

PEO/OSPE AGREEMENT— 79 PER CENT VOTE TO TERMINATE



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ON DECEMBER 5, 2011, 79 per cent of PEO members voting clearly indicated their wish to terminate PEO's formal agreement with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE).

Members recognized that PEO, operating under the *Professional Engineers Act*, is required to communicate with the public and with their representatives in government, both elected and appointed, including the bureaucrats who serve them, and that these communications are within PEO's public interest mandate and do not infringe on the concept of advocacy used in establishing OSPE 10 years ago.

The majority of members think PEO must, among other things, represent engineers in matters of establishing guidelines and standards of practice, identification and licensing of new and current applied science for the public good, and may even go so far as to assist engineers who choose to become representatives of the public, as members in the legislature.

In the opinion of many of the members I spoke with, OSPE was created to correct the inadequate respect and recognition given our members, as competent builders of our nation, and the remuneration provided them. It's important to note that our importance and earnings used to exceed both those of doctors and of lawyers.

In this, members exhibited both straight thought and straight talk at all four recent town hall meetings in Mississauga, Toronto, London and Ottawa. The subject demands no less!

Clear thinking indicates PEO has the intrinsic right to:

- establish an engineering centre to develop public policy. PEO had previously assisted government on policy matters, in highway and building design codes, in energy generation and in addressing the forces causing climate change. It is a considerable stretch of the imagination to call these subjects advocacy for individual or collective member interest;
- continue the broad efforts put forward by our 36 chapters in advising others in the practice of individual specialties as they affect the public interest;
- operate a government relations program.

In the aftermath of this vote to terminate the agreement, we must move forward and reassert our sense of direction. We must lend our moral support to OSPE's true mandate.

PEO should consider renewing our offer to purchase a corporate membership in OSPE to provide advocacy for all PEO members, which was refused before. PEO already has authority for such an arrangement under section 38 of By-Law No. 1.

Joint programs between our organizations should be investigated, but all such ventures should proceed on a contractual business basis.

Now that our objectives are clear, let us both recognize our mandates and focus on getting the job done.

Respect, recognition and remuneration are our joint goals. To fulfill these, PEO must advance its public interest mandate; OSPE should advance the interests and aspirations of members; both organizations should promote the engineering viewpoint and raise the profile of the profession.

This is *straight talk* from the heart for a renewed era of co-operation! Σ

A NOTE ON PEO'S FINANCES

My election platform, as well as fighting for a member-directed, self-regulated profession, included a promise of fiscal responsibility and integrity.

One of council's highest obligations is the fiduciary responsibility to manage the finances of our organization in the most effective way. I personally take this responsibility very seriously, particularly when our cash reserves were drained from \$14 million to \$3 million in a little over a year, while our unfunded pension liability grew to \$5.8 million.

This was an alarming state of affairs for me, made urgent by the concerns expressed at recent town halls.

The Finance Committee, which I chair, and which council has charged with monitoring PEO's budgets and finances, resolved to tackle the problem. Working with the CEO and controller, we went line by line through the budget, endeavouring to trim spending by 10 per cent, addressing our reserves and unfunded liabilities, while avoiding layoffs and preserving operational integrity.

Motions from the Finance Committee supporting this most reasonable budget were presented to council on December 15, only to be decisively rejected. I have done what I could on your behalf.

When voting this year, I suggest that each of you think very carefully about electing a council that respects the work of committees and their responsibilities, and values your hard-earned fees.