from the advisory committee. Ten research sites were identified: four health regulatory bodies and six other regulatory bodies. Representatives were interviewed with questions that focused on assessment and licensing requirements, factors that impact the assessment and licensing process, barriers to access for ITPs and promising practices. Relevant documents were also reviewed.

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² Working Precariously: The Impact of Race and Immigrants Status on Employment Opportunities and Outcomes in Canada, Cheryl Teelucksingh & Grace-Edward Galabuzi, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, May 2005 p. 3
A wide range of research reports describing the barriers to the participation of internationally trained professionals (ITPs) in the labour market and the promising practices in BC and other jurisdictions were examined as part of a literature review. This description of barriers provides background and context for this research.

2.1. Project Context

Many research reports have identified barriers to the participation of ITPs in the labour market. These research reports have examined the barriers related to education and training, registration and licensing, and employment. This report focuses on barriers to access in the registration and licensing process. Some examples of barriers identified in the literature are: lack of information about the requirements for registration and licensure, English language tests that do not adequately assess language competency required for job performance, difficulties related to the verification of credentials, lack of upgrading/bridging programs, lack of access to supervised practice opportunities, cultural bias in examinations, and high costs to applicants for assessment and registration. The literature review regarding barriers informed the direction of the legal and on-site research.

3. Research Findings

3.1. Legal Statutes Governing Professional Regulatory Bodies in BC

Professional regulatory bodies are entities to which governmental regulatory powers have been delegated. Self-regulating professions, rather than being regulated by government, have been granted the responsibility to regulate themselves. Professional regulatory bodies are akin to a level of government. As such, they have a duty to act in the public interest. This duty extends to licensing. A central goal of this report is to shed light on the content of the legal duties that apply to regulatory bodies in the exercise of their authority to establish and administer licensing requirements.

3.1.1. Regulatory Structure

The examination of the legislation through which regulatory bodies and their powers are established has led to the following conclusions: All self-regulating bodies are obligated to act in the public interest. The delegating statutes do not define the public interest or in any way limit the duties and powers of self-regulating bodies, so as to prevent them from addressing discrimination in licensing requirements. Nor do the delegating statutes prescribe the particularities of licensing requirements or the means by which competence will be assessed. Establishing standards, assessment tools and procedures required for licensing internationally trained professionals constitutes an exercise of discretion by regulators. This discretion must be exercised in accordance with the public interest, the content of which is not determined by delegating statutes. Thus, any deficiencies in the legality of licensing requirements are not the fault of delegating legislation but rather are a function of how the delegated authority is particularized and exercised by the regulators.

3.1.2. Mobility Agreements

A number of the regulatory bodies (both medical and non-medical) have implemented interprovincial mobility agreements pursuant to the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade (the “AIT”). Its purpose is to foster improved interprovincial trade by addressing obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and investments within Canada.

A “Post July 1, 2001 Strategy” was announced by Deputy Ministers working with the AIT that broadened the Labour Mobility chapter implementation activities, including to review current recognition agreements to determine the extent to which the foreign trained workers are excluded, and to determine approaches for recognition of foreign qualifications between jurisdictions. The 2003-2004 annual report on the AIT indicated that the parties planned to continue to work toward resolving the inadequate recognition of foreign trained workers in Mutual Recognition Agreements.
Concerns with respect to liability of regulatory bodies who accepted candidates from other provinces but did not accept candidates from other countries would likely be addressed by the provisions in articles 705, 707 and Annex 708. These sections provide that parties have the right to establish occupational standards and requirements, and that access to licensure will principally relate to competence.

3.1.3. Selected National Regulatory Organizations
The national regulatory organizations reviewed differ from the provincial regulatory bodies in that they are not typically created by statute. With the exception of the Canadian Architectural Certification Board, all of the national bodies reviewed are incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act.

The research did not uncover associated statutes, regulations, rules or bylaws readily available for review for these national organizations. It is unclear how the policy and processes for the accreditation and examination functions performed by the national organizations arise. Further research would be required to determine the existence of such documents, and to study more national bodies to establish whether national bodies are doing anything in particular to exclude or to facilitate membership of ITPs.

The lack of a statutory basis for these national organizations (other than registration as not-for-profit corporations) means that the organizations are not accountable to government in a direct sense and have a reduced degree of accountability with respect to the policies and procedures that they create. It appears that all the national regulatory organizations are empowered to make their own rules with respect to examination, accreditation, and/or evaluation of applicants. There do not appear to be any statutory or regulatory prohibitions that would prevent the national regulatory organizations from facilitating access to registration by internationally trained professionals.

3.2. Access to Licensing for Internationally Trained Professionals and Human Rights Law
The legal analysis addresses the responsibilities of professional regulatory bodies under human rights law, and particularly, the provisions of the British Columbia Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the “Charter”) that apply to professional licensing, and place of origin as a ground of discrimination. A discussion of the relationship between the duty of professional regulatory bodies to act in the public interest and to adhere to human rights norms is also provided. The analysis identifies the legal principles that define the concepts of discrimination, undue hardship, and the duty to accommodate, and concludes with a discussion of the implications of human rights law for regulatory bodies licensing requirements.

3.2.1. The Scope of Human Rights Legislation and the Charter, and the Responsibilities of Professional Regulatory Bodies
Professional regulatory bodies are subject to a legal obligation to ensure that the requirements for licensing adhere to human rights norms of non-discrimination and equality under the British Columbia Human Rights Code and under s. 15 of the Charter. The British Columbia Human Rights Code applies to professional licensing in that licensing falls within the prohibitions against discrimination by occupational associations. It may also fall within the ambit of prohibitions against discrimination in services and employment.

Licensing requirements of professional regulatory bodies are also subject to the requirements of s. 15 of the Charter, in that licensing constitutes the exercise of a delegated governmental decision-making authority. Discrimination based on place of training is encompassed by the Human Rights Code and s. 15 of the Charter, because there is a strong correlation between place of training and place of origin. If professional licensing requirements conflict with the Human Rights Code or the Charter, human rights laws take precedence and licensing requirements must be amended. Internationally trained professionals who believe that their rights are being infringed may initiate litigation against a regulator, pursuant to the Human Rights Code and the Charter.

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3.2.2. The Duty of Professional Regulatory Bodies to Act in the Public Interest and to Adhere to Human Rights Norms

The duty of regulatory bodies to act in the public interest is multi-faceted, and includes both a duty to ensure competence of practitioners and to uphold human rights norms. Further, it is not appropriate to regard these duties as contradictory. Discrimination is contrary to the public interest. As part of their duty to protect the public interest, regulators have a duty to ensure that standards, assessment tools, and procedures are consistent with the human rights norms of non-discrimination and equality.

This does not mean that conflicts will never arise between the public interest duty of a regulator to ensure the competence of practitioners and the public interest duty to uphold human rights norms. Rather, such conflicts must be resolved within the human rights framework, having regard to the legal principles that have been established concerning the meaning of discrimination, the duty to accommodate, and undue hardship.

3.2.3. Developments in the Law with Respect to Discrimination, Undue Hardship and the Duty to Accommodate

Discrimination analysis requires a substantive equality approach that examines the effects of licensing requirements, not merely their form. Discrimination is a question of adverse effects rather than a question merely of form or intention. Discrimination may arise because of the application of a facially neutral requirement. A requirement may be discriminatory because it is based on a standard that has adverse effects. Individual testing is not an answer to discrimination if the test is based on a discriminatory standard. However, the avoidance of discrimination may require that some individuals be individually assessed.

The question is not whether stringent standards of competence are necessary, but whether particular standards, assessment tools and/or procedures that have the effect of excluding people from licensure, or of placing burdens on them because of their place of origin, are necessary.

3.2.4. The Defence of Undue Hardship and the Duty to Accommodate

If a licensing requirement has discriminatory effects the regulator has a duty to accommodate, up to the point of undue hardship. Accommodation means making alternative arrangements or adjusting a requirement in order to remove the discriminatory effects on an individual or group. Only if it is impossible to provide a less exclusionary alternative will a discriminatory requirement be sustained. The burden of showing that it is impossible to adjust a requirement to eliminate its discriminatory effects rests with the regulator.

As this report shows, there are widespread concerns about requirements for licensing that affect access by internationally trained professionals to self-regulated professions in Canada. Increasingly, the concerns of internationally trained professionals about licensing standards, assessment tools, and procedures, that have the effect of blocking access to professional membership, and ultimately employment and service provision for internationally trained professionals, are posed as questions of discrimination, and as violations of human rights laws. Currently, various professional organizations in various Canadian jurisdictions are respondents in human rights complaints and Charter litigation that challenge licensing requirements. All professions have an interest in ensuring that their licensing requirements are consistent with applicable provisions of human rights and the Charter. There are many proactive measures that regulatory bodies can take to ensure that their licensing requirements are compliant with applicable human rights laws, and to engage the support of other institutions that may be needed to address issues that may not be within the sole control of regulatory bodies, but which nonetheless may affect licensing practices. Suggestions regarding key measures that should be taken by any regulatory body that is concerned with ensuring compliance with any applicable human rights laws are set out in the recommendations of this report (see 4.2 Assessment and Recognition).
3.3. Assessment and Licensing Practices of the Research Sites

3.3.1 Principles and Values Guiding Assessment and Licensing Practices
The overarching principles and values that guide the registration process within the participating regulatory organizations are defined as “the fundamental basis and belief system from which regulatory organizations operate,” and values are “the underlying moral standards that guide the actions” of the regulatory organizations. These are guiding principles for all procedures of regulatory bodies and have been the underlying basis for the establishment of standards for registration and licensing and professional responsibility and competency of members.

The principle of the protection of the public and the maintenance of professional standards are in fact complementary to the principle of access to licensure for all qualified and competent persons. Both principles serve the public interest. Access to licensure does not imply the lowering of standards or the undermining the safety of the public. It increases the diversity in a profession, and thereby provides the public with better service in this multicultural society.

3.3.2 English Language Assessment
To assess English language competency three medical regulatory bodies and one non-medical regulatory body require applicants to take a variety of English language tests. Five non-medical organizations and one medical regulatory body had no formal English language assessments; instead, it was thought that the ability to pass examinations implied English language competency. There are a number of problems with the existing options for English language competency assessment. For example, most testing options are designed to measure competency for an academic setting rather than for the workplace and there is no profession/sector related content. There are also differences as to how regulatory bodies determined their English language scoring levels. Some have based their scores on a systematic comparison with other regulatory bodies, colleges or university programs, while others do not have a clear rationale for their scoring levels. Where English language tests are not a requirement, English language competency is assumed if an individual can pass the licensing examinations. This raises concerns regarding the pass and fail rates on licensing examinations of internationally trained professionals.

3.3.3 Credential Evaluation
The evaluation of international credentials and experience was seen as a challenge for many of those interviewed. Some organizations lacked the resources to do in depth and ongoing research on international credentials. There is difficulty in getting official documents sent directly from some countries, and there is a lack of information about educational institutions in some countries. Different strategies have been used to address these challenges, for example some have used external organizations or their national organization to evaluate international credentials and experience.

3.3.4 Education Requirements Prior to Licensure
Education requirements of regulatory organizations vary. For some, a completed accredited degree is needed before applying for licensure. Other regulatory organizations have profession-specific education programs integrated into their licensing process and applicants are assessed on their past education, credentials and experience to determine which courses they must take. There are also profession specific courses that are required by all applicants.

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3.3.5. Competency Assessment
Competency-based assessments attempt to establish what individuals know and whether they can perform competently in the profession. None of the regulatory bodies have what they referred to as a formal competency assessment, although several had requirements that could be included in this category, such as: written submissions, oral interviews, and assessment/clinical examinations. Unintended cultural bias, lack of familiarity with profession-specific norms and practices, lack of profession-specific English language competency and a lack of familiarity with competency assessment processes can inhibit an internationally trained professional’s ability to demonstrate skills and knowledge. On the other hand the competency-based assessment has been identified by some of the regulatory bodies as an effective mechanism for individuals to demonstrate their professional competency.

3.3.6. Licensing Examinations
There are licensing examinations that examine specific knowledge of technical information, substantive information, skills and ability and examinations of knowledge of local rules and regulations, professionalism, and professional ethics. Problems identified by the regulatory bodies with regard to examinations include: costs, lack of familiarity with the testing format such as multiple choice, and perceived cultural bias.

3.3.7. Oral Interviews
The oral interview is used by some regulatory bodies as a mechanism to elicit information about an applicant’s past employment experiences in the profession and as a method to evaluate English comprehension and communication skills. Oral interviews can provide an alternative means of evaluating education and experience and can give the applicant an opportunity to demonstrate professional knowledge and skills. Some of the concerns identified by regulatory bodies about oral interviews as an assessment tool are the bias and/or preconceived beliefs of the interviewer(s) regarding the applicant’s place of education and work experience and the lack of criteria for English language assessment.

3.3.8. Internship with Professional Supervision
A number of the regulatory bodies have practice or work requirements for a designated time period. In all cases it is the responsibility of the candidate to find their practice position, and in most cases their supervising professional. This requirement presents a number of challenges to internationally trained professionals such as: a lack of job opportunities, discrimination by employers, an inability to earn an income during this time period, lack of employment networks, and lack of exposure to Canadian cultural norms. In some cases there is little training given to supervisors and a lack of clarity about their role. As a result ITPs may not be exposed to the full scope of professional practice. Some regulatory bodies are working in partnership with colleges and universities to locate supervised practice sites. Others have instituted provisional licenses to address those situations when an ITP cannot get employment without a license.

3.3.9. Fees Related to Registration
Each regulatory body has fees related to the registration and assessment requirements and these fees differ from organization to organization. These fees can be a barrier for internationally trained professionals because many of them have limited incomes. In addition if an individual fails any step of the process they have to pay fees for an appeal, and/or for retaking courses or examinations.
3.3.10. Specific Feedback Practices
Regulatory bodies provide feedback for specific assessment processes such as: credential review, examination(s), and interviews. Providing specific feedback is a very important mechanism for ITPs when they do not meet the criteria of any of the steps or when they fail an exam. Feedback enables them to know specifically what their knowledge and skill gaps are and what the expectations of the regulatory bodies are. Assessment processes that are under the control of provincial regulatory bodies tend to provide more detailed feedback than those under the control of national organizations.

3.3.11. Appeal Practices
Regulatory bodies have differences regarding their internal appeal mechanisms. There are appeal processes in some cases for all the assessment steps and in others for specific assessments such as credential evaluation and examinations. Concerns have been raised about appeals regarding the perception of unfairness. To remedy this concern some regulatory organizations have involved different staff and or external professionals for the appeals and not those who made the original decision. Concern has also been raised by regulatory bodies that access to appeal is limited to only certain assessment processes. In addition, grounds for appeal are in many cases restricted to narrow criteria such as an adverse examination environment that affected a candidate’s performance.

3.3.12. Review, Audits and Evaluation of Tools
Some provincial and national regulatory bodies review their requirements for course work, credential evaluation, and various examinations on an ongoing basis; others do a formal review of specific processes when needed. Some of these reviews involve surveying practicing members of their organization, faculty of a university, supervising professionals, examiners, and candidates. Organizations conduct this type of survey every one to five years. Another approach described by one regulator involved the hiring of a consultant to review the practice examination in order to establish the minimum requirements which are based on the professional competencies. Several of the regulatory organizations’ representatives indicated that there was a need for a more regularized, formal review process because changes have come about as a result of the reviews.

There is variation in the above assessment tools and practices. This variation should cause regulatory bodies to question to what extent their specific practices are valid and effective.

3.3.13. Factors that Impact the Assessment and Licensing Process of Regulatory Bodies
Some regulatory organizations have experienced pressure from internationally trained professionals to make their licensing processes more transparent and accessible. Others have been pressured by employers to address the skill shortage in specific professions. Addressing the skill shortage was identified by respondents as a complex problem because there were many factors that contribute to this problem and many stakeholders with different agendas. As a result this report does not address the issue of skill shortage in-depth.

Reciprocal or mutual recognition agreements are an important means of facilitating access for internationally trained professionals, and demonstrate the ability of regulatory bodies to be flexible in order to reach agreements with other jurisdictions. Several of the regulatory organizations have mutual recognition agreements with their counterparts in many of the provinces of Canada. Some of the regulatory bodies are also signatories to, or are working towards agreements between Canada and other countries such as the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Hong Kong, South Africa, and France.
Where there is such an agreement applicants may be required to take only those courses that address local needs, or may be granted an exemption from examinations and a reduction in work experience requirements. Attaining reciprocal agreements takes time and in the interim regulatory bodies can work with their provincial counterparts to establish recognition tools to more effectively evaluate the equivalency of programs and courses in other countries, which will facilitate access for internationally trained professionals.

3.3.14. Barriers to Access for Internationally Trained Professionals Identified by Regulatory Bodies
The regulators identified many barriers faced by internationally trained professionals in their dealings with them. There were barriers that related to the immigration process where ITPs were given misleading information and where the immigration of certain professions was encouraged despite an insufficient employment demand. There were barriers that related to the difficulties ITPs had in navigating the processes of registration and licensing. There were challenges that regulatory bodies themselves faced in evaluating such diverse credentials and work experiences. Regulatory bodies also identified barriers that resulted from a lack of English language competency and/or a lack of awareness about the Canadian workplace culture.

3.3.15. Promising Practices
Promising practices are examples of strategies that regulatory bodies can use to improve access to their professions. They draw attention to initiatives that address some of the barriers to access identified in the literature review and by the research participants. The promising practices section of the report highlights a number of key themes: collaboration of regulatory bodies; policies and practices review and the development of transparent standards and processes, centralized information and assessment, flexible approaches to assessment and licensing of ITPs, provision of information and support to ITPs, access to subsidy and loan programs, and reciprocal agreements. Regulatory organizations can use the information in this section to assess their own practices and develop new ideas for improving access to licensure for ITPs.

4. Recommendations

4.1. General Recommendations for Regulatory Bodies
4.1.1. Regulatory bodies should ensure that requirements for licensing comply with the anti-discrimination and equality prohibitions of the British Columbia Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and undertake a systemic review of all requirements for licensing and make reports of the results freely available.
4.1.2. Regulatory bodies should establish an internal mechanism to ensure that processes of credential evaluation are equitable and free from discrimination.
4.1.3. Regulatory bodies should identify and record the numbers of internationally trained professionals who have applied for licensure, their country of training and work experience and if they have been successful in becoming licensed.
4.1.4. Where their national organizations are responsible for credential assessment and review, regulatory bodies should work with these organizations to identify and record the numbers of internationally trained professionals who have applied for credential assessment, their country of training and work experience and whether their application for licensing was successful.
4.1.5. Regulatory bodies should explore whether they have a responsibility to encourage diversity within the profession so that the profession is representative of the diversity in the community.
4.2. Assessment and Recognition

4.2.1 Regulatory bodies should undertake a systemic review of all requirements for licensing, with the involvement of internationally trained professionals, to ascertain whether there are requirements for licensing that have discriminatory effects on internationally trained professionals, particularly in respect of standards, assessment tools, and procedures that have been repeatedly identified as barriers to licensing of internationally trained professionals.

4.2.2. Regulatory bodies should engage in a concerted, deliberative process to search for possible accommodations to eliminate the discriminatory effects of licensing requirements. The duty to accommodate entails effective problem-solving processes, and requires the participation and co-operation of all relevant stake-holders, decision-makers and experts.

4.2.3. Regulatory bodies should modify licensing requirements to eliminate discriminatory effects, to the extent possible.

4.2.4. Regulatory bodies should establish accessible processes for future accommodation requests and complaints, so that ITP’s requiring individual accommodation can make specific requests to a regulator and so that the regulator is informed of potential problems.

4.2.5. If it is not possible to fully eliminate all discriminatory requirements for licensure, regulatory bodies should document the rationale and methodology for making that determination, and periodically reassess possibilities for accommodation.

4.2.6. If, in the opinion of the regulator, there are parties, such as the universities, employers, and governments, whose assistance and participation is needed to address barriers to licensure, the regulatory bodies should initiate a process to engage their involvement.

4.3 Specific Recommendations for Licensing Requirements

4.3.1. English Language Assessment

a) Regulatory bodies need to benchmark English language competencies required for their professions in order to ensure that English language assessments are relevant.

b) Regulatory bodies should ensure that English language assessments meet the English language competency requirements of the profession and have specific and measurable criteria to evaluate English language competency.

4.3.2. Credential Review

a) Regulatory bodies should ensure that the credential evaluation process is free from discrimination with regard to place of origin/training and work experience and that it is flexible and transparent.

b) Regulatory bodies should work with their counterparts in other provinces to develop or expand their database of educational institutions in other countries, establish recognition tools to more effectively evaluate programs and courses or increase their use of external credential assessment organizations to authenticate or evaluate credentials.

4.3.3. Competency Based Assessment

a) Regulatory bodies should explore the integration of competency-based assessments in their assessment processes and assist reviewers to gain awareness of their own potential biases and/or preconceived ideas about internationally trained applicants and their place of training and work experience.

b) Regulatory bodies should work in partnership with educational institutions to develop bridging/transition programs to help orientate and better prepare internationally trained professionals to effectively demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

4.3.4. Licensing Examinations

a) Measurements of competency skills and knowledge should be designed, analysed and tested to ensure that they are valid and measure what they are intended to measure.

b) Regulatory bodies must ensure that there is no unwarranted cultural content in licensing examinations and should provide orientation and support for examination preparation.
4.3.5. **Oral Interview**
   a) Regulatory bodies must ensure that interviewers are aware of their own potential biases and/or preconceived ideas about internationally trained professionals and their place of training and work experience.

4.3.6. **Feedback Mechanism**
   a) The results of each step in the assessment process should be clearly communicated to the applicant, with strengths and limitations identified. Applicants should be able to identify areas in which they require upgrading or training needed to fill gaps in order that they can complete the registration process successfully.
   b) Provincial regulatory bodies should work with their national organizations to develop systematic feedback mechanisms for applicants with regard to the assessment process.

4.3.7. **Supervised Practice**
   a) Regulatory bodies should foster partnerships and opportunities to help ITPs find supervisors or mentors.
   b) Regulatory bodies should build partnerships with academic institutions, professional associations and employers to improve the perception of ITPs because many do not see their value to the Canadian labour market.
   c) Regulatory bodies should ensure that supervisors and mentors are adequately trained to work with applicants and have clear expectations of their roles.

4.3.8. **Fees**
   a) Regulatory bodies should ensure that the fees for assessment and licensing are reasonable and relate to the cost of administering the assessment.
   b) Regulatory bodies need to provide information on loan programs to assist internationally trained professionals who have limited funds to pay registration and licensure fees.

4.3.9. **Appeals**
   a) Regulatory bodies should implement appeal processes that are fair and accessible for all steps of the assessment process.

4.4. **Information and Communication**
   4.4.1. Information about assessment and licensing requirements should be clear and understandable. The information must describe the competencies required, the assessment methods and process used, the duration of the assessment process, and all associated fees.
   4.4.2. All communications with applicants should be free from unnecessary language and cultural barriers. Documentation should be analysed to determine if the information is communicated in the clearest and simplest way possible.

4.5. **Collaboration**
   4.5.1. The project advisory committee in partnership with MOSAIC should develop a communications plan for the distribution and promotion of the Improving Access to Licensure for Internationally Trained Professionals final report.
   4.5.2. The project advisory committee in partnership with the BC Regulators for Access and MOSAIC should hold a forum in the fall of 2005 to present the findings of this research to regulators and other key stakeholders. The forum should develop a plan of action for the implementation of the recommendations that all regulators can agree to. The forum should also make a commitment to organizing bi-annual meetings to share information about promising practices and strategies.
   4.5.3. Regulatory bodies should work with their national organizations to develop reciprocal agreements with regulatory organizations and/or education institutions in other countries.
4.5.4. Regulatory bodies should work with other provincial regulatory bodies and their national organizations to research programs and registration systems in other countries in order to determine whether these programs meet the necessary requirements.

4.5.5. Regulatory bodies should work with employers to improve access to employment for internationally trained professionals.

4.5.6. Regulatory bodies should develop partnerships with immigrant serving agencies and with internationally trained professional organizations to improve access to employment for internationally trained professionals.

4.5.7. Regulatory bodies in partnership with MOSAIC should draft a proposal for funding for the development of a self-assessment tool to assist regulatory bodies to implement a systemic review of all requirements for licensing. The tool should also include a list of consultants who can assist regulators in this process.

4.6. **Governments**

4.6.1 The Provincial government should provide financial aid to ITPs for assessment and licensing costs, tuition fees.

4.6.2 Citizenship and Immigration Canada should tie immigration policy to the labour market and track immigrants after landing to determine whether their employment positions match their training and work experience.

4.7. **Need for Further Research**

4.7.1. There is a need for more research with regard to national regulatory organizations to explore whether their policies and practices exclude or facilitate the licensing of ITPs.

4.7.2. There is a need for further research about the issue of skill shortages. Discussions should also take place between regulatory bodies, Federal and Provincial governments, and employers to explore the question of who has the responsibility to address the skill shortage problem.