

Decision Note – Time-Based Experience Review

Agenda Item No.	C-573-7.1
Purpose	For Council to receive a report presenting the results of the review of time-based experience requirements and approve associated policy direction.
Strategic/Regulatory Focus	Regulatory - licensing improvement
Motion	That Council approves the changes to the regulatory provision relating to time-based experience requirements, as presented in Appendix B, and directs staff to work with the Ministry of the Attorney General to make amendments to Regulation 941 as anticipated by paragraph 9(v) of subsection 7(1) of the <i>Professional Engineers Act</i> . (requires two-thirds majority)
Attachments	Appendix A – Review of Time-Based Experience Requirement: Key Findings and Considerations Appendix B – Policy Direction for Proposed Amendments to Regulation 941, made under the <i>Professional Engineers Act</i>

Summary

Over the past year, staff have comprehensively reviewed the time-based experience (TBE) requirement for those seeking P.Eng. licensure. The shift to Competency-Based Assessments (CBA) in 2023 as the primary means of evaluating an applicant's experience invites a reconsideration of whether the current requirement for 48 months of supervised experience continues to be reasonable and necessary. The attached report presents the findings of this review, considers options for maintaining or changing the requirement, and offers a recommendation for consideration by RPLC and Council. It is recommended that the TBE requirement be reduced to two years, with CBA remaining a requirement.

Public Interest Rationale

PEO's public protection mandate requires it to ensure that those seeking licensure are appropriately competent, while also ensuring that requirements for licensure are not unnecessarily burdensome or unfair. PEO strives to evaluate applicants for licensure based on relevant, qualitative metrics that demonstrably relate to competency.

Background

Following the introduction of CBA in May 2023, in September 2023, Council directed RPLC to develop a plan for the review of the TBE requirement. In accordance with the policy development plan proposed by RPLC and approved by Council in November 2023, staff proceeded to prepare Part I of a Policy Impact Analysis (PIA), which was presented to the RPLC in November 2024. At that time, RPLC accepted the recommendation that staff continue monitor implementation of the CBA framework, as well as related activities undertaken by other provinces and territories and report back to RPLC and Council in 2025. This note and its attached report detail the results of the continued monitoring of CBA, activities of other jurisdictions and related reconsideration of the TBE requirement.

Considerations

Based on the findings from the attached report (Appendix A), the following key points are highlighted:

- The primary rationale for 48 months has been nullified: Over three decades ago, PEO increased the TBE requirement from two to four years for international labour mobility reasons rather than based on any identified public risk concern; the intent was to make it easier for Canadian licence holders to become licensed elsewhere, notably the United States. However, in the decades since, these anticipated labour mobility improvements did not materialize.
- Competency is the primary consideration in licensing decisions: Engineering regulators across Canada including PEO now rely on CBA as a trusted, psychometrically valid method of assessing readiness for licensure based on demonstrated skills and abilities rather than simply months of experience.
- Confidence in CBA approach: PEO has a high degree of confidence in the CBA approach to ensure only validly qualified applicants are approved for licensure.
- FARPACTA and the Ontario Fairness Commissioner comments: The Ontario Fairness Commissioner recently improved PEO's risk rating from *medium high* to *moderately low*, partially in recognition of the demonstrated benefits of the CBA program. However, the revised risk rating is conditional on PEO's continued efforts to improve the efficiency of the licensing process, including by reviewing the 48-month TBE requirement to consider the extent to which the requirement is "necessary for or relevant to the practice of the profession", which is the test set out in section 19(2)(a) of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006.
- Engineers Canada recommends 4-years of TBE be recommended, not required: In April 2024 Time-Based Experience Group (TBEG), a sub-group under Engineers Canada's National Admissions Officials Group, recommended that regulators gradually move towards a *recommended* time-based experience requirement of four years, instead of a required four years.
- Other Canadian regulators have reduced TBE requirements: Manitoba has eliminated its TBE altogether and Quebec has reduced it from 3 to 2 years. Many other jurisdictions are also actively reviewing their TBE requirements and considering similar options.
- Changing TBE will not impact Canadian labour mobility for licensed engineers: When asked, other Canadian engineering regulators stated that reducing or removing the TBE requirement would not affect their labor mobility practices or the transferability of a PEO licence to another Canadian jurisdiction.

Stakeholder Engagement

As noted in the report, staff conducted targeted consultations with licence holders and employers, the Strategic Stakeholder Advisor Group (SSAG), and engaged with Engineers Canada's TBEG and reviewed its resulting reports and recommendations. In general, other than TBEG (which recommended making the TBE requirement a recommendation rather than a requirement), stakeholders were hesitant to reduce the TBE requirement but also acknowledged that they were not familiar or had limited familiarity with the CBA approach.

Options

Three options were considered: (1) do nothing (maintain status quo), (2) remove the TBE requirement altogether, or (3) reduce the TBE requirement to 2 years. The potential risks and advantages are detailed in the attached report (Appendix A).

Recommendation(s)

1. Implement Option 3 (reducing the TBE requirement to 2 years). The CBA requirement will remain unchanged.
 - PEO will monitor implementation of this change in order to evaluate any potential operational or other implications and determine if further adjustments to the TBE requirement are merited. Updates will be reported to Council as appropriate.
 - This change will apply to all new applicants as well as those in the legacy pool, consistent with the principle adopted during the 2023 transition to a FARPACTA-compliant licensing regime and supported by the Fairness Commissioner, namely that if a change benefits applicants in the legacy pool, they should be permitted to take advantage of it.
 - In pursuing the necessary regulatory changes associated with this policy direction, PEO will inquire with the Ministry of the Attorney-General whether it is advisable to draft the regulation in a manner that does not specify a particular amount of time and instead allows the required time to be set by Council.
2. As part of implementing Option 3, a comprehensive communications plan will accompany the change to reinforce that competency, not time, is the measure of readiness for licensure. Clear messaging will help shift the focus away from years of experience and manage any perception that licensing standards have been lowered, while emphasizing that the competency-based assessment approach remains unchanged.

Next Steps

Following Council's approval, staff will work with the Ministry of the Attorney General to make amendments to Regulation 941.

Prepared By: Policy Staff

Appendix A: Review of Time-Based Experience Requirement: Key Findings and Considerations

1. Introduction

As engineering regulators across Canada have shifted to Competency-Based Assessments (CBA) as the core means of determining readiness for licensure, many are reconsidering whether time-based experience requirements continue to be appropriate and necessary.

Currently, candidates for P.Eng. licensure in Ontario must complete both 48-months of supervised work experience and demonstrate they have successfully completed a CBA. However, as engineering regulators across Canada, including PEO, now regard competency is the true barometer of readiness to practice, it naturally prompts the question of whether TBE requirements continue to serve a necessary purpose.

This report provides relevant context and analysis to inform decision-making and examines the risks and advantages of three approaches to TBE requirements: (1) maintaining the status quo of 48-months; (2) removing the requirement altogether; and (3) reducing the requirement to 24-months. In all cases, the requirement to successfully complete the CBA will be maintained.

2. Historical Context

On January 1, 1995, the time-based experience requirement increased from 2 to 4 years. As detailed in the March/April 1993 edition of Engineering Dimensions magazine, a primary driver for the decision was the desire to more closely approximate experience requirements in the USA and Europe in the hopes of facilitating labour mobility. The change was not based on an identified risk or evidence of competency gaps among applicants, but rather on perceived alignment benefits with other jurisdictions. Three decades later, however, Canada's shift to 4 years has not resulted in achieving Mutual Recognition Agreements with most regulators in the United States or Europe. In addition, even at the time this change was made, there was an acknowledgement that requiring more time-based experience did not necessarily guarantee a higher quality learning experience.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Background

Paragraph 2 of section 33(1) of Regulation 941 states:

The applicant shall demonstrate that he or she has had 48 months of experience in the practice of professional engineering that, in the Council's opinion, provides sufficient experience to enable him or her to meet the generally accepted standards of practical skill required to engage in the practice of professional engineering.

Although not explicitly prescribed by the Regulation 941, the CBA is the method used by PEO to evaluate whether a candidate for licensure has "sufficient experience to enable him or her to meet the generally accepted standards of practical skill required to engage in the practice of professional engineering. This approach was adopted in accordance with a decision of Council in November 2022 to adopt a CBA model.

As such, candidates for licensure must demonstrate that they have *both*:

- Completed 48 months of experience in the practice of professional engineering
- Completed the CBA, demonstrating the sufficiency of their experience.

4. Pan-Canadian Activities

Through 2023 and 2024, staff sat on the Time-Based Experience Group (TBEG), a subgroup of the Engineers Canada National Admissions Officials Group (NAOG) formed to "share ideas, information,

research and identify opportunities for potential changes or a reduction of the time-based experience requirements that are largely still a part of the P.Eng. licensure assessment processes in Canada”. This has informed staff’s research, as well as final recommendations.

As part of its research, the TBEG conducted a cross-jurisdictional assessment exercise to explore whether some applicants could demonstrate the required competencies for licensure in less than four years. In December 2023, TBEG reviewed a redacted CBA report provided by Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba (EGM) for an applicant who achieved licensure with approximately two years of post-graduation experience. When shared with assessors from other jurisdictions, many reached a similar conclusion, determining that the applicant had met the necessary competency standards. The exercise demonstrated that, in certain cases, applicants may be able to attain the required level of competence within a shorter timeframe, depending on the quality and breadth of their experience. It also reaffirmed that the CBA model is focused on demonstrated competence rather than the amount of time served.

At the April 2024 NAOG meeting, TBEG delivered its final report, recommending that Canadian regulators consider a gradual transition toward a consistent four-year time-based experience standard.

5. Consultations

In fall 2024, PEO undertook consultations with key stakeholders to gather their input on potential changes to the TBE requirement. These consultations included surveying current license holders, employers and supervisors of Professional Engineers and meeting with the Strategic Stakeholder Advisor Group (SSAG)

A majority of survey respondents indicated strong support for the status quo. However, respondents also indicated that they were unfamiliar with the CBA approach, which may have impacted their comfort with potentially removing or reducing the TBE requirement. Similarly, among SSAG participants there was no consensus on reducing or removing time, and it was decided that the group needs to better understand CBA, which was then quite new and unfamiliar to most SSAG participants. Furthermore, some members raised concerns that the removal of the 48-month requirement would compromise objectivity and consistency. Overall, there was some support for establishing a "recommended" TBE requirement.

6. Key Findings

The primary rationale for 48 months has been nullified

PEO, along with most other Canadian jurisdictions, increased the TBE requirement from 2 to 4 years in the mid-90s in the hopes of making it easier for Canadian engineers to become licensed in the United States and Europe. This change was not based on any identified public-protection or risk-related concern, but rather on perceived alignment benefits with other jurisdictions. In the absence of meaningful improvements (e.g., mutual recognition agreements), however, this initial justification no longer provides a compelling basis for maintaining a four-year requirement.

Competency is the primary consideration in licensing decisions

With the adoption of CBA, PEO has shifted its focus in licensing decisions to an evaluation of the quality of experience, rather than simply time spent. Even once candidates complete their 48 months of supervised experience, they must demonstrate that that experience has allowed them to meet all required competencies in order to be granted a license.

PEO has high confidence in the CBA approach

PEO's licensing team has robust practices in place to identify applications that may include exaggerated or questionable claims and has a high degree of confidence in the CBA approach as a means of evaluating candidate readiness for licensure. These practices include validating the validator and interviews with the Experience Requirements Committee when there are concerns of untrue claims in a CBA. This aligns with feedback received from other engineering regulators as well.

PEO's licensing team supports reducing or removing the TBE given their reliance on the CBA process to evaluate readiness of candidates. There is agreement that one could achieve competency in less than four years, though it would be very unlikely to achieve it in fewer than two.

FARPACTA and the Ontario Fairness Commissioner

In its 2023 Fair Registration Practices report, the OFC praised PEO's adoption of Competency-Based Assessments for both applicants in the FARPACTA compliant process and legacy applicants who had yet to submit their experience; despite this praise, PEO's risk rating was set at "moderate-to-high" due to other concerns with PEO's licensing operations.¹ However, in October 2025, the Ontario Fairness Commissioner improved PEO's risk rating, partially in recognition of the demonstrated benefits of the CBA program in reducing delays associated with interviewing bottlenecks and licensing delays. The revised risk rating was conditional on PEO's continued efforts to improve the efficiency of the licensing process, including by reviewing the 48-month TBE requirement to consider the extent to which the requirement is "necessary for or relevant to the practice of the profession", which is the test set out in section 19(2)(a) of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006.

Engineers Canada recommends 4-years of TBE be recommended, not required

As noted above, Engineers Canada recommends that regulators gradually move towards a *recommended* time-based experience requirement of four years. This recommendation was reached through various research activities conducted by the group, including surveys on each Canadian engineering regulators current experience assessment methods and processes, research on other countries' time based experience requirements for obtaining a P.Eng. or equivalent, research on other Canadian professions' time based experience and a cross-country assessment exercise of a prospective applicant with only two years of experience.

Other Canadian regulators have reduced TBE requirements

In September 2022, EGM removed a minimum time requirement, relying wholly on their CBA to evaluate the experience of applicants for licensure. At the same time, they adopted Engineers Canada's recommendation to recommend 4 years of experience. Policy Staff consulted with Manitoba to gain insight on their experience following removal of their time-based requirement. EGM stated that they have confidence in their CBA process and have not experienced an influx of underqualified candidates since removing the TBE requirement. The Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec (OIQ) reduced their experience requirements to two years in 2018. All other Canadian engineering regulators currently require 48 months of experience in addition to fulfillment of a CBA; however, many are also actively reviewing their TBE requirements and considering reducing or removing the requirement.

Changing TBE will not impact Canadian labour mobility for licensed engineers

In September 2025, PEO consulted with other Canadian engineering regulators to gain insight on how transferability might be affected between provinces were PEO to change its time-based requirements. Provincial regulators were provided with PEO's current policy options to modify time-based experience

¹ 2023 Fair Registration Practices Report (p.6)

and asked if labour mobility would be affected and whether they are currently reviewing their time-based requirements. The consulted regulators primarily appear to be impartial to the change and state that a change in PEO's approach will not affect their labor mobility practices, nor will they block transferability if PEO makes this change.

7. Options Evaluation

Option	Risks	Advantages
1. Maintain status quo	• Reputational risk to PEO if it maintains an approach that is not evidence-based; for which the original impetus for change has not materialized; is potentially unfair; is inconsistent with modern emphasis on demonstrated competency (CBA has been proven to be a psychometrically valid and effective method of assessment while requiring a set time-based requirement does not accurately validate qualitative experience); and is inconsistent with nation-wide recommendation from Engineers Canada. • Risk of losing qualified candidates if PEO maintains unnecessary and burdensome criteria to licensure. • Risk of treating candidates unfairly and risk of further criticism from the Ontario Fairness Commissioner without a clear rationale or benefit.	• Many current licence holders and employers/supervisors have expressed comfort and confidence in the current approach as this is the system they are familiar with.
2. Remove TBE requirement	• Risk of operational challenges if PEO were to receive an influx of underqualified applicants, including applicants the exaggerate their experience to become licensed sooner since it is now a possibility (note: PEO is confident it could identify and properly respond to such applicants, but it could cause additional workload for the licensing team).	• Better emphasizes the primacy and importance of the CBA system to evaluate readiness for licensure and removes arbitrary and potentially unfair barriers to licensure • Shifts the focus from duration to demonstrated quality of experience, reinforcing that competency, not time, is the measure of readiness for independent practice. • Adherence with Engineers Canada's recommendation could

		position PEO as adaptable and a leader of change. • Insofar as other provinces are also considering this approach, choosing this option may bring us closer to national harmonization of licensing requirements.
3. Reduce TBE requirement from 4 years to 2 years	• Mitigates the risks associated with Options 1 and 2 but does not fully eliminate them.	• Better emphasizes the primacy and importance of the CBA system to evaluate readiness for licensure and reduces arbitrary and potentially unfair barriers to licensure. • Shifts the focus from duration to demonstrated quality of experience, reinforcing that competency, not time, is the measure of readiness for independent practice. • Mitigates risks associated with a potential influx of grossly underqualified candidates by retaining a minimum TBE requirement. • Insofar as other provinces are also considering change to TBE requirements, choosing this option may bring us closer to national harmonization of licensing requirements. • As Quebec has had a two-year requirement in place since 2020, PEO may be able to draw on the experience of OIQ as a precedent to inform best practices and lessons learned.

Note that if either Option 2 or 3 is adopted, a comprehensive communications plan will be developed in order to ensure candidates and current license holders understand why the TBE requirement is being changed. Strong communications will mitigate any risk of the change creating confusion among candidates about the *expected* amount of time required to achieve competency or any potential reputational risk from a *perceived* reduction in licensing requirements despite consistent CBA approach.

8. Recommendations

1. Implement Option 3 (reducing the TBE requirement to 2 years).
 - This option best mitigates the risks associated with the alternative options while presenting very limited unique risks.
 - PEO will monitor implementation of this change in order to evaluate any potential operational or other implications and determine if further adjustments to the TBE requirement are merited. Updates will be reported to Council as appropriate.
 - This change will apply to all new applicants as well as those in the legacy pool, consistent with the principle adopted during the 2023 transition to a FARPACTA-compliant licensing regime and supported by the Fairness Commissioner, namely that if a change benefits applicants in the legacy pool, they should be permitted to take advantage of it.
2. As part of implementing Option 3, develop a comprehensive communications plan that highlights to students and others that PEO still expects it may take a prospective applicant up to 4 years to develop the competencies required for licensure.

Appendix B: Policy Direction for proposed Amendments to Regulation 941, made under the Professional Engineers Act

The Professional Engineers Act (the Act) provides Council with the authority to make regulations regarding the experience requirements for the issuance of a licence.¹ Further to this authority, subsection 33(2) of Regulation 941 sets out the requirements applicants for licensure are required to satisfy in order to obtain a license.

The following policy changes will be made to Regulation 941 in order to require that candidates for licensure complete both a minimum of 24 months of experience and complete a CBA as conditions for licensure (all other conditions for licensure, such as the academic requirement, NPPE, good character, remain unchanged):

- Changing the requirement for 48 months of experience to 24 months of experience, to be acquired after the applicant has acquired their degree or equivalent education qualifications are obtained.
- Adding an explicit, additional requirement that candidates for licensure successfully complete a CBA as the mechanism for determining that a candidate for licensure has sufficient experience to enable them to meet the generally accepted standards of practical skill required to engage in the practice of professional engineering.
- These proposed changes would apply retroactively.

Exact wording will be determined in consultation with the Ministry of the Attorney-General.

¹ Subsection 7(1) at paragraph 9(v).