

# COUNCIL APPROVES RESTRUCTURING ENGINEERING INTERNSHIP AND EIT PROGRAM

453rd MEETING, NOVEMBER 13, 14, 2008

By Jennifer Coombes

AT THE NOVEMBER 2008 MEETING council approved, in principle, a restructuring of the engineering internship and Engineering Intern Training (EIT) programs. Currently, licence applicants either navigate the licensing process alone or may voluntarily enroll in the EIT program, which has been shown to better prepare applicants for the final licensing review.

The proposed new model will add a structured engineering internship program, whereby PEO partners with and guides employers in developing an engineering experience plan for licence applicants that will allow them to meet all of the required experience for licensing, including the 12 months of Canadian experience.

The recommendation presented to council is based on ideas developed by the Seamless Transition Task Force, the council-approved recommendations of the Licensing Process Task Force, and the results of many months of consultation within the membership and with specific stakeholder groups on the *Alternative Engineering Internship Program Models White Paper*, which was presented by its author, Gerry Meade, P.Eng., to council at the January 2008 meeting. At that meeting, the white paper was accepted in draft form with a requirement to report to council in six months with recommendations.

The white paper outlined three proposed models:

- Model 1—a fully voluntary program;
- Model 2—a voluntary program with specific rights and privileges; and
- Model 3—a mandatory program for 12 months immediately prior to licensure.

Because a majority of those who responded to a survey seeking feedback on the proposed models supported some sort of voluntary participation, Model 2 was used to develop the program. With this model, registration in the structured internship program would be voluntary but, unlike the EIT program, once applicants are accepted, participation in the program's components would be mandatory.

Applicants in this program, along with their supervisors, would create a customized engineering development plan, approved by PEO to meet licensing requirements. Completing this plan would exempt them from the final experience review to which EITs and general applicants are normally subject.

They would also receive rights and privileges not available to general applicants or EITs, including the right to use the title "engineering intern," recognition in legislation as a class of member (and therefore subject to PEO's Code of Ethics and disciplinary process), full chapter participation, including holding office as a chapter executive, and PEO council election voting rights.

At the November meeting, council directed the CEO/registrar to conduct a full legal review of the proposed restructuring and prepare an implementation plan for consideration at its February 2009 meeting.

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

The November meeting's agenda included a plenary session on development of professional standards, intended to help council develop an understanding of how the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) carries out its function, the types of standards and guidelines the committee develops, and how the list of possible standards to develop is created.

The session was also held to open up communication between council and the PSC and have council provide the committee clear direction and support in carrying out its approved policy on standards (see *Engineering Dimensions*, March/April 2007, p. 28).

Council heard a comprehensive overview of the work of the committee, which acts as the executive body for guidelines and standards development, including the process used to identify issues and determine whether a guideline or standard is necessary. Council also received a brief overview of the guidelines in various stages of development.

After the presentation, small breakout groups were asked to discuss the process for carrying out council's policy on standards development, the adequacy of the speed, quantity and quality of standards development, and the direction and support required from council to assist the PSC in carrying out its function.

All groups reported they now had a better grasp of performance standards and guidelines following the PSC presentation and that the current process for carrying out standards development is sound.

Suggestions for improvement to the standards development process included:

- providing council with a briefing note describing the policy issues whenever the PSC is considering developing a standard in a particular area;

- increasing communication between the committee and council at several stages during a standard's or guideline's development;
- increasing staff and volunteer resources (i.e. develop a talent bank of subject matter experts to sit on subcommittees) to help increase the speed and quantity of guidelines and standards produced; and
- checking with stakeholders on a guideline's or standard's validity a set number of years after it is introduced.

Some councillors also suggested that the PSC work with chapters more closely to recruit subject matter experts.

### COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE POLICY REVISION

Council approved a revised Committees and Task Forces Policy at the November meeting that it hopes will facilitate a more efficient and effective working relationship between council and PEO committees. The policy, which was last revised in 2004 as part of a new PEO governance model, exists to guide the general operation of each committee, define the committee/council relationship, and assist council, the Executive Committee and the CEO/registrar in executing the requirements of the *Professional Engineers Act*.

At its December 2007 meeting, council raised several issues with the existing policy, among them a lack of compliance by the committees with some terms of the policy, including a lack of member turnover on some committees and the need for better succession planning. At issue also were council and committee accountability and communication between these groups.

These issues were further dealt with at a workshop held in March, involving committee chairs, PEO staff and committee staff advisors. Separate additional meetings were held by the CEO/registrar with committee staff advisors and the Advisory Committee on Volunteers, whose mandate is to assist in the operational review of committees (including memberships). A plenary session at council's June meeting was devoted to discussing strategies for improving the working relationship between council and committees (see *Engineering Dimensions*, July/August 2008).

The result of these initiatives was a discussion paper titled *Strategy to Enhance Council-Committee Outcomes*, which sought recommendations and input from all committee chairs.

Stakeholder feedback to the paper identified four areas of potential improvement for a revised Committees and Task Forces Policy:

- improving council/committee accountability—council and committees are to be accountable for outcomes and honour their obligations and expectations to each other, members and the public;
- rationalizing committee governance—ensuring that committees have the flexibility to directly manage their affairs within a framework of accountability;
- broadening volunteer engagement—ensuring that committees facilitate ongoing volunteer learning and leadership development; and
- improving council/committee communication links—ensuring direct, two-way communication between council and its committees.

According to Councillor Cliff Knox, P.Eng., the new policy is less prescriptive. For example, on the issue of turnover of members on committees, it is being left to each committee to determine when it requires fresh input, since no two committees have the same requirements for turnover.

### 2009 BUDGETS APPROVED

Council approved both PEO's 2009 operating budget and 2009 capital budget, which were presented for approval on the recommendation of PEO's Finance Committee.

The 2009 operating budget is balanced, with revenues budgeted at \$19,925,798 (positive variance of \$2,408,999 or 13.7 per cent compared to 2008) and expenditures at \$18,061,244.

A provision of \$600,000 has been made for council-directed special projects, including \$300,000 for the Ontario Centre for Engineering and Public Policy, and \$1,258,395 for the building fund (representing the \$20 P.Eng. fee increase to be used for the purchase of a building). The impact of a potential building purchase has not been factored into the 2009 operating budget.

### NEW FEE DESIGNATIONS

Council approved amending section 39 of By-law No. 1 to prescribe a fee equal to 25 per cent of the annual licence fee for professional engineers unable to practise engineering due to retirement, postgraduate studies, maternity/paternity leave, unemployment or a health condition, and an exemption of fees for past presidents.

The bylaw amendment will be presented to members for confirmation with the 2009 election material.

If the bylaw amendment is confirmed by members, PEO will put forward to the attorney general an amendment to Regulation 941/90 setting out the criteria for a "non-practising Member" class of licence holder, comprising professional engineers or limited licence holders paying the reduced annual fee. The regulation would also be amended to establish a reduced fee for limited licence holders.  $\Sigma$