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THE REGULATORY ROUNDUP

Topic: ISED Proposes Changes to Tower Policy

In the "Regulatory Roundup" column in each issue of *The Canadian Amateur* magazine, I will provide an overview of our regulatory priorities and also discuss some topics of interest.

Print from home certificates; CARAB 2026; Advanced Question Bank

Print from Home certificates

In September 2026, ISED created a means by which each Radio Amateur can print their own 'Certificate of Proficiency in Amateur Radio.' ISED's Amateur Radio Service Centre (ARSC) will no longer mail out certificates. If you are a new Radio Amateur, if you have upgraded your qualifications, or if you simply want a reprint of your existing certificate, you will have to:

- Create an account on the ISED website
- Download a printable version of your certificate
- Print it on your own printer.

At time of writing (mid-September), the 'print from home' function' was not yet in operation. ISED HQ and the ARSC have both assured me that the 'print from home" function has been thoroughly tested and is ready for the expected launch on 28 October.

In my January/February 2027 column, I will provide step-by-step instructions for how the 'print from home' process works. One thing is clear: once 'print from home' certificates are up and working, the ARSC will cease mailing out Amateur Radio certificates. For many years, the ARSC has been very kind and included information about RAC in all the Amateur Radio certificates they mailed out. "Print from home" will end this, and RAC will have to find a new way to reach out to new and upgrading Radio Amateurs.

The 'print from home' initiative is a good idea, but it's not unique. ISED will roll out similar 'print from home' processes for other Canadian radio operator certificate programs over the coming months. We Radio Amateurs are the first ones to benefit from it. Other countries have similar processes. In both the United Kingdom and the United States, Amateur Radio licences are wholly online. Neither the UK's OfCom nor the US FCC send Amateur Radio licences through the mail.

In this era of easy custom digital printing, it may be a simple matter to take the digital file and create a durable plastic wallet-sized version of your certificate. The old, printed certificates that we used to receive through the mail came on heavy paper stock in two sizes: Letter size (8.5' x 11') suitable for framing, and a not-quite wallet size version. I have always kept a laminated copy of the smaller certificate in my wallet, just in case I was ever asked to prove my qualifications. I've never been asked, but I'm ready. A proper credit-card sized version of the certificate would be a better choice and may be possible.

CARAB 2026

CARAB is the 'Canadian Amateur Radio Advisory Board.' This is the name for the annual formal meeting where representatives of RAC and ISED meet to discuss priorities and plan our work together. It is also the occasion when RAC will make formal requests for changes to ISED policy and the regulations as they relate to Amateur Radio. RAC has regular informal contact with ISED throughout the year, but CARAB is more formal, and involves senior officers of both RAC and ISED.

CARAB 2026 is scheduled for 23 September, approximately ten days after this is being written so I can't tell you what happened but I will provide a preview. The RAC delegation will include RAC's President (Al VE3AJB), Vice-President (Hiroshi VA7LET), Mid-West Director (Ed VE4VT), the President of the Fédération des clubs radio amateurs du Québec (RAQI) (Charles VE2ZCL), RAQI's Director-General (Daniel VA2DLO) and me. I will attend the meeting at ISED HQ in Ottawa, and the other members of the RAC delegation will attend by virtual presence.

RAC has no new requests of ISED for policy or regulatory change, but we will raise our three outstanding requests:

- RAC's proposals for changes to Amateur Radio call sign policy
- RAC's request to modify ISED policy to allow broader use of remotely controlled stations
- RAC's proposed changes to the Advanced Question Bank.

As well, RAC has asked RAQI to make a presentation to ISED on RAQI's role on managing Canadian applications for funding from the US-based Amateur Radio Digital Communications (ARDC). ARDC offers funding for Amateur Radio research and development (R&D), training and youth initiatives.

On call sign policy, RAC has offered to shoulder some of the burden arising from our proposed changes. This offer includes a temporary IT solution where RAC can handle applications for

the 2x1 and 2x2 call signs we have proposed (ex: CF1A, XOØAA), and to maintain data in a database format compatible with ISED standards. RAC has proposed to do this until such time as ISED finds the IT resources to finalize the project. We have also offered to be ISED's 'ghost writer.' We have already drafted a proposed complete replacement for the current call sign policy document, RIC-9. We are trying to do what we can to make it easier for ISED to say 'yes.' I feel the good will from ISED, but their resources are limited and they remain non-committal.

A full report on CARAB 2026 will appear in this column in the January/February 2027 TCA.

Advanced Question Bank Changes

In August, ISED informed me that they have a team of four Spectrum Management Officers (SMOs) reviewing the recommendations RAC made for changes to the Advanced Question Bank. The four SMOs are all Radio Amateurs and they are in different locations across Canada.

RAC's 20-member Examination Standards Committee (RAC-ESC-CNE) laboured long and hard during 2024 and 2025 to produce these recommendations. Our objective was to improve the quality of questions in the Advanced Question Bank. Our objective was ***not*** to make the Advanced Exam harder or easier. Our recommendations proposed changes to 98% of the questions in the 550-question Advanced bank. While some of these changes were minor editorial changes, we also recommended the deletion of 287 questions and the addition of 288 questions. If RAC's recommendations are accepted by ISED:

- 47 of the 50 topic areas will be unchanged
- One topic area will be deleted and replaced with a new topic area
- Two existing topic areas will be combined
- The reorganization of two topic areas

We will only release our recommendations in the final form approved by ISED. If RAC's recommendations are accepted by ISED, they will require a small re-write of one section of RIC-3.

ISED's review of RAC's recommendations has been a long time coming. RAC delivered our detailed recommendations for change on 1 May 2025. In the fifteen subsequent months, ISED had endured a 'perfect storm' of budget cuts, staff cuts, retirements and a major reorganization. Managing Amateur Radio issues is not their only task. At last year's CARAB (September 8, 2025), ISED informed RAC that they had to 'pause' work on the Advanced Question Bank while they attended to higher priorities. That pause lasted ten or eleven months.

The pause is over and ISED's two-stage internal process has begun. The first stage is a technical review by those four ISED SMOs. The second stage is an editorial review by ISED's publications section. ISED will produce modifications to RAC's recommendations. When the changes are finalized, ISED will publish the revised Advanced Question Bank on the ISED website. Approximately six months after publication, the revised Advanced Question Bank will be ingested by ISED exam generator software and be used for all Advanced exams.

When ISED publishes the new Advanced Question Bank, RAC will simultaneously publish an annotated document explaining all the changes, question-by-question. This is the process we followed when the Basic Question Bank was updated in 2025. Please see https://www.rac.ca/esc_cne/. We will do exactly the same thing for the update to the Advanced Question Bank.

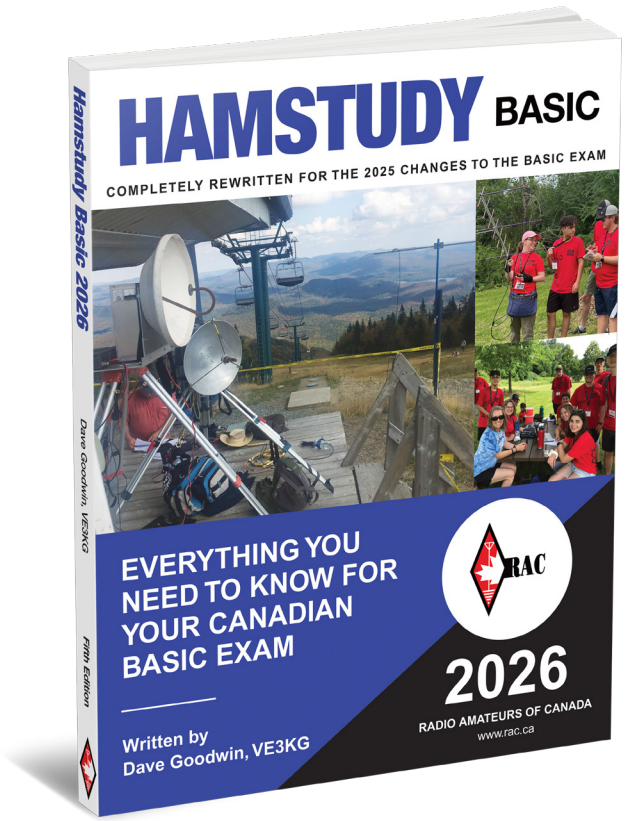
RAC will also prepare 'reference material' for ISED's approval. This will include mathematical formulas and diagrams relevant to the content of the Advanced exam. This will be analogous to the reference material now available to candidates writing the Basic exam.

My current estimate is that the new Advanced Question Bank will be published in the spring of 2027 and come into effect in the summer or fall of 2027. I have been wrong with my previous estimates, so take that only as a guess.

Census of Amateur Radio in Canada

Normally, I would publish an updated statistical profile in the November/December issue of my column. I was late requesting this data from ISED, so it will have to wait until January/February 2027, along with the report on CARAB 2026.

Hamstudy Basic Study Guide 2026



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