

# Labour Mobility Essentials

By Denis Blais, O.L.S., O.L.I.P.

**W**hy? How? When? What are the advantages to our profession? What are the challenges?

If you want to attract young people to the surveying profession, give them the flexibility to travel the world, participate in interesting projects, broaden their skills and perspectives, our revitalized Agreement on Internal Trade provides options. If you want to retain your existing professionals, don't want to lay them off during slow times, sharing them with an out of province firm on a temporary basis is another option under Chapter 7 of the Agreement. Conversely, if you want to participate in a large scale project but don't have the resources, you can partner with a number of firms, either in or out of province. For those professionals who are motivated, and we need people who are motivated, the agreement offers them an opportunity to meet and interact with their peers in meaningful ways. None of the above is new or ground breaking but Chapter 7, being the part of the Agreement dealing with Labour Mobility, facilitates the task. I am optimistic about the Utopia contemplated by Chapter 7, and the above scenarios, however, there have been and still are a number of challenges attached to the implementation of labour mobility.

Fortunately for our profession, for over 10 years now, the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors (CCLS) and the 11 Canadian licensing bodies have been working diligently to meet the spirit of the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade. The spirit of the agreement requires the recognition of professionals without any additional re-training, re-testing or re-assessment. I cannot say that our efforts to meet the spirit of the agreement were motivated by economics. Rather, we were motivated by the fact that mobility could potentially attract more people to the profession and so we set out a plan to facilitate mobility. That plan recognized the need for standard entry requirements for all surveyors across the country. By having every surveyor in the country take the same courses with the same content, barriers to recognition could be eliminated. As a first step, a task force was formed and this group of volunteers created a new harmonized syllabus. This syllabus has recently been adopted by the licensing bodies. As a second step, this past year, CCLS secured federal funding to further develop the syllabus, more specifically, to hire subject matter experts to define the learning outcomes. This work is ongoing.

Interestingly, the Canadian Board of Examiners for Professional Surveyors (CBEPS) was born out of the many discussions held amongst our volunteers working on the harmonization of entry standards. Most of the professional

bodies across the country have joined CBEPS, including the AOLS, and this will facilitate implementation of harmonization and labour mobility.

So in many ways, we are ahead of other professional bodies when it comes to meeting the requirements, however, there are many challenges yet to be overcome. For example, there are provisions of Chapter 7 that allow professional bodies to require additional testing if there are differences in occupational standards or scopes of practice. In surveying terms, this means that the licensing bodies can test for local knowledge as it pertains to cadastral surveying. We can all attest to the uniqueness of our provincial statutes and regulations and their application so this type of testing seems reasonable. The licensing bodies have opted for a 4 hour exam to ensure candidates have the local knowledge they need to serve the public. It sounds simple enough, however, the exam must be readily available, unique every time and there cannot be any unreasonable delays in testing a candidate. That requires time and money, and the cost to be borne by the licensing bodies. If you have 1000 members, the cost can be reasonably dispersed but if you have only 40 members, the cost can be onerous. Some level of cooperation at the national level is possible, however, there is still a significant burden at the local level.

So when can you apply to become a member of another professional surveying group within the country? Contact the licensing body of your choice now and tell them that you want your credentials as a professional land surveyor to be recognized under Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade and their process will be explained to you. Sounds simple, but of course, don't be surprised if your colleagues ask you to consider the ethical challenges facing such a move. Ask yourself whether you shouldn't perhaps partner with, work for a colleague within the jurisdiction you are interested in before you take the exam and/or take a relevant course or two to learn more about the local jurisdiction you are interested in. Strictly speaking, you are not obligated but if you have the same professional maturity as the rest of your colleagues, your ethics will dictate a cautious approach. When you're ready for the exam, there will be a fee of course and once successful, you will have to pay the associated professional dues in the jurisdiction(s) of your choice.

In preparing this article, I am thankful for the reports prepared by our CCLS Executive Director Sarah Cornett and the many discussions I have had with colleagues across the country. Thank you all.



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