



The Labour Market Integration of Internationally Educated Health Professionals: An Environmental Scan

Employment Pathways in Canada – Health Careers by Achēv

SEPTEMBER 2024

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Table 1 List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ACP	Alberta College of Pharmacy
ACPE	Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education
BCCNM	British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives
CCEM	Community Collaboration Employment Model
CCPP	Certificate to Canadian Pharmacy Practice
CCAPP	Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs
CDSA	Controlled Drugs and Substances Act
CIHI	Canadian Institute for Health Information
CLMTA	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta
CLMTO	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario
CLPNA	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta
CNO	College of Nurses of Ontario
CPhA	Canadian Pharmacists Association
CPRNE	Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination
CRNA	College of Registered Nurses of Alberta
CSMLS	Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science
CTS	College Technology Services
EPIC-HC	Employment Pathways in Canada – Health Careers
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada

Abbreviation	Definition
FCR	Foreign Credential Recognition
HWC	Health Workforce Canada
IEHP	Internationally educated health professional
IEMLT	Internationally educated medical laboratory technologist
IEN	Internationally educated nurse
IPG	International pharmacy graduate
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
LPN/RPN	Licensed practical nurse / Registered practical nurse
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
MLT	Medical Laboratory Technologist
NAIT	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
NAPRA	National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities
NCLEX-RN	National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses
NICHE	Nova Scotia's International Community of Health Workers Engagement
NNAS	National Nursing Assessment Service
NOC	National Occupational Classification
NP	Nurse practitioner
OCP	Ontario College of Pharmacists
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OH	Ontario Health
OSA	Online self assessment

Abbreviation	Definition
OSCE	Observed Structured Clinical Examination
PACE	Practice Assessment of Competence at Entry
PEBC	Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
REx-PN	Regulatory Exam – Practical Nurse
RhPAP	Rural Health Action Plan
RN	Registered nurse
RNA	Registered nursing assistant
RNCCAP	Registered Nurses Canadian Competency Assessment Program
RPN	Registered Practical Nurse
RxA	Alberta Pharmacists' Association
SPEP	Supervised Practice Experience Partnership
SPT	Structured Practical Training
SRDC	Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
STARS	Supports, Training, and Access to Regulated-employment Services
TEER	Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities
WES	World Education Services
WIP	Workplace Integration Program

ABSTRACT

Canada has been facing significant labour shortages in health professions, with the situation intensifying during the COVID-19 pandemic. While, across Canada, internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) have been recruited to help alleviate shortages across healthcare occupations, IEHPs experience complex barriers to become licensed to practice and integrate into the health workforce.

This environmental scan provides an overview of the policies and practices that have facilitated the integration of IEHPs into the Canadian health workforce, focusing specifically on three areas: nursing, pharmacy, and medical laboratory occupations. Organized by healthcare area, the report examines the IEHP licensure pathway, recent policy changes and new announcements relevant to each field, and past and existing programs and initiatives implemented to support IEHPs' integration into the workforce. The analysis highlights the challenges in this integration, including barriers in the accreditation and certification processes as well as barriers in the workplace such as language and communication barriers.

In light of these findings, Achēv's Employment Pathways in Canada – Health Careers (EPIC-HC) program aims to address some of the identified gaps and leverage the insights from this scan to further support the integration process for IEHPs. [Achēv](#) is one of the largest providers of employment, settlement, language, women, youth, and technology solutions services in the Greater Toronto Area, throughout Canada and abroad, that is committed to creating faster paths to prosperity for clients. For more than 30 years, Achēv has dedicated themselves to helping diverse Canadians and newcomers achieve their full potential. They serve over 109,000 clients and 4,200 employers annually and their dedicated team of 500 staff delivers a wide range of innovative, high-quality, and personalized programs and services that empower their clients to prosper and communities to thrive.

INTRODUCTION

Like other countries globally, Canada is experiencing a shortage of health professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has put additional stress on a system that was already lacking resources, and as the population ages and needs for healthcare increase, the number of health professionals has not been keeping pace.

Healthcare by the Numbers

- Canada's spending on healthcare: 8% of GDP
- Canada's healthcare workforce: Over 10% of the population
- Number of nurses working in direct care roles per 1,000 older adults (age 65 and older):
 - 2013: 59
 - 2022: 52
- Number of job vacancies in healthcare (2022-2023): 120,140
 - 2x 2019-2020 numbers (before the COVID-19 pandemic)
 - 4x 2015-2016 numbers
- 2022-2023 job vacancies, by occupation:
 - Personal support workers: 30,800 vacant positions; 25.7% of all healthcare vacancies
 - Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses: 28,000; 23.3%
- Anticipated nurses shortfall in Canada by 2030: 117,600

Sources:

Ahmed, H. E. B., & Bourgeault, I. L. (2022). *Sustaining nursing in Canada: A set of coordinated evidence-based solutions targeted to support the nursing workforce now and into the future* [Report]. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CHWN-CFNU-Report_-Sustaining-Nursing-in-Canada2022_web.pdf

Casey, S. (2023). *Addressing Canada's health workforce crisis. Report of the standing committee on health* [44th Parliament, 1st session]. Ottawa, ON. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/HESA/Reports/RP12260300/hesarp10/hesarp10-e.pdf>

The recruitment of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) helps alleviate shortages in several health occupations. IEHPs have long made up a considerable proportion of Canada's workforce, with the country sitting slightly above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average for the proportion of internationally educated health workers (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2024b). In 2022, more than a third of pharmacists in Canada were international graduates, which represents the highest proportion of IEHPs in a specific health profession, followed by physicians at 26.2% (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2024b). The proportion of IEHPs in nursing has traditionally been lower, but, in 2022, on average, 12% of newly licensed nurses across all provinces and territories were internationally educated, a 4% increase from 2017.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) (2023b), 21,656 skilled newcomers arrived in Canada to work in health occupations

between 2017 and 2022. Among them were 10,051 people who intended to work as nurses, 2,054 who intended to work as pharmacists, and 410 who intended to work as medical laboratory technologists.

These numbers should not mask the fact that IEHPs face numerous challenges obtaining professional certification and finding employment in their target occupation in Canada. According to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) (2024), “skilled newcomers in all sectors face higher unemployment rates than people born in Canada and are less likely to work in regulated occupations for which they have studied.” Additionally, a Statistics Canada survey found that 47% of newcomers to Canada who completed their highest level of health education internationally do not work in an occupation that leverages the full extent of their skills and training (Hou & Schimmele, 2020) as they face several challenges in doing so. These may include a lack of clear information and guidance regarding the foreign credential recognition process, financing the process, English or French language barriers, lack of knowledge of the Canadian healthcare workplace culture, and racism and discrimination in the workplace. Moreover, the recent expansion of the scope of practice for both nurses and pharmacists in several provinces according to the Canadian Pharmacists Association (n.d.) and College of Nurses of Ontario (2023c) for example, may be an additional barrier for IEHPs if their training did not include the additional practices.

The Role of Nurses and Pharmacists in Addressing the Shortage of Physicians

While there is a shortage of trained professionals in their respective professions, nurses and pharmacists have also been called on to address the current shortage of physicians in Canada through the expansion of their scope of practice.

Nurse Practitioners possess advanced training and experience and can exercise healthcare skills that used to be reserved to physicians, such as diagnosing healthcare conditions and ordering tests. Both Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses have recently been granted more responsibilities in drug prescription and the management of medications.

Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Health Canada issued temporary exemptions under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) that have allowed pharmacists to provide additional services to prevent care interruption. The exemption, which applies to this day, allows pharmacists to extend or renew, transfer, and adapt prescriptions, among other things.

Nurses and pharmacists play key roles in the accessibility of care. Nurses form the largest group of healthcare professionals in Canada and are often the primary care providers in rural and remote communities. Due to their presence in community pharmacies, pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare providers.

Sources:

Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2020). *Nurse practitioner scopes of practice in Canada, 2020*. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/nurse-practitioner-scopes-of-practice-in-canada-2020>

College of Nurses of Ontario. (2023c). *Scope of practice – Proposed changes*. Standards & Learning. <https://www.cno.org/en/learn-about-standards-guidelines/scope-of-practice-proposed-changes/>

Canadian Pharmacists Association. (n.d.). *Opioids & the CDSA*. <https://www.pharmacists.ca/advocacy/scope-of-practice/opioid-and-the-cdsa><https://www.pharmacists.ca/advocacy/scope-of-practice/>

New policies, practices, and resources are needed to help IEHPs integrate into the Canadian health workforce and occupy positions that are commensurate with their skills and training.

THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The present environmental scan is one component of the evaluation activities of the Employment Pathways in Canada – Health Careers (EPIC-HC) program designed and implemented by Achēv and funded by ESDC. EPIC-HC is an online training and employment guidance program that supports the accreditation and employment of internationally educated health professionals; specifically, nurses, pharmacists, and medical laboratory technologists. As such, this scan provides an overview of policies and practices that have promoted the integration of IEHPs into the Canadian health workforce, focusing more specifically on the same three healthcare areas: nursing, pharmacy, and medical laboratory occupations. The report is organized by healthcare area. Recent policy changes and new announcements that concern each of these areas are reported in their respective sections. Information on both regulated and unregulated occupations has been reviewed.

The environmental scan presents information that applies across Canada but focuses more specifically on the two provinces where EPIC-HC will operate: Ontario and Alberta. Information at the national level is included to highlight similarities and differences across jurisdictions.

OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Beginning in 2005, the Government of Canada (2009) committed approximately \$18 million annually¹ to create the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative. The goals of the initiative were to:

- Provide IEHPs with access to clear, timely information about paths to licensure,
- Establish fair and transparent mechanisms for assessing the credentials, knowledge and clinical skills of IEHPs,
- Create programs that increase the capacity of faculty and clinical educators to work effectively with IEHPs,
- Increase access to a range of training, bridging and remediation programs for IEHPs,
- Launch programs that promote the integration of IEHPs into the healthcare workplace, and
- Enhance regional collaboration to maximize the impact of available resources for IEHPs.

Health Canada, other federal departments, provinces, territories and stakeholders worked together on projects that assisted healthcare professionals in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and medical laboratory technology, among others.

In the 2010s, the Foreign Credential Recognition Program conducted a pilot project to provide loans to support internationally trained workers, including nurses and other healthcare professionals, cover the costs associated with credential recognition and certification with a regulatory body. Bursaries, loans, and other financial supports, such as, tuition forgiveness, are increasingly being offered to support healthcare professionals.

¹ We were unable to identify the duration of this initiative.

The Foreign Credential Recognition Pilot Project

From 2012 to 2015, nine immigration service and support agencies across Canada¹ received funding from ESDC to develop, implement and deliver a loan program to help internationally trained workers, including healthcare professionals, gain recognition for credentials earned abroad. The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) was mandated to design and implement a research framework to evaluate this pilot project.

The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) loans represented a new type of financing developed to address the needs of a population that experienced difficulties obtaining the necessary funds to finance their credential attainment. In addition to loans, delivery partners also provided wraparound supports to internationally trained workers. In the first two years of the program, close to 1,500 loans of, on average, \$6,000 and totaling \$9 million were approved.

FCR loans were successful in many ways: they established a new source of credit and implemented tools and screening processes adapted to internationally trained workers, which incentivized financial institutions to approve larger loans. In addition to financial support, the program also provided participants with support and guidance navigating the Canadian financial system, which were not provided by traditional financial institutions and student aid agencies at the time.

By accelerating the re-certification process, the program helped internationally trained workers integrate into the Canadian labour market faster and attain skills-commensurate wages, as indicated by higher amounts of taxes paid and reduced reliance on government transfers. Amounts provided were deemed sufficient to cover credentialing costs by participants seeking registration in nursing, but less so by participants wanting to work in business and finance.

Program clients also reported non-financial benefits, including enhanced well-being, social status, ability to obtain further funding, social networks, and sense of belonging in their community and in Canada. Participants recommended the continuation of the program, the creation of clearer credentialing pathways, and better coordination between governmental agencies.

Today, these nine immigration service and support agencies still provide loans and wrap-around support to internationally trained workers who want to have their credentials recognized in Canada. In healthcare, many regulatory bodies provide bursaries and loans that help IEHPs cover the costs of credential recognition and registration (see Tables 4, 7, and 11).

1. Immigration service and support agencies: Association Communautaire d'Emprunt de Montréal (ACEM), Montréal, QC; Canada Microcredit Education Group (CMEG), Charlottetown, PE; Immigrant Access Fund of Alberta (IAF AB), Calgary, AB; Immigrant Access Fund of Saskatchewan (IAF SK), Saskatoon, SK; Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), Halifax, NS; New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) Fredericton, NB; S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Vancouver, BC; Supporting Employment and Economic Development (SEED), Winnipeg, MB; Women Immigrants of London resource services (WIL), London, ON.

Source:

Grékou, D., Rodier, J., & Legault, L. (2014). *FCR Loans Pilot Project: Year 2 implementation and outcome report* [Report]. Ottawa, ON: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government intensified efforts to integrate IEHPs into the healthcare workforce (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2023). The federal government announced funding for programs aimed at helping internationally trained nurses become

licensed and start working. Since the end of 2020, several provinces have announced changes to remove barriers to workforce entry for certain healthcare professions, by easing registration requirements and establishing bridging programs.

World Education Services (WES) (2024) authors a Summary of Recent Provincial Initiatives Supporting Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs). The summary, which is periodically updated, compiles policies, programs, and legislation that specifically benefit IEHPs. Policies are reported by province, with a section on pan-Canadian initiatives. They are further broken down into initiatives that are specific to nurses, and initiatives that are specific to physicians. Recent announcements in Ontario and Alberta include:

- **Alberta:** In October 2023, the province announced an \$11 million investment towards more than 1,221 new seats for internationally educated nurses bridging programs, including 848 seats for registered nurses and 373 for licensed practical nurses.
- **Ontario:** Through its 2022 budget, Ontario announced \$230M in 2022-2023 to enhance healthcare capacity, including supporting up to 1,000 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership program.²

Since 2021, the federal government has made several announcements to support the healthcare workforce at large, and to support IEHPs specifically (Government of Canada, 2024). Through the 2022 budget, the federal government committed to provide \$115 million over five years, with \$30 million ongoing, to expand the Foreign Credential Recognition Program with the aims of helping up to 11,000 IEHPs per year get their credentials recognized and find work in their field, and support projects that will reduce barriers to foreign credential recognition, such as standardized national exams, easier access to information, faster timelines and less bureaucratic hurdles. It has also announced measures to encourage health professionals to work in rural and remote communities (Government of Canada, 2024).

² The Supervised Practice Experience Partnership is a collaborative initiative between the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), Ontario Health, and CNO approved organizations. This program provides applicants with the option to complete a supervised practice experience in Ontario, allowing them to demonstrate their up-to-date nursing knowledge, skills, judgment, and language proficiency (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2022).

Healthcare in Rural and Remote vs. Urban Communities

The proportion of nurses working in rural or remote areas has declined over the last decade, decreasing from 11.1% in 2013 to 9.6% in 2022. This percentage varies across types of nurses, with the proportion standing at 1 in 7 for nurse practitioners compared to 1 in 10 for other types of nurses. Because of their additional education, training, and expanded scope of practice, nurse practitioners play an important role in delivering primary care in rural and remote communities. In 2020-2021, the ratio of nurse practitioners to 100,000 inhabitants was 72 in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and 51 in the Yukon, compared to 18 per 100,000 inhabitants on average across Canada. The territories and Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest ratios of nurse practitioners to family physicians in the country. Nevertheless, the proportion of nurse practitioners employed in rural and remote communities is following a similar trend to the one observed for all types of nurses combined and has declined from 18% in 2013 to 14% in 2022. For pharmacists, that proportion has declined only slightly from 11% to 10% over the same period. It has remained stable for family physicians (13%) and specialists (2%).

In Ontario, hospitals have identified a lack of available staff, including nurses and physicians, as the key issue causing longer emergency department wait times and closures. Emergency department closures are primarily an issue in rural and remote communities, while the longer emergency department wait times are more commonly found in urban communities. Hospitals in rural and remote communities face more challenges filling vacancies because they have a smaller pool of trained workers from which to draw.

Several solutions have been proposed to address the shortage of nurses in rural and remote areas. For example, in a joint report, the Canadian Health Workforce Network and Canadian Federation of Nurses unions (2022) have recommended creating a pan-Canadian public agency for mobile nurses, providing tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness programs for newly graduated nurses choosing to work in rural and remote communities, and offering paid practicum experiences in rural and remote communities for students looking for an opportunity to consolidate their knowledge and clinical skills. Through Budget 2022, the Government of Canada announced \$26.2 million in funding to increase the forgivable amount of student loans for physicians and nurses who work in rural and remote communities. The list of eligible professionals under the loan forgiveness program was also expanded to help bring more health workers to those communities. In 2024, the maximum amount of forgivable Canada Student Loans for eligible family physicians, family medicine residents, nurses and nurse practitioners was further increased by 50%.

Sources:

Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2023). *Health workforce in Canada: In focus (including nurses and physicians)* [Report]. Ottawa, ON. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/health-workforce-in-canada-in-focus-including-nurses-and-physicians>

Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2024b). *The state of the health workforce in Canada, 2022* [Report]. Ottawa, ON. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/the-state-of-the-health-workforce-in-canada-2022>

Gumham, M., Segel-Brown, B., Ngo, L., & Novak, J. (2023). *Ontario health sector: Spending plan review*. Toronto, ON: Financial Accountability Office of Ontario. <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/health-2023>

Ahmed, H. E. B., & Bourgeault, I. L. (2022). *Sustaining nursing in Canada: A set of coordinated evidence-based solutions targeted to support the nursing workforce now and into the future* [Report]. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CHWN-CFNU-Report_-Sustaining-Nursing-in-Canada2022_web.pdf

In 2023, a federal, provincial and territorial statement on supporting Canada's health workforce was approved, committing to take concrete actions to reduce the time it takes for IEHPs to join the health workforce, among other measures aimed at addressing key workforce challenges (Government of Canada, 2023a). The same year, Health Canada worked with IRCC on category-based selection to allow Canada to issue invitations to prospective permanent residents with specific work experience in healthcare to apply through the Express Entry program.

In 2024, the federal government announced an investment of up to \$86 million to 15 organizations across Canada to increase capacity for the foreign credential recognition of approximately 6,600 internationally educated health professionals (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024)³. The 15 funded projects will:

- Reduce barriers to foreign credential recognition for IEHPs by improving recognition processes, simplifying steps in credential recognition, and offering increased access to practice in the field.
- Provide IEHPs with relevant Canadian work experience in their intended fields, while incorporating wrap-around supports, such as, childcare and transportation costs, as well as mentoring and coaching.
- Facilitate labour mobility between jurisdictions in Canada for health professionals and IEHPs to reduce the systemic and administrative barriers for health professionals who wish to work in another jurisdiction in Canada.

There is a consensus that the integration and retention of IEHPs in the health workforce is key to helping the healthcare system face chronic shortages. Another key element is the better management and planning of human resources needs through complete and accurate data on the number of health workers across fields and across provinces and territories. In 2023, Health Workforce Canada (HWC) was established to work closely with the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and healthcare system stakeholders to improve the collection and sharing of health workforce data and share practical solutions and innovative practices. In July 2024, the federal government announced that it would spend \$47 million to collect data on the number of physicians and nurses in Canada (Health Canada, 2023).

³ To the best of our knowledge, the list of funded projects is not available. However, we believe that this is the funding source for EPIC-HC.

NURSING

With more than 450,000 members, nurses represent Canada’s largest group of regulated healthcare professionals (Health Canada, 2024). However, compared to other professions, IEHPs represent a relatively small proportion of the nursing workforce. The following sections present nursing regulated and unregulated occupations and pathways to registration for IEHPs, challenges faced by IEHPs in nursing, and some programs and exemplary practices that have been put in place to support them.

NURSING OCCUPATIONS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

There are three main regulated occupations in nursing: 1) Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), called Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) in Ontario; 2) Registered Nurse (RN); and 3) Nurse Practitioner (NP). Additionally, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the three territories have separate regulations for Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

Table 2 provides the name of the regulatory bodies in charge of overseeing registration for nursing occupations. Depending on the province or territory, between one and three different regulatory bodies oversee professional registration.

Table 2 Nursing Regulatory Bodies Across Canada

Regulated Nursing Occupations				
	Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse	Registered Nurse	Nurse Practitioner	Registered Psychiatric Nurse
BC	British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives			
AB	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta	College of Registered Nurses of Alberta		College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta
SK	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Saskatchewan	College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan		Registered Psychiatric Nurse Association of Saskatchewan
MB	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Manitoba	College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba		College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba
ON	College of Nurses of Ontario			
QC	Ordre des infirmiers et infirmières auxiliaires du Québec	Ordre des infirmiers et infirmières du Québec		
NB	Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses	Nurses Association of New Brunswick		
NS	Nova Scotia College of Nursing			
PE	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of PEI	College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of Prince Edward Island		
NL	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador	College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador		
NT & NU	College and Association of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut			
YT	Yukon Department of Community Services	Yukon Registered Nurses Association		Yukon Department of Professional Licensing

There are a host of unregulated occupations in the field of nursing: Personal Support Worker, Nurse Assistant, Nurse Aide, Orderly, Patient Service Associate, etc. All these occupations are grouped under the same National Occupational Classification (NOC) code (NOC 33102) and have similar job descriptions, training requirements, and work conditions.

National Occupational Classification (NOC)

The National Occupational Classification (NOC) provides a systematic classification for the entire range of occupations in Canada. The NOC, which underwent a complete revision in 2021, includes more than 40,000 job titles grouped into 516 units. Units are organized in ten occupational categories and six Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) categories.

Each occupation is associated with a 5-digit NOC code, where the first digit represents the occupational category. For example, NOC codes for health occupations start with 3. The second digit represents TEER categories:

- 0: Management occupations
- 1: Occupations that usually require a university degree
- 2: Occupations that usually require a college diploma or apprenticeship training of two or more years; or supervisory occupations
- 3: Occupations that usually require a college diploma or apprenticeship training of less than two years; or more than six months of on-the-job training
- 4: Occupations that usually require a secondary school diploma; or several weeks of on-the-job training
- 5: Occupations that usually require short-term work demonstration and no formal education

The combination of the first two digits defines 45 major groups. In health occupations, major groups are:

- 30: Specialized middle management occupations in health care
- 31: Professional occupations in health
- 32: Technical occupations in health
- 33: Assisting occupations in support of health services

Further digits subdivide major groups into more specific subgroups. For example, codes that start with 311 include health treating and consultation services professionals, such as pharmacists, while codes that start with 313 include nursing and allied health professionals.

Source:

Government of Canada. (2023b). National Occupational Classification. <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

Table 3⁴ presents a short description of training and registration requirements, wages, and job prospects for unregulated and regulated nursing occupations in Canada. Information is taken from the Job Bank website.⁵ The information presented in Table 3 applies to Canada as a whole. Details are provided for specific provinces where relevant.

⁴ Sources for Table 3 are located at the bottom of the table.

⁵ Job Bank is the Government of Canada's national employment service. Its mission is to "help Canadians find work and plan their careers, and [...] make it easier for employers to recruit and hire across the country". Job Bank is made available by Employment and Social Development Canada on behalf of the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments. <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home>

Table 3 Training, Wages, and Job Prospects for Nursing Occupations

	Nurse Assistant	Licensed Practical Nurse Registered Practical Nurse (ON)	Registered Nurse and Registered Psychiatric Nurse	Nurse Practitioner
NOC code	NOC 33102	NOC 32101	NOC 31301	NOC 31302
Training requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Some secondary school education and on-the-job training, or ✓ A personal support worker, nursing aide or health care aide college or private institutional program, or ✓ A college nursing orderly program and supervised practical training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completion of a vocational, college or other approved program for licensed practical nurses, and ✓ Completion of a registration examination, and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body in all provinces and territories – regulatory bodies are specific to each province or territory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completion of a college, university or other approved registered nursing program, and ✓ Additional academic training or experience to specialize in a specific area of nursing, and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body in all provinces and territories – regulatory bodies are specific to each province or territory ✓ <i>A master's or doctoral degree in nursing is usually required for clinical nurse specialists, clinical nurses, nursing consultants and nursing researchers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completion of a master's degree in nursing, or ✓ Completion of a nursing program with additional advanced or extended primary health care nursing education, and ✓ Several years of practice as a registered nurse, and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body in all provinces and territories - regulatory bodies are specific to each province or territory
Training duration after High School	6-8 months	2-3 years	3-4 years	6+ years, not including years of practice as a registered nurse
Median wage (/hour)	\$17.35 (NL) - \$35 (NT) Canada: \$22	\$26 (NB) - \$43.71 (NT) Canada: \$29	\$38.05 (ON) - \$64.69 (NU) Canada: \$40.39	\$46 (QC) - \$57.69 (NS) Canada: \$54
Registration with a regulatory body	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Nurse Assistant	Licensed Practical Nurse Registered Practical Nurse (ON)	Registered Nurse and Registered Psychiatric Nurse	Nurse Practitioner
Number employed (2021)	347,400	71,600	327,000	42,000
Median age of workers (2021)	42	40	40	44
Expected labour shortage in 2022-2031?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Related job titles with the same NOC code	<p><u>Common alternative job titles:</u> Patient support worker Patient service associate Nurse aide Orderly</p> <p><u>Other alternative job titles:</u> Health care aide Hospital attendant Long term care aide Nursing attendant Patient care aide Personal care attendant - medical Psychiatric aide Resident care aide - medical</p>	Graduate nursing assistant Licensed practical nurse (LPN) Operating room technician Registered nursing assistant (RNA) Registered practical nurse (RPN)	Clinical nurse Community health nurse Critical care nurse Emergency care nurse Intensive care nurse Nurse researcher Nursing consultant Occupational health nurse Private duty nurse Public health nurse Registered nurse (RN) Registered psychiatric nurse (RPN)	Advanced practice nurse Extended class registered nurse
Link	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketrep/ort/occupation/18350/ca;jsessionid=1FB909CD8DCD5603C11AB041BC43980E.jobsearch75	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketrep/ort/summary-occupation/4383/ca	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketrep/ort/summary-occupation/993/ca	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketrep/ort/summary-occupation/26454/ca

Practicing as an LPN (RPN in Ontario), RN, or NP requires registration in all Canadian provinces and territories, and this registration is specific to each province or territory. For Canadian-trained nurses, registration in the province where they completed training typically involves completing an initial registration process, paying registration fees, and maintaining good professional standing and paying annual fees in subsequent years. Nurses who completed training and are registered in one province can register in a different province following a simple procedure that typically involves a background record check and paying registration fees. Internationally educated nurses must complete a more demanding procedure that varies across provinces. In general, registration involves a credentials assessment, professional exams, and registration and payment of annual fees to the regulatory body. Depending on their personal circumstances, applicants may need to complete language proficiency tests, pay for translation and notarization of documents, and complete courses or a bridging program.

Table 4⁶ provides an overview of costs, financial supports, criteria, and procedures for the registration of IEHPs in regulated nursing occupations in selected provinces, as of June 2024.

⁶ Sources for Table 4 are located in the final row of the table.

Table 4 Registration Pathway for Nursing IEHPs in Selected Provinces

	Alberta		Ontario
	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta	College of Registered Nurses of Alberta	College of Nurses of Ontario
	Licensed Practical Nurses	Registered Nurses	Registered Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses
Costs (approximate)	<p>National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) assessment: \$650 USD (~\$890 CAD) Initial registration: \$340 Language test: ~\$300 Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPRNE): \$600 Annual fees: \$320 Professional liability insurance: ~100\$ Total: \$2,550</p>	<p>Initial registration: \$236.25 Pathways to write National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN): - Education equivalence: ~\$300, or - Registered Nurses Canadian Competency Assessment Program (RNCCAP) exam: \$1,500 in person - \$1,750 virtual, or - NNAS assessment: \$650 USD (~\$890 CAD) NCLEX-RN exam: \$360+GST Language test: ~\$300 Professional liability insurance: ~100\$ Annual fees: \$504 Total: \$1,820 - \$3,270</p>	<p>NNAS assessment: \$650 USD (~\$890 CAD) Language test: ~\$300 Initial application - General: \$452 - Temporary: \$75 Regulatory Exam – Practical Nurse (REx-PN) for Registered Practical Nurse (RPN): \$395 NCLEX-RN for Registered nurse (RN): \$405 Jurisprudence exam: \$45 First-year registration fees: \$455 Total (RPN): \$2,160 (temporary) - \$2,537 (general) Total (RN): \$2,170 (temporary) - \$2,547 (general)</p>
Funding and other supports available?	<p>Microloans are available through Windmill Microlending to assist candidates in paying for fees associated with their professional assessment and application process.</p>	<p>Various organizations support applicants pay for application costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Rural Health Action Plan (RhPAP) has a bursary for internationally educated nurses. ▪ Alberta Student Aid has a bursary program to assist with bridging program costs. ▪ For low-interest loans up to \$15,000, the Government of Alberta supports the Servus-Bredin Microloans for Newcomer Professionals and Windmill Microlending. ▪ Additional support is available from the Government of Alberta's resources for newcomers. 	-

	Alberta		Ontario
	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta	College of Registered Nurses of Alberta	College of Nurses of Ontario
	Licensed Practical Nurses	Registered Nurses	Registered Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses
Possibility to work with a temporary registration while completing full registration?	Yes - Part of the regular process	Yes	Yes
Alternative ways or relaxed requirements to demonstrate credentials based on current registration jurisdiction	-	Yes - Australia, India, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, UK, US	-
Citizenship requirements for registration	-	-	Only Canadian citizens or permanent residents are eligible for registration

	Alberta		Ontario
	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta	College of Registered Nurses of Alberta	College of Nurses of Ontario
	Licensed Practical Nurses	Registered Nurses	Registered Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses
Registration steps	<p>1) Complete an assessment with National Nursing Assessment Service - Education credentials</p> <p>2) Apply to College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA) - Employment - at least 1,000 hours of practice in the last 4 years - Nursing registration - Language proficiency (English) - Background record check</p> <p>3) Obtain provisional registration</p> <p>4) Registration exam - Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Exam - Jurisprudence module</p> <p>5) Registration granted</p>	<p>1) Create an account with College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA)</p> <p>2) Confirm competency Pathways for authorization to write the NCLEX-RN exam: - Current registration in selected jurisdictions (see above) and confirmation of good standing. - Education equivalence. - Write the RNCCAP and obtain provisional registration. - Complete the NNAS and obtain provisional registration. - Already passed NCLEX-RN: no need to write it again.</p> <p>3) Demonstrate eligibility - Currency of practice - Language proficiency (English) - Post-secondary education - Criminal record check - Character and fitness to practise</p> <p>4) Prepare for practice - Jurisprudence course - Protecting Patients from Sexual Abuse and Misconduct course - Purchase professional liability insurance</p> <p>5) Confirm accuracy of information and pay registration</p>	<p>1) Complete an assessment with National Nursing Assessment Service - Education credentials - Employment - Nursing registration - Language proficiency (English or French)</p> <p>2) Evaluation and notification to apply to College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) - Possibility to apply for a Temporary registration</p> <p>3) Registration exam - REX-PN for RPN - NCLEX-RN for RN - Jurisprudence exam for all</p> <p>4) Background record check</p> <p>5) Eligibility for registration confirmed</p>
Link	https://www.clpna.com/lpn/apply-to-be-an-lpn/applicants/internationally-educated-nurses/	https://connect.nurses.ab.ca/home/%2Fsubstantial-equivalence-applicants%2Ffive-steps-to-a-permit%2F	https://www.cno.org/en/become-a-nurse/new-applicants1/outside-canada/ontario1/

Courses or bridging programs are not mandatory to meet criteria for registration in a regulated nursing profession. Bridging programs in nursing can be seen as additional or remediation support for nurses who need to learn or review important concepts and skills. Nursing regulatory bodies do not recommend specific bridging programs, but several are available through colleges and universities.

Certification Exams in Nursing

The main certification exams used in Canada are the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPRNE) or the Regulatory Exam – Practical Nurses (REx-PN) for licensed practical nurses, and the National Council Licensure Examination – Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) for registered nurses.

The CPRNE, which is used in Alberta, can be attempted four times. If the applicant does not pass the exam on the fourth attempt, they will be required to complete further education before writing the exam again.

Applicants used to be allowed a maximum of three attempts to write the REx-PN, which is used in Ontario, and the NCLEX-RN which is used in Alberta and Ontario. If an applicant did not pass the exam on the third attempt, they were not allowed to further pursue certification. Nowadays, applicants have an unlimited number of attempts, with some restrictions in the number of days between subsequent attempts and the total number of times they can take the exam in one year.

In Ontario, applicants who had failed a certification exam three times under previous rules can now apply to re-open their application.

Sources:

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta. (2023). *Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPNRE) attempts* [Info sheet]. <https://www.clpna.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/LPN-Info-Sheet-CPNRE-Attempts-ID-55704.pdf>

College of Nurses of Ontario. (2023b). *Registration examination: Repeat attempts*. Become a Nurse. <https://www.cno.org/en/become-a-nurse/registration-requirements/registration-examination/registration-examination-repeat-attempts/>

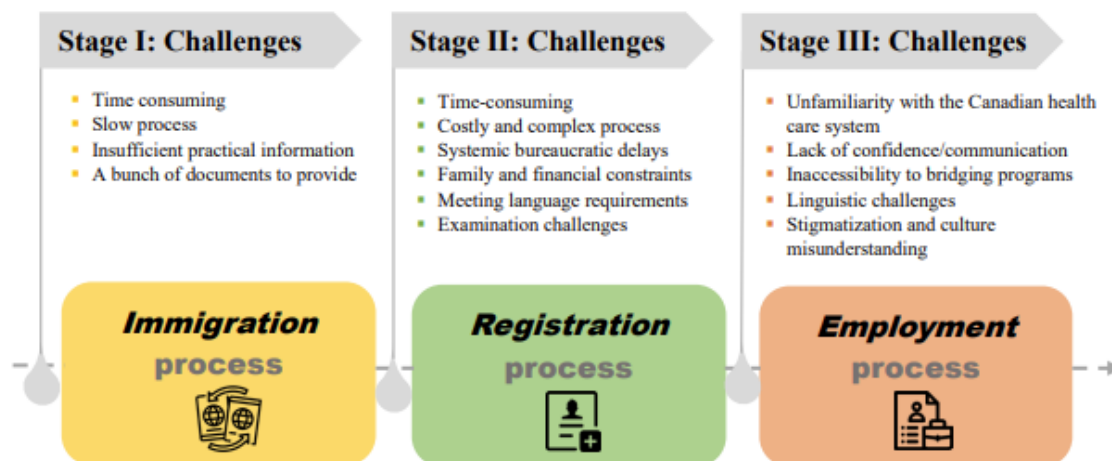
While efforts have been made to uniformize procedures and requirements, some differences remain across provinces, including in accepted certification exams. Recently, limitations on the number of times nursing applicants could attempt most certification exams have been lifted.

CHALLENGES FACED BY IEHPS IN NURSING

Challenges in the registration process

As illustrated in Table 4, the registration pathway for IEHPs in nursing is long and involves many steps. In a joint report, the Canadian Health and Workforce Network and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions summarized some of the most common challenges faced by IEHPs seeking employment in nursing (see Figure 1) (Ahmed & Bourgeault, 2022). As the report helps illustrate, IEHPs face challenges before, during, and after the registration process.

Figure 1 Challenges Faced by Internationally Educated Nurses along their Integration Pathway



Note: The image was created to highlight the ways in which internationally educated nurses struggle with several complex intersecting issues. From Source: Ahmed, H. E. B., & Bourgeault, I. L. (2022). *Sustaining nursing in Canada: A set of coordinated evidence-based solutions targeted to support the nursing workforce now and into the future* [Report]. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CHWN-CFNU-Report_-Sustaining-Nursing-in-Canada2022_web.pdf

Information gaps and avoiding misinformation

It may be difficult for people who are not familiar with the Canadian healthcare system to find the necessary information, and to make sure that they are accessing information from reputable sources. For example, last February, the British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM) (2024) issued an advisory to applicants to warn them of a scam involving agencies and individuals charging applicants high fees to submit applications to BCCNM on their behalf. Applicants may also unknowingly consult information that is out-of-date, or that does not apply to the province where they are seeking registration.

Financial barriers

Costs associated with registration can be prohibitive for many. Loans and bursaries can help to cover the costs (Table 4), but they do not cover revenue loss for people who work in occupations that do not match the full extent of their training and skills, whether it is because they are working in that occupation temporarily while pursuing registration, “stuck” in that occupation because they have been admitted to Canada on a closed work permit, or because they do not have the funds necessary to pay for registration fees.

Immigration status and provincial registration requirements

As other newcomers to Canada, nurses must go through the immigration process. Different provinces have distinct requirements in terms of citizenship status for registration with a regulatory body. For example, IEHP nurses who want to work in British Columbia can complete the full credentialing and registration process outside of Canada and use their registration to apply for the BC Provincial Nominee Program in the Health Authority Category. Meanwhile, in Ontario, only permanent residents and Canadian citizens can apply for registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario. Many⁷ internationally trained nurses will be hired to work in unregulated occupations (e.g., personal support worker, nurse aide, orderly) with a closed work permit that ties them to a specific employer. Unless the employer provides support to employees so that they can progress from unregulated occupations to regulated occupations that match their skills and credentials, these internationally trained nurses may not be able to register in their target occupation.

Additional barriers in registration

The credentialing and registration process is time-consuming, complex, and costly. Some IEHP nurses may face additional challenges such as family constraints, language barriers, and bureaucratic hurdles that include requirements to retrieve, notarize, and translate official documents from their country of origin. Successfully completing examinations may also represent a challenge, which is often compounded by language barriers for IEHPs whose first language is not English.

Employment challenges

Once they are registered with a regulatory body, nurses may face challenges finding employment. Many face discrimination from employers, colleagues, and patients that is based on origin, race, and/or ethnicity. Their unfamiliarity with the Canadian healthcare system and lack of a local network may prevent them from accessing interesting job opportunities. Language barriers may remain an issue, especially in understanding and using specific terms and acronyms used in the workplace, which are specific to Canada or even to a province or region. This may also impact their interactions with colleagues and patients.

⁷ To the best of our knowledge, the percentage or number is not currently available. As noted earlier in the report, the federal government is currently investing in the data collection of health professionals in Canada.

Workforce burnout and retention challenges

While support programs show that IEHPs can benefit from the support of colleagues who can provide them with guidance and mentorship, they are joining a workforce that is often stretched to the limits of its capabilities. According to a Canadian Health and Workforce Network and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions joint report (Ahmed & Bourgeault, 2022), 94% of nurses are showing signs of burnout, and 83% say their workplace is so understaffed that they are worried about the quality of care they can provide. A Statistics Canada (2022) survey showed that among nurses not intending to retire, almost 1 in 4 (24.4%) intended to leave their job or change jobs in the next 3 years. Many nurses are also leaving the public sector to work in the private sector and leaving Canada to work in the US (Jones, 2023).

CURRENT PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT IEHPS IN NURSING

Several announcements have been made by provincial governments and local healthcare agencies and employers to create or enhance programs to support the integration of IEHPs in nursing. As noted earlier, a summary of recent announcements is compiled and periodically updated by WES (World Education Services, 2024).

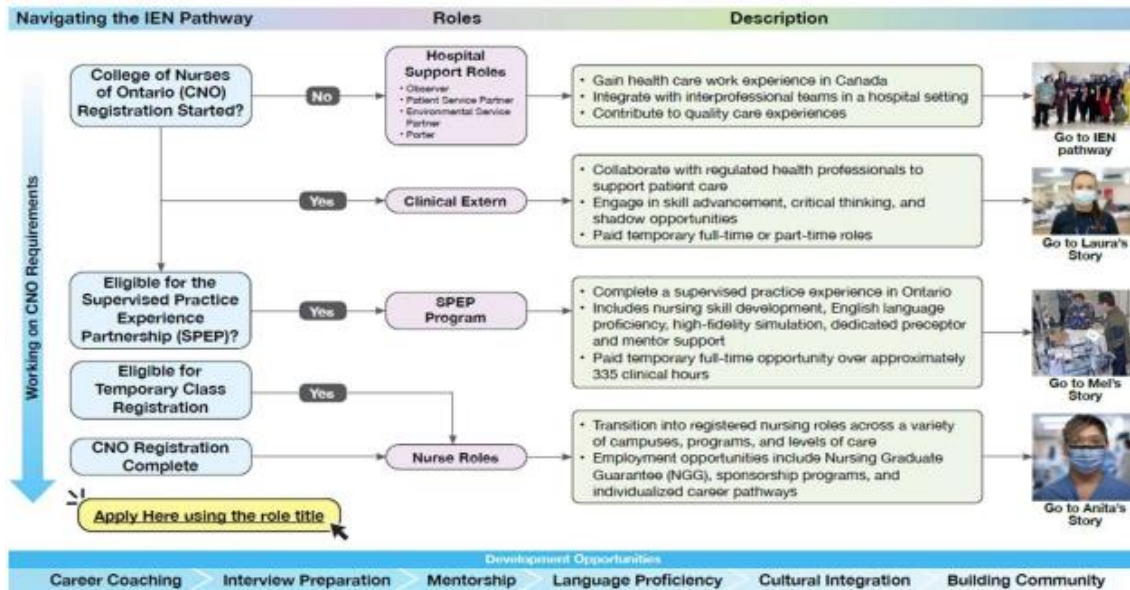
Care Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses – Supporting Nurses Back into Practice (CARE)⁸ is a non-profit organization created in 2001 to offer support to internationally trained nurses in Ontario. CARE offers pre-arrival services (Pre-Arrival Supports and Services (PASS)), supports for credentialing and registration with Ontario regulatory bodies (Supports, Training, and Access to Regulated-employment Services program (STARS)) and services for IEHP nurses who are ready to join the workforce (Workplace Integration Program (WIP)). Various job-shadowing and mentoring opportunities are offered to participants. CARE also offers supervised practice experience through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership (SPEP), conducted in partnership with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), Ontario Health (OH) and CNO-approved organizations.

The Supervised Practice Experience Partnership (SPEP) program was implemented at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto (see Figure 2) and in an evaluation of the program, IEHPs reported that SPEP supported the development of their communication skills in the Canadian healthcare context, with much of this skills development attributed to opportunities to connect with others in their teams (e.g., knowing members of the team well enough to be comfortable speaking with physicians, other nurses, and other professionals) (Lawrence et al., 2023). The program also contributed to their cultural integration by providing them with a better

⁸ <https://care4nurses.org/>

understanding of the nursing role at Sunnybrook Hospital and in Canada. It helped them develop support networks which made them feel more welcomed in the workplace.

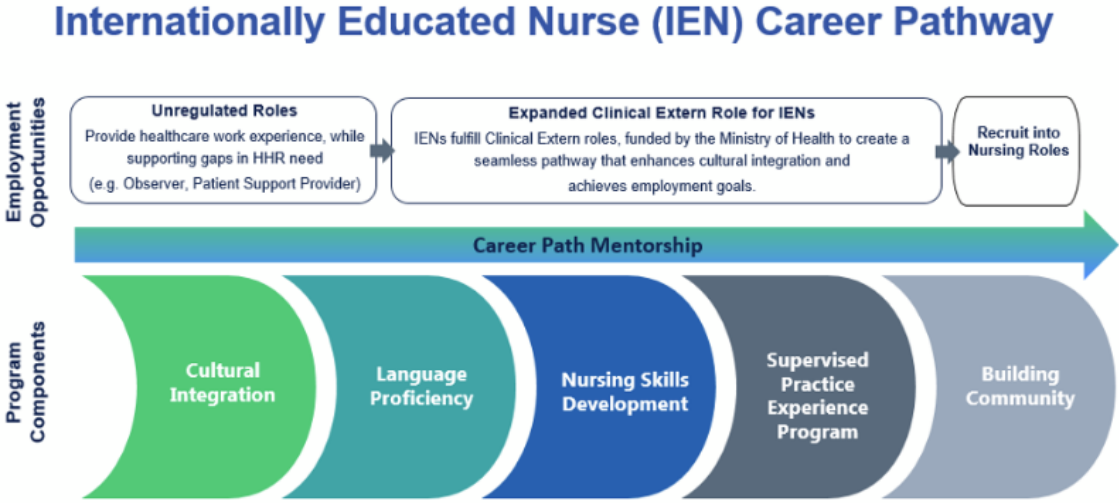
Figure 2 The Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program at Sunnybrook Hospital



Note: The image was created by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre to represent the components of the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership (SPEP) program. From Lawrence, K., Boyd, K., Rashleigh, L., & DasGupta, T. (2024). *From recruitment to retention: Evaluating the experiences of internationally educated nurses in the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership* [PowerPoint slides]. North York, ON: Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. <https://www.nln.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/B6-From-Recruitment-to-Retention.pdf>

SPEP was seen as an integral component of Sunnybrook’s IEN (Internationally Educated Nurses) career pathway. This pathway supports IEHPs hired in unregulated occupations complete registration and be hired in their target occupation. At Sunnybrook Hospital, an IEHP in an unregulated healthcare occupation can progress to employment in roles with expanded clinical responsibilities, to being hired as a licensed healthcare professional (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Career Pathway of an Internationally Educated Nurse at Sunnybrook Hospital



Note: The image was created by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre to illustrate their new IEN Career Pathway. From Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. (n.d.). *Internationally Educated Nurse (IEN) pathway at Sunnybrook*. <https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=careers-internationally-trained-nurses>

Other exemplary programs and practices have been described in the two recent reports summarize below.

Good Practices for the Integration of IEHPs in Nursing

Research has been conducted to identify and compile case studies and good practices to promote the integration of IEHPs in the nursing workforce:

Strategic Practices for Hiring, Integrating, and Retaining Internationally Educated Nurses: Employment Manual – Government of Ontario, McMaster University, & McMaster Nursing Health Services Research Unit

This manual was designed to provide nursing and human resources personnel with evidence-informed strategic practices to facilitate the hiring, integration and retention of internationally educated nurses. It highlights the benefits of hiring and integrating internationally educated nurses, as well as the best ways to hire and support them. Practices were identified through interviews with nine exemplar organizations that champion IEHP employment and integration. Successful strategic practices in each organization are presented, and sample reference documents such as policies, programs, workshops, courses, presentations, guidelines and terms of reference are included.

Examples of best practices:

1. Proactively recruit IEHPs to increase diversity in the workplace by taking into account language barriers and considering various staffing needs, including the diversity of clients. Staff involved in the interview process can be trained to ensure the hiring process is welcoming for all candidates. Hamilton Health Sciences recruited and integrated IENs from colleges, bridging programs, and referrals.
2. Develop partnerships with key stakeholders to support and integrate internationally trained staff into the workforce. For example, Hamilton Health Sciences developed a Community Collaboration Employment Model (CCEM) designed to support IENs from pre-hire through orientation to clinical integration. Each stakeholder organization involved in the CCEM provides a specific set of interventions, such as language and communication courses.

Nursing Retention Toolkit: Improving the Working Lives of Nurses in Canada – Health Canada

As its name indicates, the Nursing Retention Toolkit was primarily created to promote retention in the nursing profession. The toolkit draws on the expertise of the nursing community, evidence-based practice, and current lived experiences of front-line nurses and was created 'by nurses, for nurses'. The toolkit focuses on eight broad themes that are relevant to nurses' day-to-day work and that are underpinned by four key values. The scope of the toolkit goes beyond the integration and support of IEHPs in nursing, but practices that benefit them or that concern them specifically are identified throughout.

Examples of best practices:

3. Create structures that allow nurses to connect with each other and involve them in decision making. For example, Le Secrétariat international des infirmières et infirmiers de l'espace francophone fosters a community of practice where French-speaking nurses and clinicians can share knowledge and information.
4. Design and implement formal transition programs for IEHPs so that they can enhance their skills and pursue career goals. For instance, Nova Scotia's International Community of Health Workers Engagement (NICHE) program works to support IEHPs entering the health workforce with education, training, and supervision.

Sources:

Baumann, A., Ross, D., Idriss-Wheeler, D., & Crea-Arsenio, M. (2017). *Strategic practices for hiring, integrating and retaining internationally educated nurses: Employment manual* [Report]. Hamilton, ON: Nursing Health Services Research Unit. https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/StrategicPracticesforHiringIntegratingandRetainingIENs-EmploymentManual2017_WEB.pdf

Health Canada. (2024). *Nursing retention toolkit: Improving the working lives of nurses in Canada* [Report]. Ottawa, ON. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/health-care-system/health-human-resources/nursing-retention-toolkit-improving-working-lives-nurses/nursing-retention-toolkit-improving-working-lives-nurses.pdf>

PHARMACY

In 2022, 30,706 pharmacists were employed in direct patient care in Canada (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2024a), with 34.6% having completed their education internationally. This makes pharmacy the healthcare occupation in Canada with the highest proportion of internationally educated professionals. There is high variability in the proportion of pharmacy IEHPs across provinces with the largest proportions working in Ontario (48%), followed by Alberta (35%) and Manitoba and British Columbia (22% each). The following sections present pharmacy regulated and unregulated occupations, pathways to registration for IEHPs in pharmacy, and some programs that have been put in place to support them.

PHARMACY OCCUPATIONS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Pharmacy includes two regulated occupations: 1) Pharmacy Technician, and 2) Pharmacist. Table 5 provides the name of the regulatory body in charge of overseeing registration for pharmacy occupations in Canadian provinces and territories.

Table 5 Pharmacy Regulatory Bodies Across Canada

Regulated Pharmacy Occupations		
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
BC	College of Pharmacy of British Columbia	
AB	Alberta College of Pharmacy	
SK	Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals	
MB	College of Pharmacists of Manitoba	
ON	Ontario College of Pharmacists	
QC		Ordre des pharmaciens du Québec
NB	New Brunswick College of Pharmacists	

Regulated Pharmacy Occupations		
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
NS	Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists	
PE	Prince Edward Island College of Pharmacy	
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board	
YT	Yukon Department of Professional Licensing	
NT	Registrar, Professional Licensing, Department of Health and Social Services	
NU	Registrar, Department of Health Professions	

Unregulated pharmacy occupations include Pharmacy Technical Assistant, Pharmacy Aide, and Pharmacy Assistant, which are all grouped under the same NOC code (NOC 33103) and can be considered equivalent from a regulation perspective. Table 6⁹ presents a short description of training and registration requirements, wages, and job prospects for unregulated and regulated pharmacy occupations.

⁹ Sources for Table 6 are located in the final row of the table.

Table 6 Training, Wages and Job Prospects for Pharmacy Occupations

	Pharmacy Technical Assistant	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
NOC code	NOC 33103	NOC 32124	NOC 31120
Training requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pharmacy Technical Assistance vocational program (up to two years), or ✓ Pharmacy Assistant college program, ranging from six to twelve months, or ✓ Secondary school and several months of on-the-job training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pharmacy technician college program (two years), or ✓ College program in pharmaceuticals and supervised practical training (2 or 3 years), and ✓ Certificate of Qualification from the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC), and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body in all provinces except Quebec 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Undergraduate or CEGEP degree, and ✓ University degree in pharmacy (Doctorate of pharmacy – PharmD) and a period of supervised practical training, and ✓ Certificate of Qualification from the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) (and additional exams in some provinces), and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body in all provinces and territories for community and hospital pharmacists
Training duration after High School	6 months – 2 years	2-3 years	6-8 years
Median wage (/hour)	\$16.70 (NL) - \$25.00 (BC) Canada: \$21	\$18.00 (NS, PE) - \$27.32 (YT) Canada: \$20	\$42.80 (NS) - \$65.93 (NT) Canada: \$52.88
Registration with a regulatory body	No	Yes (except Quebec)	Yes
Number employed (2021)	NA	NA	42,900
Median age of workers (2021)	NA	NA	41

	Pharmacy Technical Assistant	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
Expected labour shortage in 2022-2031?	NA	NA	No
Related job titles with the same NOC code	Pharmacy aide Pharmacy assistant	Pharmacy technician supervisor	Clinical pharmacist Community pharmacist Hospital pharmacist Industrial pharmacist Retail pharmacist
Link	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/occupation/25662/ca	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/summary-occupation/25660/ca	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/summary-occupation/18196/ca

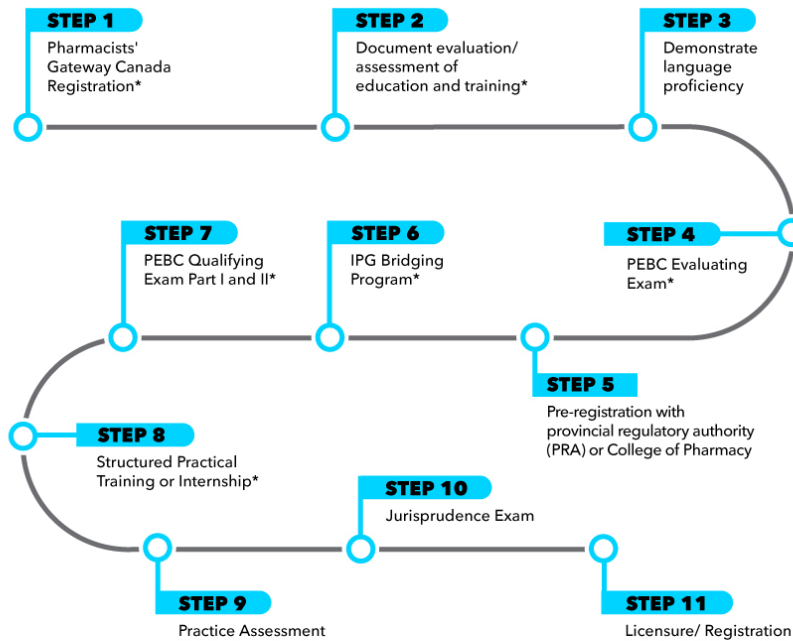
Working as a pharmacy technician requires registration with a regulatory body in all provinces except Quebec, and that registration is specific to each province. Registration with a regulatory body is mandatory in all provinces for community and hospital pharmacists. Registration is not mandatory for pharmacists working in positions that do not involve direct contact with the public (e.g., in universities, government departments, or pharmaceutical companies). These represent only a small proportion of pharmacy positions in Canada.

For Canadian-trained pharmacy technicians and pharmacists, registration in the province where they completed training typically involves completing the initial registration process, paying registration fees, paying annual fees in subsequent years and maintaining good professional standing, which can include completing continuing education. Registration for pharmacists or pharmacy technicians who are already registered in another province is relatively simple and includes basic procedures such as obtaining a background check. It is more advantageous for newly graduated pharmacists to register in the province where they completed training, because the process of registering in a different province as a new graduate, without registering in the province where they completed your training, can be onerous.

Registration for IEHPs interested in working in pharmacy is a long and complex process, especially for pharmacists. The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) has summarized the general steps for IEHPs who want to register as pharmacists in Canada (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Steps to Becoming a Pharmacist in Canada

Steps to becoming a pharmacist in Canada: A general guide for IPGs



The registration process takes about 3 years for most IPGs and can cost between \$12,000 and \$24,000. The time and costs needed for licensure can vary widely based on individual circumstances and the requirements of the respective PRA.

* Not a requirement in all provinces or within all pathways to licensure

Please note that the steps outlined in this graphic are general in nature and may vary depending on the province or specific pathway to licensure within a province. For more detailed information, please consult Pharmacists' Gateway Canada and your provincial regulatory authority/College of Pharmacy.

Note: The image was created by the Canadian Pharmacists Association to represent steps to becoming a pharmacist in Canada. From Canadian Pharmacists Association. (n.d.). How to become a pharmacist in Canada. <https://www.pharmacists.ca/pharmacy-in-canada/becoming-a-pharmacist-in-canada/>

Table 7¹⁰ provides an overview of costs, financial supports, criteria, and procedures for registration in regulated pharmacy occupations in selected provinces, as of June 2024.

¹⁰ Sources for Table 7 are located in the final row of the table.

Table 7 Registration Pathway for Pharmacy IEHPs in Selected Provinces

	Alberta		Ontario	
	Alberta College of Pharmacy		Ontario College of Pharmacists	
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
Costs	<p>English proficiency test: ~\$300 Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) exam: \$825 Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) bridging program: \$495 Registration with Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP): \$678.30 Annual registration: \$600.60 Ethics & Jurisprudence exam: free for first attempt, \$189 after If taken > 3 years - re-take MCQ exam: \$825 Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE): \$1,855 Professional liability insurance: ~\$150</p> <p>Total: \$4,904 - \$5,918*</p> <p>*All official documents must be notarized - expect additional fees</p>	<p>Pharmacist Gateway Canada: \$380 English proficiency test: ~\$300 MCQ exam: \$825 OSCE exam: \$1,855 University of Alberta bridging program: \$13,600 Registration with ACP: \$678.30 Annual registration (pro-rated/ 6 months): \$1,017.45 Ethics & Jurisprudence exam: free for first attempt, \$189 after If taken > 3 years - re-take MCQ exam: \$825 If taken > 3 years - re-take OSCE exam: \$1,855 Professional liability insurance: ~\$200</p> <p>Total (US Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)- accredited program graduate, no exams to re-take): \$4,956* Total (Internationally educated health professional (IEHP) from another country, passed MCQ and OSCE on 1st attempt, no exams to retake): \$5,256* Total (IEHP from another country, failed MCQ/OSCE, needs to re-take exams): \$21,725*</p> <p>*All official documents must be notarized - expect additional fees</p>	<p><i>Estimated fees paid to Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) are \$691 plus the annual fee (\$657.26).</i> <i>Estimated fees paid to third parties are \$6,675 plus the annual liability insurance premium (~\$150).</i> Total: \$8,173</p>	<p>MCQ and OSCE passed on first attempt: <i>Estimated fees paid to the College are \$364 plus the annual fee (\$985.87).</i> <i>Estimated fees paid to third parties are \$5,116 plus the annual liability insurance premium (~\$200). The estimated fees paid to third parties may be higher if the panel decides courses are required.</i> Total: \$6,666</p> <p>MCQ and OSCE not passed on first attempt: <i>Estimated fees paid to the College are \$364 plus the annual fee (\$985.87).</i> <i>Estimated fees paid to third parties are \$19,296 plus the annual liability insurance premium (~\$200). The estimated fees paid to third parties may be higher if the panel decides courses are required.</i> Total: \$20,846</p>

	Alberta		Ontario	
	Alberta College of Pharmacy		Ontario College of Pharmacists	
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
Funding and other supports available?	-	<p>Scholarships and loans are available to support the costs of the bridging program</p> <p>Funding Options <u>Bursaries and Scholarships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) New Horizons Scholarship (\$1,000 scholarship) ▪ Maria Eriksen Memorial Bursary (\$2,000 bursary) ▪ Ann Falk Memorial Education Fund (\$750 bursary) <p><u>Loans</u> The Certificate to Canadian Pharmacy Practice (CCPP) program does not qualify for Alberta Student Aid. However, other private loan options are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Servus-Bredin Microloans for Newcomer Professionals (loans of up to \$15,000) ▪ Windmill Microlending for skilled immigrants and refugees (loans of up to \$15,000) 	-	-
Possibility to work with a temporary registration while completing full registration?	Yes - Part of the regular process	Yes - Part of the regular process	Yes - Part of the regular process (Structured Practical Training (SPT) requirements)	IEHP may register as an intern if: Their student status expires while they are waiting to meet any other pharmacist registration requirements (e.g., Qualifying Exam) and they wish to continue practising in the scope of the profession, or They would like to practise in the scope of the profession while registered as an intern

	Alberta		Ontario	
	Alberta College of Pharmacy		Ontario College of Pharmacists	
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
Alternative ways or relaxed requirements to demonstrate credentials based on current registration jurisdiction	-	Applicants from the US who completed a Doctor of Pharmacy program accredited by the ACPE are exempted from: language proficiency test; CCPP bridging program	-	-
Citizenship requirements for registration	-	-	Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada, temporary foreign workers with a valid work permit, and refugees with a valid work permit are eligible	Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada, temporary foreign workers with a valid work permit, and refugees with a valid work permit are eligible
Registration steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meet English requirements 2) Complete the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Qualifying Exam Part 1 (MCQ) 3) Complete the bridging program NAIT IPHE101 – Orientation to Canadian Healthcare 4) Gather official documents Diploma, language proficiency results, successful completion of MCQ exam, successful completion of bridging program, identification form, two pieces of government ID, statutory declaration, background record check, evidence of name change (if needed). 5) Submit application to ACP 6) ACP reviews application: decision 7) Provide payment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enroll in National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) Pharmacists’ Gateway Canada 2) Meet English language requirements 3) Complete one of the following to be eligible for the <u>provisional pharmacist register</u>: a. PEBC Part I (MCQ) and II (OSCE), <u>or</u> b. University of Alberta’s Certificate to CCPP program All requirements must be met for full registration. 06-01-24: <i>If successfully complete MCQ and OSCE on first attempt: do not need to do the CCPP program.</i> 4) Gather official documents Exams (MCQ, OSCE, CCPP), identification form, two pieces of government ID, statutory declaration, Enhanced Police Information Check, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Complete PEBC Pharmacy Technician International Evaluation Education, credentials, and evaluating exam 2) Complete bridging programs a. University of Toronto: Canadian Health Care System, Culture and Context for Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals course, <u>and</u> b. College Technology Services (CTS) Canadian Career College: Internationally Educated Pharmacy Technician Bridging Program <i>Alternatively, complete a Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP)-accredited Canadian pharmacy technician</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enroll in Pharmacists’ Gateway Canada 2) Apply for PEBC document evaluation and successfully complete PEBC evaluating exam - OCP confirms results and creates OCP account (no fees) - Evidence of Identity and Citizenship or Status in Canada 3) Enroll in bridging program <i>Candidates who successfully completed the MCQ and OSCE on the first attempt do not need to enroll in the bridging program. They can register to OCP as a student and complete steps 4 and 6 below.</i> University of Toronto: International Pharmacy Graduate Program - Professional liability insurance - Police background record check - Evidence of language proficiency - Student application fee - Declaration of good character

	Alberta		Ontario	
	Alberta College of Pharmacy		Ontario College of Pharmacists	
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
	<p>8) Access temporary permit to practice Provisional pharmacy technician Valid two years</p> <p>9) Complete Jurisprudence Learning Module</p> <p>10) Complete Ethics & Jurisprudence exam</p> <p>11) Complete ACP's SPT program Minimum of 800 hours supervised practicum</p> <p>12) Successfully complete the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Qualifying Exams</p> <p>13) Obtain professional liability insurance</p> <p>14) Apply for full registration</p>	<p>evidence of name change (if needed).</p> <p>5) Submit application to ACP</p> <p>6) ACP reviews application: decision</p> <p>7) Provide payment</p> <p>8) Access temporary permit to practice</p> <p>9) Complete Jurisprudence Learning Module</p> <p>10) Complete Ethics & Jurisprudence exam</p> <p>11) Complete ACP's SPT program Minimum of 1,000 hours supervised practicum</p> <p>12) Successfully complete the PEBC Qualifying Exams</p> <p>13) Obtain professional liability insurance</p> <p>14) Apply for full registration</p>	<p><i>program (i.e., re-train in Canada).</i></p> <p>3) Pre-register with OCP - Online account, registration fee, official documents - Structured Practical Training: 35h/week x 12 weeks - Jurisprudence, ethics, and professionalism exam</p> <p>4) PEBC Part I (MCQ) and II (OSCE) exams</p> <p>5) Final application for Certificate of Registration as a Pharmacy Technician - Professional liability insurance - Police background check - Evidence of language proficiency - Application fees - Declaration of Good Character</p>	<p>4) Practice Assessment of Competence at Entry (PACE) - Demonstrate entry to practice competencies - Jurisprudence, Ethics and Professionalism Exam - Register as an intern (optional): requirements from step 3 need to be met and current.</p> <p>5) PEBC Part I (MCQ) and II (OSCE) exams</p> <p>6) Final application for Certificate of Registration as a Pharmacist Requirements from step 3 need to be met and current</p>
Links	https://abpharmacy.ca/regulated-members/registration/pharmacy-technicians/initial-registration-pharmacy-technician/internationally-educated-pharmacy-technician/	https://abpharmacy.ca/regulated-members/registration/pharmacists/initial-registration-pharmacist/internationally-educated-pharmacist-graduate-iepg/ https://www.ualberta.ca/en/pharmacy/programs/certificate-to-canadian-pharmacy-practice/tuition-and-funding.html	https://www.ocpinfo.com/registration/register-technician/international-tech/ https://www.ocpinfo.com/registration/fees-timelines/fees-timelines-pharmacy-technician-applicants/	https://www.ocpinfo.com/registration/register-pharmacist/ipg-pace/

Provincial regulatory bodies reviewed in this environmental scan have identified accredited bridging programs that all IEHP applicants were required to complete for professional registration in pharmacy occupations. Alberta and Ontario have recently adopted measures that exempt some internationally trained applicants from completing these pharmacy bridging programs.

Certification Exams in Pharmacy

IEHPs who want to be certified as pharmacy technicians or pharmacists must successfully complete the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Exam Part I (Multiple-Choice Question – MCQ) and Part II (Objective Structured Clinical Exam – OSCE) specific to their target occupation.

In Alberta and Ontario, applicants who want to be certified as pharmacists and who pass both parts of the exam on their first attempt are exempted from completing bridging programs offered by the University of Alberta and the University of Toronto, respectively. The pass rate for pharmacist-applicants on the PEBC exam is 36.2% for first-time test takers and 38.4% for repeat test takers.

Both applicants who apply to be pharmacy technicians and pharmacists have a maximum of three attempts to pass both parts of the PEBC Exam. Those who provide proof of remediation and further training may be allowed a fourth attempt. Candidates who do not pass the exam on their last attempt are not allowed to retake the exam and to pursue certification.

Sources:

The Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. (n.d.). *Examination scoring and results. Pharmacy Technicians.* <https://pebc.ca/pharmacy-technicians/pharmacy-technician-qualifying-examination/examination-results/>

The Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. (n.d.). *Scoring and pass standing. Examination Scoring and Results.* <https://pebc.ca/pharmacy-technicians/pharmacy-technician-qualifying-examination/examination-results/>

Universities that were offering “post-graduate” programs in pharmacy in the 2010s are now offering bridging programs for IEHPs. Those programs were offered at a time when provinces were gradually shifting the entry-level to practice from a Bachelor of Science in pharmacy to a professional doctorate degree in pharmacy (Canadian Pharmacists Association, 2011).

Table 8¹¹ presents accredited bridging programs for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists in selected provinces.

¹¹ Sources for Table 8 are located at the bottom of the table.

Table 8 Accredited Bridging Programs for Pharmacy Occupations

	Alberta		Ontario	
	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist
Name of program	Orientation to Canadian Healthcare	Certificate to Canadian Pharmacy Practice (CCPP) program	Internationally Educated Pharmacy Technician Bridging Program*	International Pharmacy Graduate Program
Format	Online asynchronous	Online and in-person	Online and in-person	Online synchronous and asynchronous
Duration	32 hours	Three semesters (10 months), part-time	78 weeks	23 weeks full-time, including weekends
Training institution	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)	University of Alberta	CTS Canadian Career College	University of Toronto
Location	Edmonton	Edmonton	North Bay	Toronto
Link	https://www.nait.ca/nait/continuing-education/courses/iphe101-orientation-to-canadian-healthcare	https://www.ualberta.ca/pharmacy/programs/certificate-to-canadian-pharmacy-practice/	https://www.ctsccc.com/pharmacy-technician/	https://www.pharmacy.utoronto.ca/programs/international-pharmacy-graduate-program

Note: * Applicants also need to complete the Canadian Health Care System, Culture and Context for Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals course offered online by the University of Toronto.

<https://estore.pharmacy.utoronto.ca/products/cpd-canadian-health-care-system-culture-and-context-for-internationally-educated-healthcare-professionals>

CURRENT PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT IEHPS IN PHARMACY

Currently, several programs support IEHPS in pharmacy through scholarships, information, mentorship, practical work experience, and other supports. As noted in Table 7, the Alberta College of Pharmacy offers scholarships and provides information on loans offered by Servus-Bredin and Windmill to cover the costs of the pharmacy bridging program at the University of Alberta.

From 2019 to 2022, a pilot project conducted by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) provided access to tools, resources, and a mentorship program to specifically address the learning and skills gaps that pharmacy regulatory authorities had identified as barriers to the success of IEHPS pursuing registration as a pharmacist in Canada (National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, 2023). While the mentorship component did not continue beyond the pilot phase, learning diagnostic tools and learning modules remain available at a cost of \$95 to all pharmacists, international pharmacy graduates, and pharmacy students. These tools are hosted on NAPRA's Pharmacist Gateway Canada website¹² which is the main information hub for pharmacy IEHPS who are pursuing registration in Canada. Created in collaboration by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities and the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada, Pharmacists Gateway Canada offers information about the steps to becoming a licensed pharmacist, as well as assessment tools and resources to work as a pharmacist in Canada (Pharmacists' Gateway Canada, n.d.).

Earlier this year, the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) received funding from Employment and Social Development Canada to lead a four-year project to help support pharmacy IEHPS with mentorship, practical experience, and other key integration supports to increase their chances of success in registering with a regulatory body (Canadian Pharmacists Association, 2024).

The International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program, a bridging education program to support international pharmacy graduates (IPGs) in obtaining licensure as pharmacists in Canada, was developed and implemented in 2000 following a funding opportunity from the Government of Ontario. The IPG program is comprised of the following core components: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR);¹³ individualized learning plans, mentorship, and distance learning opportunities (Austin & Dean, 2004). In an evaluation of the IPG Program, Austin and

¹² <https://www.pharmacistsgatewaycanada.ca/>

¹³ Prior Learning Assessment and recognition (PLAR) involves processes for identifying, documenting, assessing, and acknowledging individuals' previous learning. The PLAR process allows educational institutions, employers, and organizations to assess an individual's skills and knowledge, to give credit, to grant professional status, or help advance their career (Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, n.d.).

Dean (2004) evaluated the program outcomes among 264 IPGs in Canada, and the authors report that the IPG program helped IPGs gain the knowledge and skills needed to meet Canadian standards of practice. Furthermore, as of February 2004, 51.9% of IPGs in the evaluation of the program had met all licensure requirements, while another 20.8% had passed licensure examinations and were finishing their final in-service training requirements before obtaining licensure.

MEDICAL LABORATORY OCCUPATIONS

According to ESDC, more than 50,000 people worked as medical laboratory technologists in Canada in 2021 (Job Bank, 2024). To the best of our knowledge, statistics on the proportion of IEHPs in medical laboratory occupations in Canada is not publicly available.

MEDICAL LABORATORY OCCUPATIONS AND REGULATIONS

The medical laboratory field includes one occupation that is regulated in most provinces, Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT), and one closely related but unregulated occupation, Medical Laboratory Technical Assistant.

Certification Exam for Medical Laboratory Technologists

In order to be certified, medical laboratory technologists need to successfully complete the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) exam.

In Alberta, applicants who do not pass the exam on the first attempt have one year to register to take the exam again. Applicants who do not apply within a year are considered to have forfeited their second exam attempt and to have failed the exam. Applicants who fail the exam two times are required to complete additional education before they are allowed to write the exam again.

Source:

Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science. (n.d.). *After the exam. Certification.* <https://csmls.org/Certification/Preparing-for-and-taking-the-exam/After-the-Exam.aspx>

Many other unregulated occupations leverage similar skills. The Alternate Careers for Lab Professionals website¹⁴ is a resource made available by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS), which is the organization in charge of the certification exam for medical laboratory technologists.¹⁵ The website provides information on 11 alternative occupations, including animal health technologist, biotechnology laboratory worker, and food science technologist. Occupations are presented as good options for a permanent career, or as occupations that allow individuals to continue applying their skills, knowledge, education, and work experience while completing registration as a medical laboratory technologist.

¹⁴ <https://altcareers.csmls.org/>

¹⁵ CSMLS certification is the entry-level requirement for MLTs in all of the regulated provinces (AB, MB, NB, NL, NS, ON, PEI, and SKS) with the exception of Quebec. In the unregulated provinces and territories (BC, NT, NU, YT) most employers also require MLTs to hold CSMLS certification (Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science, n.d.).

Table 9 provides the name of the regulatory body in charge of overseeing registration for medical laboratory technologists in Canadian provinces and territories while Table 10¹⁶ presents a short description of training and registration requirements, wages, and job prospects for medical laboratory technical assistants and medical laboratory technologists.

Table 9 Medical Laboratory Technologist Regulatory Bodies Across Canada

	Medical Laboratory Technologist
BC	
AB	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta
SK	Saskatchewan Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists
MB	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Manitoba
ON	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario
QC	L'Ordre professionnel des technologistes médicaux du Québec
NB	New Brunswick Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists
NS	Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists
PE	
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Health Professionals
YT	
NT	
NU	

¹⁶ Sources for Table 10 are located at the bottom of the table.

Table 10 Training, Wages and Job Prospects for Medical Laboratory Occupations

	Medical Laboratory Technical Assistant	Medical Laboratory Technologist
NOC code	NOC 33101	NOC 32120
Training requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completion of a college certificate program in medical laboratory science, and ✓ Certification by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science is usually required by employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ College program in medical laboratory technology (a period of supervised practical training may be required), and ✓ Registration with a regulatory body (NL, NS, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB), and ✓ Certification by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science is usually required by employers ✓ <i>Combined laboratory and X-ray technicians require completion of a combined laboratory X-ray technology program</i> ✓ <i>Some employers may require a university science degree for specialized medical laboratory technologists</i>
Training duration after High School	2-3 years	2-3 years
Median wage (/hour)	\$24.30 (MB) - \$30 (QC) Canada: \$26	\$30.77 (QC) - \$44 (AB) Canada: \$36.24
Registration with a regulatory body	No	Yes (except BC, PE, territories)
Number employed (2021)	NA	51,300
Median age of workers (2021)	NA	41
Expected labour shortage in 2022-2031?	NA	Yes
Related job titles with the same NOC code	Medical laboratory aide Medical laboratory assistant Medical laboratory technician Phlebotomist Phlebotomy aide	Cytogenetics technologist - medical laboratory Histology technologist Medical laboratory cytotechnologist Medical laboratory technologist - anatomical pathology Medical laboratory technologists supervisor Medical technologist - medical laboratory
Link	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/occupation/4210/ca	https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/summary-occupation/4187/ca

Table 11¹⁷ provides an overview of costs, financial supports, criteria, and procedures for registration as a medical laboratory technologist in selected provinces, as of June 2024. IEHPs who are seeking registration as medical laboratory technologists are not required to complete mandatory courses or bridging programs. However, they may need to seek further education if they struggle to pass mandatory certification exams.

Table 11 Registration Pathway for Medical Laboratory IEHPs in Selected Provinces

	Alberta	Ontario
	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario
	Medical Laboratory Technologists	Medical Laboratory Technologists
Costs	Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) Personal Competency Rating Booklet and CSMLS Online Self Assessment (OSA) diagnostic report: \$60 Academic credentials evaluation: \$230 - \$380 Language proficiency test: ~\$300 CSMLS application fee: \$820 - \$975 Technical report fee (when required): \$720 - \$875 Register for the National Certification Examination with CSMLS: \$995 - \$2,580 Criminal record check: \$65 College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta (CMLTA) application fee: \$75 Registration fee: \$425 Total: \$3,690 - \$5,735	Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science Personal Competency Rating Booklet and CSMLS Online Self Assessment diagnostic report: \$60 Academic credentials evaluation: \$230 - \$380 Language proficiency test: ~\$300 CSMLS application fee: \$820 - \$975 Technical report fee (when required): \$720 - \$875 Register for the National Certification Examination with CSMLS: \$995 - \$2,580 Criminal record check: ~\$50 College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario (CMLTO) application fee: \$169.50 Registration fee: \$384.20 Total: \$3,729 - \$5,773
Funding and other supports available?	Microloans are offered in partnership with Servus Credit Union	-
Possibility to work with a temporary registration while completing full registration?	<p><i>If an Internationally Educated Medical Laboratory Technologist (IEMLT) applicant does not have CSMLS certification, they may apply for a provisional practice permit.</i></p> <p><i>This is appropriate for an applicant who has registered for but has not yet successfully challenged the CSMLS certification exam or is awaiting results. Under a provisional practice permit, the Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT) must work under the direct supervision of another MLT. Direct supervision means that the supervising MLT is physically present and available to assist the provisional member.</i></p>	-

¹⁷ Sources for Table 11 are located in the final row of the table.

	Alberta	Ontario
	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta	College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario
	Medical Laboratory Technologists	Medical Laboratory Technologists
Alternative ways or relaxed requirements to demonstrate credentials based on current registration jurisdiction	-	-
Citizenship requirements for registration	Candidates do not need to be permanent residents to start the Prior Learning Assessment process.	Proof of being legally entitled to work in Canada is required to start the registration process.
Registration steps	<p>1. Enroll with the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science and complete a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Provide an academic credentials evaluation from the CSMLS. May be required to complete a language proficiency test, and to complete a technical report of application.</p> <p>2. Register for the CSMLS Examination and successfully complete the exam If the candidate passes the exam, they are eligible to register with the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta. If they do not pass the exam, they can attempt the exam one more time before being required to complete extra education.</p> <p>3. Register with CMLTA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide PLA - Provide proof of CSMLS exam completion - Proof of English language proficiency for candidates who have not completed training in English - Criminal record check - Two pieces of ID - Application fees - Registration fees <p>4. Upgrade registration status (Optional) Obtain registration to work in specialized areas (Diagnostic Cytology, Clinical Genetics)</p>	<p>1. Provide proof of being legally entitled to work in Canada</p> <p>2. Obtain a Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check or Vulnerable Sector Check within the six months preceding your application</p> <p>3. Have proof of an equivalent Prior Learning Assessment completed by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science</p> <p>4. Provide proof of successfully completing a CSMLS MLT exam (i.e., General Medical Laboratory Technology, Clinical Genetics, or Diagnostic Cytology)</p> <p>5. Provide proof of active engagement in the occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The candidate used their knowledge, skills, and judgment as an MLT in the practice of medical laboratory technology during the three years immediately preceding the date of the application, or - The candidate has successfully completed refresher courses approved by the CMLTO within the three years preceding the date of the application. <p>6. Provide proof of English or French language proficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accredited MLT training completed in English or French, or - Other training completed in English or French, or - Academic papers or theses written in English or French, or - Minimum score on language proficiency test
Links	<p>https://www.cmlta.org/registration/internationally-educated-mlts/</p> <p>https://www.cmlta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/IEMLT-Steps-to-Registration-2024.pdf</p>	<p>https://www.cmlto.com/education-and-registration-requirements-for-internationally-educated-applicants/</p> <p>https://www.cmlto.com/applicants-resources/</p>

CURRENT PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS

We are aware of only one current program targeting internationally educated medical laboratory professionals. The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta provides microloans in partnership with Servus Credit Union.

There are other programs, policies, and services for internationally educated medical laboratory professionals that are not specific to medical laboratory professionals but are open to those in the “other healthcare occupation” category. These programs are outside the scope of this environmental scan.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Internationally educated nurses, pharmacists, and medical laboratory technologists face several barriers integrating into the Canadian labour market. These include barriers in the accreditation and certification process as well as barriers in the workplace. During the FCR process, many work in unregulated occupations in the same field (e.g., nurse assistant, pharmacy technical assistant, medical laboratory technical assistant). This experience does not provide direct benefits for registration in regulated nursing, pharmacy, or medical laboratory occupations. For example, hours worked as a nurse assistant do not count towards meeting requirements for registration as a licensed practical nurse or a registered nurse. However, working in related fields provides IEHPs with Canadian work experience in a relevant workplace setting, and allows them to learn a wealth of information about the Canadian healthcare system, including the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals, specific aspects of Canadian workplace culture, including interacting with patients, and key regulations and practices. This also provides them with a professional network that can help them find employment in their target occupation once they are licensed. For people seeking registration as medical laboratory technologists in Ontario, working in a closely related but unregulated occupation can be a way to demonstrate that they are “maintaining active engagement in the occupation”, which is a requirement for registration (College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario, n.d.).

Completing the full registration process with a regulatory body can take months, if not years. Because regulatory bodies are specific to each province and have distinct sets of requirements (e.g., they do not all accept the same certification exams), moving provinces before having completed the full registration process can result in having to start it all over again. IEHPs who complete registration in one province could, in principle, follow the same process as Canadian-trained healthcare professionals who want to move provinces. This involves registering with the other province’s regulatory body, meeting a list of requirements that is much less extensive than the one required for IEHPs (e.g., completing a background record check), and paying registration fees. However, stories of IEHPs who were already licensed to work in one or more province but were required to complete more education for registration in another province were reported in the media in recent years (Paul, 2022).

IEHPs whose mother tongue is not English or who did not complete their most advanced level of training in English often have to provide proof of English language proficiency. This most often takes the form of attaining a specific level on a standardized language test. Considering that many IEHPs still experience language barriers after completing registration and once they are employed, the language proficiency required to work in healthcare may not be adequately captured by standardized language tests. As reported by IEHPs, one important challenge concerns understanding terms and acronyms that are specific to Canada, or even to a province

or region. There are also cultural differences in the ways healthcare professionals interact with each other, including when writing clinical notes and reports, and with patients. These aspects of communication are not adequately covered in generic language courses that do not consider the specificities of the healthcare system and of different professions.

Achēv's EPIC-HC program has been designed to provide customized supports to IEHPs in nursing, pharmacy, and laboratory medical technology so that they can successfully integrate into the Canadian labour market and use all of their previous training and skills. Although it cannot address all of the barriers IEHPs face and does not attempt to change the systems governing the Foreign Credential Recognition process, it will provide training, support, resources and information, and related work experience opportunities to participants. Moreover, it will contribute to addressing the healthcare labour shortages in rural areas of Ontario and Alberta by facilitating labour mobility from the Greater Toronto Area to rural Ontario and Alberta.

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