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Professional engineers must stand up and be counted

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PRESIDENT

Every engineer in Ontario has made a tremendous commitment to earn and hold the title of professional engineer and assume the immense responsibility that goes along with it.

You and I didn't invest our time and energy in, and make sacrifices for, our education and training only to neglect the promotion of our profession.

Professional Engineers Ontario has accepted the assignment of building our self-regulating profession because of our belief in the extensive contributions engineers make to society.

You have urged us to promote the self-regulatory profession.

Many professional engineers maintain their licences throughout their career, even when not required by law, to show their personal and professional commitment to the high ethical and technical standards of the profession. I am among these people. We understand that being a professional engineer is of such importance to society that we feel a responsibility to continue to support self-regulation.

While gathering input for PEO's strategic plan, over 800 members responded online that PEO needs to be out there promoting and preserving the self-regulatory profession. Doing so does not require us to compromise our knowledge and ideals. But we do have to adapt ourselves to today's needs and present the profession in a new light.

We must show the value of a licensed, accountable profession.

Over the last several months, PEO Council has taken several bold steps to focus our efforts and mobilize our resources.

In March 2005, Council unanimously approved a five-year strategic plan that outlines an ambitious agenda to maintain our self-regulatory mandate in the face of new and ever-changing realities in society. The plan's foremost objective is to elevate the value of the P.Eng. licence to the public and the regard paid to the engineering profession.

PEO has been vigorously defending its own regulatory mechanisms in the face of the Building Code qualification regime introduced by the Ontario government. The specially appointed Building Code (formerly BRRAG) Task Force has made tremendous ground in demonstrating the affront made by this external regime.

Your Council has a long list of demands that will be placed on PEO in the coming years. They include:

- ensuring that PEO's authority to regulate engineering practice under the *Professional Engineers Act* is not infringed upon;
- meeting new demands put on us as a result of new areas of regulation;
- ensuring that we are prepared for the significant number of applications for licensure that are made each year. An increasing percentage of these are from international engineering graduates and require a few additional, costly steps to process;
- having the physical infrastructure and support staff to facilitate the important contributions of hundreds of volunteers;
- addressing inflation and the costs of instituting new information and communications technology and the need to train staff;
- mobilizing, through PEO's 38 chapters, the commitment to integrate the local presence component of our government liaison efforts into chapter operations; and
- ensuring that all new engineers remain part of a strong self-governing profession.

It's time to seal the commitment you have urged us to make.

In December, Council took another bold step by acknowledging that the future of self-regulation requires each of us to play a greater role. Pursuing our regulatory priorities requires us to make a thorough evaluation of the resources PEO has at its disposal.

The difficult decision to increase the annual P.Eng. licence fee by \$20 in both 2006 and 2007, and the miscellaneous fees in Regulation 941 by an average of 30 per cent, was a necessary one. The increases are directly related to the funding required for PEO's normal operations as well as the additional initiatives envisioned under the five-year plan.

This direction is no different than the investments required to upgrade the infrastructure we help build each day. Take my world of water supply and wastewater disposal systems. Most engineers in this field would agree that service rates are about one-half of the real costs to own, operate and maintain these water and sewage systems. Government and the public now fully realize that such systems have a finite age, after which work must be done, at a cost, to improve processes for providing safe drinking water and reducing the impact of wastewater discharges. This requires significant new expenditures.

I would expect nothing less than for our 67,000 P.Engs to demand that PEO Council have a long-range plan to protect our professional engineering infrastructure investments and to maintain our reserves for the future. This means all professional engineers have to stand up and be accountable.

I ask that you please carefully consider Council's request for your confirmation of the amendment to section 39(2) of By-Law No. 1 to set a new annual fee for 2006 and 2007. We must now focus our efforts and our resources.