

Chapters forum provides opportunity for growth

Held in conjunction with the 425th meeting of Council November 19, 20 at the Doubletree International Plaza Hotel in Toronto, the Chapters Forum was a chance to learn more about PEO initiatives and committees, to network with peers and to air views in an open setting.

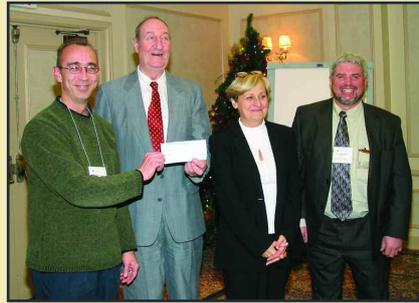
Aptly titled "PEO Chapters: Opportunities for Growth," the forum was opened Friday with an address by David Robinson, P.Eng., Northern Region Councillor and co-chair of the organizing committee. He welcomed chapter leaders and thanked all involved for their work in making the event happen. Robinson spoke of the different types of chapter members (EITs, P.Engs in mid-career, empty nesters and, finally, mature engineers) that are essential for the success of any chapter. Each, he said, offers unique strengths. Robinson encouraged chapter leaders to volunteer on PEO's committees, emphasizing that volunteerism is the backbone of PEO.

In the first session, PEO President George Comrie, P.Eng., discussed many issues and challenges facing PEO, including education outreach and developing a seamless transition from student to EIT to P.Eng., confusion about the Certificate of Authorization, discipline-specific licensing, continuing competence, and relations with the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. Perhaps the most important issues facing PEO today, according to Comrie, are the regulatory incursions that undermine the *Professional Engineers Act*, such as recent changes to the *Ontario Building Code* and the Brownfields regulation. Comrie said the government's actions conflict with the established Canadian model for self-regulating professions and devalue PEO's value proposition.

Diane Freeman, P.Eng., chair of the Chapter Leaders Conference held on April 22, reported on the conference's major outcome, which was to redefine the roles and responsibilities of chapters in light of PEO's new governance model and new role as a strictly regulatory body. A roles and responsibilities document created as a result of the forum was accepted in June by Council.

Allen Lucas, P.Eng., discussed the chapter business planning process and the requirement for chapters to submit business plans to sup-

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Jim Foley, P.Eng. (left), and Larry Betuzzi, P.Eng. (right), of the Lakehead Chapter present Derek Wilson, P.Eng., president, Ontario Professional Engineers Foundation For Education (OPEFFE), and OPEFFE board member Brenda Caplan with a donation of \$1,354 at the Chapters Forum. The Lakehead Chapter held a charity golf day this past summer to benefit the OPEFFE. Northern Region Councillor Seimer Tsang, P.Eng. (not in photo), was also instrumental in organizing the event.

port the funds they receive. The Regional Councillors Committee, which Lucas chairs, has been tasked with ensuring that members' money is being fairly allocated to fulfill the mandate of the chapters.

Summaries of the objectives and mandates of the Academic Requirements, Experience Requirements, Professional Standards, Professional Engineers Awards and Education committees were provided by committee chairs or members. The brief overviews provided chapter leaders with greater insight into the activities of each of the committees.

Jordan Max, PEO manager, policy, presented the progress to date of PEO's Strategic Plan. Many of the phases of the process, including assembling the project team, drafting a project plan, research projects, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) sessions, have been completed. Next steps include developing priorities and selecting goals, redrafting the plan, and presenting it to the Executive Committee and Council early in 2005. The plan, once approved, will be incorporated into the 2006 budget for implementation beginning in January 2006.

Chris Roney, P.Eng., updated chapter leaders on the latest developments regarding the *Building Code Statute Law Amendment Act*

(Bill 124). His concerns with the legislation include the mandatory insurance for engineers who submit designs for building permits and the requirement for designers to qualify via ministry exams, which he agreed with President Comrie is an issue of external certification vs. self governance. In his presentation, Roney called on chapter leaders and, in fact, all P.Engs to make their views known to their local MPPs. To aid in this effort, PEO has prepared talking points and a sample letter, both of which are available on the PEO website under "BRRAG."

Hot issues continued on Saturday with PEO's IT Communication Plan, presented by Cliff Knox, P.Eng. He provided details of the IT initiatives underway to provide tools for chapters, including an easy-to-use website template, a master calendar, an email distribution list, survey software, and membership profile and collaboration tools. A rollout of these tools, including training and support, is scheduled for the first quarter of 2005. Next was an overview on Brownfields legislation by David DuBois, P.Eng., that included an update on records of site condition (RSCs) and the definition of a "qualified person." A presentation on international professionalism, by Al Perks, P.Eng., rounded out the hot issues.

Also on Saturday, several chapters presented stories of successful events they've organized to raise awareness of engineering and to give back to their local communities. A sampling of the initiatives presented include science fairs and bridge building competitions (Algoma, Brantford, Chatham-Kent, North Bay), a technology conference (Lakehead) and a unique dinner to celebrate a century of military engineering (Algonquin).

Last, but certainly not least, was an "open forum," moderated by Nigel Birch, P.Eng., that allowed chapter leaders to air concerns. Some of the issues raised included ensuring that regulatory incursions similar to Bill 124 and Brownfields don't happen again, inequitable funding of chapters, the need to encourage EITs to be more involved with chapters, getting help from PEO in contacting politicians, training for chapters on succession planning and PEO's privacy policy, and PEO's work in helping internationally trained engineers.