

STRENGTHENING OUR GOVERNANCE MODEL



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President

LAST MONTH, a previously unscheduled meeting of council was called to ask council to reconsider a decision as to how our profession is governed.

This special meeting was intended to afford councillors an opportunity to review their November decision with regard to undertaking a referendum of the membership associated with the election of president.

Following considerable frank and open discussion, based on council's governing rules, the motion to reconsider was defeated. (If interested, you are welcome to listen to the audio of that meeting on www.peo.on.ca/council/AgendaMinutes.html.) Many councillors, including some with contrary views, stated they would respect the decision made by council.

I believe the decision to have council give a sober second thought to this very important issue was prudent and necessary.

Over the years, some have felt that PEO presidents have focused on their own priorities, some-

times at the expense of the bigger picture, and many councillors recognize that more is accomplished through a chair who works well with all 29 members of council. This is a very difficult task. Council believes that appointing its chair from within the elected members will result in a more focused, cohesive and effective council.

Council believes real progress can be achieved only when the president keeps council focused on PEO's legislated mandate to serve and protect the public interest and its long-term strategic initiatives to achieve this mandate.

Appointing the president from the elected members of council will not affect the number of councillors elected by licence holders. But it will allow all councillors to have more of a say in PEO's direction, and should ensure the continuity of leadership to enable our organization to achieve its goal of becoming the global leader in professional self-regulation.

This was not a decision easily taken; considering it has consumed council for much of last year. In February 2010, council voted to adopt the leadership structure that is most commonly used by the majority of Ontario's other self-regulating organizations, in which the officers are appointed by the board from among the member-elected directors. In May, council reported and heard from licence holders at the PEO annual general meeting, agreeing to consult them regarding the change. In July, PEO conducted an extensive survey, generating over 4700 responses and over 100 pages of comments from licence holders with diverse and conflicting points of view. At its September meeting, council reviewed the results of the survey and directed the Human Resources and Compensation Committee to draft a referendum question that could be used to confirm licence holders' support for the change. At its November meeting, council

considered the draft referendum question and agreed, by a two-thirds majority, that it should simply proceed with the change following the 2013 annual general meeting, as this is within council's mandate and provides time for implementation.

From 1922 to 1984, the *Professional Engineers Act* required licence holders to annually elect the PEO president and vice presidents. But in 1984, the Ontario government changed the act to give council the flexibility and the authority to establish the most effective governance structure. This included granting council the regulation-making powers to establish the number of elected councillors; to define constituencies, qualifications, methods of nomination and election, and term or terms of office of the elected members; and to conduct elections.

In 2000, again with the government's assistance, PEO and its licence holders created "the voice of Ontario's engineers," the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. Its mandate is to focus on member needs, just like the lawyers do, with the Ontario Bar Association, and the doctors, with the Ontario Medical Association.

This allowed PEO to focus on its larger mandate of protecting and serving the public interest, which is good for licence holders, business, PEO and the public.

I'm confident that PEO council, as member-elected and government-appointed representatives of our profession, is looking to PEO's future interests and has acted to strengthen the association and its ability to lead the profession on your behalf. Σ