

Council approves contingency funding for OSPE, Certificate of Authorization review

JUNE 30, 2000

by Alison Piper

At its June 30 meeting, Council approved contingency funding for the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), in light of a delay in passage of changes to the Professional Engineers Act to enable the transfer of funds from PEO to OSPE. The legislative changes, originally scheduled to be passed as part of a Red Tape Bill this past spring, were delayed by the government until the fall because of the water contamination crisis in Walkerton.

Council therefore authorized the Executive Committee, after reviewing OSPE's budget, to advance additional funds of up to \$200,000 to enable OSPE to operate until the end of 2000.

Following the Council meeting, the PEO team negotiating with OSPE's interim board on the transfer of PEO's non-regulatory activities asked all PEO committees to review their mandates and programs and provide input to the negotiating team and Advisory Committee on Committees (ACC) on which activities might be considered to be non-regulatory. After the ACC receives and reviews the responses (due by the end of July), it plans to work with the affected committees to develop recommendations on program transfer for consideration by PEO's negotiating team and Council.

Transfer of PEO's non-regulatory programs to OSPE will occur on a staged basis once OSPE is fully operational.

Certificate of Authorization review gets underway

Council approved the terms of reference for a new Certificate of Authorization Task Force, in keeping with the findings and recommendations of the Professional Practice Committee subgroup report that Council approved in December 1999. The subgroup determined that a broader review of the C of A program is needed to determine whether it is accomplishing its intended regulatory goals.

The new task force will examine a range of issues, including whether the C of A licence affords the public additional protection or recourse related to professional liability over that already afforded by P.Eng. licensing, and whether it properly addresses the impact of business entities on engineering practice. The terms of reference also recognize that any changes to the C of A program must mesh with the results of a concurrent review of the Consulting Engineer designation (by the Consulting Engineer Designation Committee) and development of the Professional Excellence Program (PEP) by the PEP Review Task Force. The overriding purpose of the review, to be chaired by Councillor Gina Cody, P.Eng., is to ensure that PEO's approach to corporate licensing fits with PEO's mandate to regulate engineering practice in the public interest.

In discussion, President-elect Gordon Sterling, P.Eng., chair of the PEP Review Task Force, noted that several other provinces have made continuing competence a requirement to maintain the

P.Eng. licence—or are in the process of doing so. He said the C of A program must be reviewed with this in mind.

Council commits to strategic planning

Council will hold a summer think tank to brainstorm on a strategic plan for the association. Council approved the Executive Committee's proposal to develop a strategic plan and annually update it. It also approved the appointment of a Council and staff steering committee to prepare for a workshop on strategic planning, to be held August 11, and moderated by an external facilitator.

Registrar's report

In his report to Council, CEO and Registrar Roger Barker, P.Eng., provided an update on recent PEO activities, as well as national professional engineering initiatives underway by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE). Highlights included the following:

- ◆ CCPE has directed the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) to form a task force to look into creating a joint CEAB/Computer Science Accreditation Council group, with a mandate to accredit software engineering programs at Canadian universities. The step anticipates upcoming recommendations of a "software engineering" panel set up by an agreement of CCPE, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and Memorial University of New-

foundland to settle a lawsuit brought by CCPE against Memorial over the university's use of the term "engineering" in the title of a computer science program (see *The Link*, October/November 1999, p. 1). The panel is scheduled in September to make its non-binding recommendations on appropriate use of the term "software engineering" by Canadian universities.

- ◆ The Canadian Engineering Qualifications Board is working with engineering organizations in several countries to develop a register of recognized engineers in Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries. The proposed APEC Engineer Register would facilitate the mobility of engineers in participating countries through mutual recognition of systems of assessing qualifications for professional engineering practice. Professional engineers considered by the signatories to be substantially equivalent in their competence to practise would have their names entered in the register, facilitating their practice in the participating APEC countries.
- ◆ The Ontario labour ministry is revising its regulations for predevelopment reviews under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act. A working group under PEO's Professional Practice Committee has reviewed and responded in writing to draft proposals. The current draft exempts many routine industrial activities, but would require professional engineers to sign off on predevelopment reviews for activities involving custom design and modification of equipment.
- ◆ Considerable progress has been achieved on implementing PEO's new membership database. Startup of the new system has been scheduled for later this summer, following testing and training.
- ◆ In May, PEO received an award from the Ontario government to recognize its efforts in working with foreign-trained engineers and government agencies that help recent immigrant professionals. PEO President Peter DeVita, P.Eng., President-elect Gordon Sterling, P.Eng., and staff attended the awards presentation at Queen's Park. (See "PEO lauded for improving access to engineering" on p. 10.)

Defining bioengineering practice

John Runciman, P.Eng., co-chair, Bioengineering Task Force, updated Council on the task force's activities, noting that bioengineering is an umbrella term that defines several, diverse fields.

He said the group is currently developing a core body of knowledge for bioengineering, which will be used by PEO's Academic Requirements Committee as licensing criteria. It is also defining the areas of practice requiring the skills of bioengineers, he said. It has separated bioengineering into three areas for which it will draft scopes of practice: biochemical engineering or bioengineering applied to chemical products and services, biore-source engineering or bioengineering applied to agriculture and food, and biomedical engineering or bioengineering applied to the health sciences.

Engineering in high growth industries

Recent research has shown that today's high growth industries are rapidly and radically changing the nature of engineering work.

Research consultant John O'Grady made a presentation to Council on results of a study commissioned by the Canadian Engineering Resources Board (a standing committee of CCPE) on trends in engineering work and licensing in biotechnology, software development and informa-

tion technology. The study comprised interviews with human resource directors and engineering managers at 93 companies across Canada. It was conducted by KPMG and John O'Grady Consulting Ltd.

O'Grady said that in these high growth industries, a professional licence does not top the list of job qualifications. In fact, none of the companies interviewed said they would make membership in a professional association mandatory for employees, and about two-thirds said they would view professional regulation negatively if it impinged on their managerial prerogative. The study also found that companies in the biotech, software and IT industries identify strongly with technology-oriented professional associations, rather than licensing bodies.

O'Grady stressed that there are no consistent distinctions in the three industries between the work of engineers and that of engineering technologists. In some companies, there is a pronounced distinction, with design and project management considered to be engineering responsibilities, while in others there is little distinction.

The study also found that engineers with project management and non-technical skills are in high demand in the three industries. (See the September/October 2000 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* for full coverage of CCPE's research on trends in engineering work and licensing in today's economy.) ◆