



Great expectations

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PRESIDENT

Thank you for your letters and emails speaking to the issues raised in my first President's Message and my Ten-point Work Plan. I am greatly encouraged that so many of you are looking for new perspectives and actions from your Council. I will certainly take your suggestions into account, where possible. Keep them coming.

I've entitled this issue's President's Message "Great expectations," as I did our May Council workshop. This name brings to mind the unforgettable novel by Charles Dickens about the struggles of Pip, the English waif and his Australian benefactor. Like the boy, we have obstacles to overcome and, fortunately, like him, we have been given direction from an excellent guide. Familiar with the governance of volunteer associations like ours, Jean Frankel of Tecker Associates recommended we set a new culture for Council founded upon "knowledge-based decisions."

Why did we choose this prescription? Because the self-assessment of Council's past performance indicated 94 per cent of our Councillors believe our output needs improvement. Furthermore, we are not the only ones who feel this way.

- PEO membership believes we should be regulating more than one-third of those practising engineering, and that we should restore our profession to its former equivalence with the other learned professions of medicine and law;
- Our government believes we should be operating to ever-improving standards of practice, with guaranteed competence assurance and liability insurance; and
- The public, whom we protect, feel we should be contributing to the creation of a more healthy environment, and speaking out on important technical issues like global warming, energy supply and big city gridlock.

On your behalf, we at Council accept these challenges and are prepared to assume a leadership role in their solution. However, giving direction requires a high level of involvement and understanding of the issues. If we are to guide and advise others, there is no substitute for clarity and consensus of purpose. We must build a knowledge-based culture of trust, creating decisions based upon purpose, policy, strategy and considered perspective, rather than on politics, power plays, personalities, or the perception of the moment. In such a culture, who makes the decision is not nearly as important as the quality of the information.

Your leadership has set out a Ten-point Work Plan outlining some of the expectations of the groups we serve. I fully expect to report on substantial progress in several of these areas in my next message.

Make no mistake, achievement will test the effectiveness of knowledge-based decision making, as we build trust and competence in our Council.

I have taken the liberty of conversing one-on-one with most of the Councillors at or before the workshop. I have confirmed their interest in contributing to the advancement of our profession, while at the same time fulfilling their personal aspirations. In point of fact, they are quite excited about it! They will each be given the opportunity to participate as liaisons with PEO committees and/or as those spearheading elements of the work plan.

As a symbol of their commitment to rebuild PEO to even greater heights, I have asked all of your Councillors to sign on to this venture by initialing the margin of a rather famous photograph of steel workers building a skyscraper in New York.

Look for it in the lobby when you visit us at 25 Sheppard Avenue West with your further suggestions for improvement. ✦

Ten-point Work Plan for 2008

1. Introduce a multi-tiered licensing model from undergraduate to licensed P.Eng.
2. Install a structured, measurable, knowledge-based internship program, supported by wiki-style collaborative Internet mentors.
3. Further develop practice standards in significant areas.
4. Provide reasonably priced primary and secondary liability insurance for individuals and Certificate of Authorization holders.
5. Resolution of modern academic requirements for licensure.
6. Reciprocity membership with Michigan, provide means for graduates to write US engineering practice exams.
7. Mandatory reporting of fields of graduation and practice, self-certification of continuing competence.
8. Effective removal from our Act of major exceptions to the licensure requirement, close the back doors to the practice of professional engineering.
9. Bring to a conclusion the acquisition of a new headquarters building.
10. Create a centre of engineering and public policy to prepare technically informed position papers affecting future prosperity and jobs in Ontario.