



Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access Fact Sheet

What is the Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access?

The Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access (ORA) is a group of regulators of self-regulated professions in Ontario. Our goal is to improve access to professions by internationally educated or trained candidates while maintaining high standards for public safety.

Why is the issue of access important to Ontario regulators?

There are approximately 38 self-regulated professions in Ontario. Each profession has a regulatory body in place to grant licences, certificates, or professional designations to qualified candidates. In growing numbers, regulatory bodies are receiving applications from skilled immigrants who have received their education and training overseas. It is well documented that international candidates often face extra hurdles that delay or even prevent their entry to their profession in Ontario. For example, they may find it difficult to:

- obtain accurate information about the licensing procedure before immigrating to Canada,
- ascertain the equivalency of their academic credentials
- find work placements to gain Canadian experience
- obtain targeted training to upgrade a specific skill or technical language ability.

Why is it important for regulators to work together on access issue?

Ontario regulatory bodies recognize the importance of improving access for international professionals while maintaining standards to protect public safety and treating all candidates fairly. While many regulators have instituted practices or projects to improve access, initiatives have proved challenging to develop, implement, and sustain, especially with limited resources. The steering committee serves as a catalyst for regulators to work collaboratively on practical, proactive approaches and to benefit from each other's experiences. ORA also helps to foster collaborative partnerships with regulators and other players such as educators, community groups, employers, and governments.

What is the genesis of the Steering Committee?

Following a series of information sessions hosted by The Maytree Foundation and various self-regulated professions in 2000-2001, a group of senior staff from 13 regulatory bodies formed the Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access.

Who is on the Steering Committee?

Senior staff from the following regulatory bodies are members of the steering committee:

Professional Engineers Ontario
College of Nurses of Ontario
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
College of Massage Therapists of Ontario
Certified General Accountants of Ontario
College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario
Ontario College of Teachers
College of Optometrists of Ontario
College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
Ontario Association of Architects
Ontario College of Pharmacists
Law Society of Upper Canada

Senior staff from the Access to Professions and Trades Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities liaise with the steering committee. The executive director of The Maytree Foundation serves as an advisor.

What is the role of Steering Committee members?

The steering committee members work together to develop and propose initiatives that can assist regulators on access issues and provide opportunities for collaboration. The products of the steering committee are not necessarily formally adopted or endorsed by the members' regulatory bodies.

What is the Access Solutions Project?

In June 2002, the steering committee received funding from the Access to Professions and Trades Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities to conduct a two-year "Access Solutions" project. The goal of the project is to conduct research, produce practical resources for regulators, and provide opportunities for collaboration.

What has the Access Solutions Project accomplished?

Research

ORA conducted research to document promising practices of regulators in Ontario and other jurisdictions, increase understanding of the access issue, identify supports to help regulators improve access for international candidates, and identify gaps and challenges regulators are facing. 30 Ontario regulatory bodies participated in the research by completed surveys and 28 participated in one-on-one interviews. The research report is available on the website described below.

Compendium of Promising Practices

The research results were used to create a compendium of 29 promising practices of Ontario regulators. A promising practice is one that is innovative and has improved, or has the potential to improve, access for international candidates while maintaining standards. The compendium is also available on the website described below. Regulators are encouraged to submit additional or updated promising practices.

Regulators For Access Website

ORA produced a website that was launched in October 2003. The site contains a wealth of information, best practices and links to assist Ontario regulatory bodies on issues affecting access to professions by international candidates. While designed primarily for Ontario regulators, the site will be of interest to immigrant professionals, community groups, governments, colleges and universities, employers, and professional associations.

Regulators' Forum

The first of two regulators' forums took place October 17, 2003. Participants had the opportunity to learn about key findings from the project research, participate in the launch of the Regulators for Access website, hear dynamic speakers, and discuss ways to collaborate on improving access to professions by international candidates. A report on the forum appears on the website. A second forum is planned for June 7, 2004 to foster collaboration with educators, community groups, employers and governments.

Guiding Principles for Regulators

ORA has developed overarching principles to guide regulators as they evaluate their policies, practices and approaches in relation to internationally educated candidates. The principles are centered on five themes: fairness; objectivity; transparency; accountability; and collaboration.

Regulators' Guide for Promoting Access

ORA has produced a Regulators' Guide for Promoting Access to Professions by International Candidates. This is a practical assessment tool regulators can use to evaluate and design programs that support access to professions by qualified international candidates. The guide sets out the rationale for access initiatives as well as tips, challenges and where to go for more information.

Business Case

ORA has prepared a business case setting out a rationale for implementing initiatives to improve access to professions by internationally educated and trained candidates. The business case articulates benefits for the economy, society, and the professions.

How can I get more information?

For more information, check out the ORA web site at www.regulators4access.ca.

Or contact:

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Updated May 2004