

Objectives such as educating stakeholders on who and what PEO is and does, furthering the goals of the Professional Profile program, and taking another look at the *Professional Engineers Act* are all in a year's-work for PEO's 2003-2004 President.

If Ken McMartin, P.Eng., wishes his presidency to be known for one thing, it is for it to have added value to the engineering profession. A key tenet of this drive is to draw attention to the value of professional engineering to the Ontario public as well as to Ontario professional engineers. "If we don't, PEO is going to become less relevant in this province. If the public doesn't know who we are, they are not going to see value in having engineers licensed, which is going to cause problems down the road in terms of what engineers do on a daily basis for the public," he says.

One of the main goals is to educate stakeholders on the enforcement measures PEO undertakes. McMartin knows this ground well, having helped develop PEO's Enforcement Committee and serving as its first chair. But even he is the first to admit that continuing and improving the enforcement process will require "concerted effort."

While unmasking charlatans and getting tough with title abuse is an easy sell to other engineers, McMartin warns against the appearance of turf protection. "Our message here needs to be very clear. Our poli-

cy is not designed for the protection of those who already belong; it's designed to uphold the public's safety. Communicating this principle is essential," he says.

McMartin feels that stakeholders need to recognize the personal accountability that is fundamental to professional licensing. As members of a self-regulating profession, PEO practitioners are bound to demonstrate the highest standards of competence and professional ethics. These standards have been, and are, of great value to Ontario, its economy and its environmental track record, he says.

# Value added:

## Kenneth C. McMartin, P.Eng.

Value can only be increased, he argues, by informing the public about the profession's responsibilities and by protecting the public from situations where unlicensed people provide engineering work beneath the standards set by Ontario's P.Engs.

But McMartin feels "aggressive" enforcement of the *Professional Engineers Act* within industry could easily backfire on PEO, as it will be perceived as an intrusion on an employer's right to allocate staff as the employer sees fit. "I don't for a minute believe that every engineer in the province of Ontario needs to be licensed. It would be extremely nice, but it's not practical. So from that standpoint, we want to make sure that those directly supervising and taking responsibility for professional engineering are P.Engs," he says.

### Look at the Act

Another objective of McMartin's presidency is to undertake a comprehensive review of the *Professional Engineers Act* to make it more inclusive of emerging disciplines and perhaps even including engineering students and interns in the legislation. "I think the Act has to be looked at with respect to what professional engineering is today," he says. "I think it's antiquated. In 1922, we didn't really have electronics, communications or software, but today that's not recognized. We have items in the Act that take us back to our roots in civil engineering. It should be more general and maybe those items that are discipline-specific should be in the regulations."

McMartin points out that currently there's no provision in the legislation for retired P.Engs, yet they receive a fee remission. In addition, PEO already allows credit toward the experience required for licensing for certain pregraduation engineering experience acquired by engineering stu-



dents, but how is that possible if they're not even mentioned in legislation? Changing the Act will "strengthen the profession in the public's eyes, and in the practitioner's eyes by having a better governance regime within the association that will better serve both the public and licence holders," McMartin says.

### Meeting standards

McMartin also believes that if PEO sets the standards of competence and professional conduct, it must also ensure that its licensed practitioners meet these stan-

dards. So along with enforcement, an equal effort in his term will be spent on furthering the goals of the Professional Profile program and on encouraging the demonstration of practitioners' commitment to continuing competence.

While he admits that the rate of return of the Professional Profile questionnaire has been "disappointingly low" so far, McMartin feels PEO must not be deterred in its objective. "If we want to be a profession," he says, "we have to have some form of continuing competence that's measurable. The problem is that we have no way of knowing what our membership does in terms of their ongoing education or development of professional expertise. We have no way of telling the public whether these people are competent 30 years after graduating from uni-

by Dwight Hamilton

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*Ken McMartin, P.Eng*

versity. The public has a right to know who partakes in professional development and who doesn't, and somewhere along the line there's got to be a registry.” As a result, PEO licensees can expect the introduction in McMartin's term of a professional excellence program that involves voluntary participation in continuing education as they develop their careers.

McMartin's concern with developing engineers was evident more than three years ago, when he helped set up PEO's Student Membership Program, an Internet-based partnership with the Engineering Student Societies Council of Ontario, that permits any full time engineering student to begin building a relationship with PEO.

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And being a professional is precisely what McMartin wants current PEO practitioners—as well as prospective ones—to

think about. While his term as President may last only a year, McMartin's dedication to the engineering profession is clearly long-term. ❖



Ken McMartin, P.Eng. (left) takes over the reins as PEO President from outgoing President Richard Braddock, P.Eng., at PEO's annual general meeting in April.

## Biography at a glance

### Education

B.Eng. Carleton University, 1976  
M.Eng. Carleton University, 1982

### Professional career

Manager, Civil and Environmental Laboratories, Carleton University, since 1982  
Morrison Hershfield Burgess and Huggins Ltd., consulting engineers

### PEO service

Member of Ottawa Chapter executive since 1988, chair (1991-1992)  
Eastern Regional Councillor, 1997-1999, 1999-2001  
Vice President, 2001-2002  
President-elect, 2002-2003

### Committees

Advisory Committee on Committees, Professional Engineers Awards, Audit, Executive, Enforcement (founding chair), Fee Schedule, Finance, Reconsideration, Regional Councillors