

Council approves continuing government communications plan

By JENNIFER COOMBES

At the June meeting, Council was presented with the progress of PEO's six-month trial government relations program initiated in January 2005 to increase the government's knowledge of PEO's role. Progress of the program to date includes the scheduling of over 20 meetings with individual MPPs and the successful Engineering for Ontarians Day, held June 6 at Queen's Park (see special centre pull-out), which was attended by 45 MPPs and the attorney general.

Council has approved the continuation of the program for the remainder of 2005, at a cost not to exceed \$70,000. The contract of Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs Inc., the firm engaged to lead the program, has been extended by six months as a result.

Council also directed that an Executive Committee working group report its recommendations on incorporating a government relations/public communications program into PEO's operations at the September meeting. Council recognizes that the program fulfills a goal of PEO's strategic plan, to "achieve a better understanding and broader acceptance of the *Professional Engineers Act* and the role and jurisdiction of PEO by government, staff, volunteers, licence holders, employers of engineers, and other related stakeholders" and, as such, must be integrated into PEO's core business functions. The program will be included in the 2006 budget.

Complaints process examination

Bruce Matthews, P.Eng., PEO's manager, complaints & discipline, provided an overview of the current complaints process to prepare Councillors for the motions put forth in response to *Examination of Procedures for the Treatment of Complaints*, a report received in March 2005 by then Complaints Review Councillor (CRC) David J.D. Sims, Q.C. While concluding that PEO's complaints process works well,

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the CRC made five specific recommendations for improvement.

The report was subsequently forwarded to the Complaints Committee (COC) and regulatory compliance staff for their comments, which were to be considered at the June Council meeting. The COC and staff reviewed the report by the CRC and endorsed three of the five recommendations, but identified concerns with two. The first recommendation of concern deals with early disclosure of material to the complainant against member (i.e. before a formal written complaint is filed with the Registrar). The COC and staff both agree that the current process is in compliance with the intent of the recommendation made in the September 1999 Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement Task Force report.

The COC and staff also do not support the recommendation that experts' reports should be disclosed to both complainants and complained against engineers, since it is felt that precautions would be ineffective in preventing a complainant from making inappropriate use of an expert report.

With this information in mind, the COC and staff prepared five motions for consideration by Council, the first three of which reflect recommendations proposed by the CRC and the final two, views of the COC and staff. The following (condensed) motions were approved by Council:

1. that the COC establish internal guidelines for the processing of complaints by December 31, 2005, and to annually review the guidelines and report on compliance, beginning in 2006;
2. that training be provided for the COC on the writing of reasons, to be implemented by December 31, 2006;
3. that the regulatory compliance staff explore the introduction of a quality assurance program, such as ISO, to the complaints process and report to Council by June 30, 2006;

4. to endorse the current approach of the COC toward early complaint notification; and
5. that the COC consider the implications of disclosure of expert reports, to revise its procedures and practices accordingly, and to report back to Council at its December 2005 meeting.

The CRC's report will be published in its entirety in *Gazette* in the September/October 2005 issue of *Engineering Dimensions*.

Downtown location chosen

Despite a range of opinions on the issue, Council voted to support the Accommodation Task Force's recommendation to locate PEO's offices in downtown Toronto when the current Sheppard Avenue West lease expires in December 2009.

Nick Monsour, P.Eng., chair of the task force, Barry Hitchcock, P.Eng., Laurier Proulx, P.Eng., and Brian Walsh and Mark Renzoni of CB Richard Ellis, the realtors engaged to evaluate locations for the office, presented an overview of the issues of concern with PEO's present location. These issues include insufficient office space, lack of visibility, parking availability and cost and, not insignificantly, the present yearly rental cost of \$1.2 million (which is projected to be \$1.45 million in 2009 and higher still if PEO's lease is renewed in 2010). The landlord at 25 Sheppard has advised PEO that, currently, there is no additional space available in the building and the building's principal tenant has a right of first offer on any space that does become available.

Competing priorities were considered in searching for a new location for PEO, including public transit access, access to major highways, proximity to amenities, and a location that abides by the *Professional Engineers Act*, which dictates that PEO be located in Toronto.

Data gathered through months of surveys of key stakeholders, including Council, committee members and staff, showed that all ranked the downtown area second, making it the most common choice for the office location among the survey groups.

Some Councillors suggested that it might be premature to narrow the options for location of PEO's premises before it's known which types of properties are available for purchase or lease in a given area. Others thought that it was somewhat of a chicken and egg situation and that it was wiser to first make a buy vs. lease decision and then decide on location.

An amendment moved by Councillor Dixon to add the word "preferably" before the words "located in downtown Toronto" was defeated.

IEG portal postponed

Council defeated a motion to allow the President and CEO/Registrar to finalize a contract with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) for the Ontario Portal for International Engineering Graduates.

MTCU announced funding for the project in October 2004; however, when the contract was prepared, the ministry had included items that were unacceptable to PEO, including a proposal to develop a college course for international engineering graduates that would substitute for the 12 months of Canadian work experience required for permanent licensure. Although a new draft contract dated June 23, 2005 omits the unacceptable conditions, Councillors are uncomfortable with the project for various reasons and feel it requires more review.

External organization reports

CCPE strategy

Ken McMartin, P.Eng., president-elect of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), directed Councillors to the report of the May 13 meeting of the CCPE board of directors in Regina, Saskatchewan. Among the policy and business issues covered at the meeting was the approval of CCPE's strategic plan 2006-2008.

To help celebrate CCPE's 70th anniversary in 2006, the board of directors approved a commemorative calendar project, which will highlight the history of engineering in Canada. The calendar will be distributed to all engineers in Canada. Currently, there is a call for photographs of Canada's engineering achievements (see ad this page).

Insurance changes

Council approved PEO's participation in the CCPE/Association Errors & Omissions/Non-profit Entity Directors and Officers Insurance Program. CCPE's national program for directors and officers and errors and omissions insurance provides better coverage than PEO had previously. Specifically, the insurance provides coverage for PEO volunteers and representatives PEO appoints to external groups. In addition, matters arising from admissions and discipline are explicitly covered. Taking part in CCPE's program will mean significant cost savings for PEO: \$40,000 for the 2005 budget, and \$100,000 for 2006.

OSPE takes on gala

At the June meeting, Council approved an agreement between PEO and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), appointing the engineering advocacy organization as the exclusive sponsorship agent for the 2005 Ontario Professional Engineers Awards (OPEA) gala, for which it will be paid a commission. PEO and OSPE have been co-hosting the OPEA awards galas for the past four years. In 2006, PEO will contribute \$60,000 to the event (\$50,000 in 2007 and \$50,000 in 2008) and OSPE will assume responsibility for all of the costs of the gala, recouping its investment from PEO's contribution and the sponsorship revenues. PEO will continue to subsidize PEO's Awards Committee, which will continue in its role of recommending awardees.

PEO/OACETT move forward with LET

In March, Council received a joint report on a plan to implement a Licensed Engineering Technologist (LET) designation for limited licensees who are certified engineering technologists (see *Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2005, p. 40).

PEO and OACETT staff have since created a finalized charter for the LET project, which Council received at the June meeting.

Call for photos

January
February
March
April
MAY
June
July
August
September
October

2006 Commemorative Calendar
Celebrating Engineering that Transforms Canada: past, present and future

CCPE invites engineers, as well as amateur and professional photographers, to submit photos of great Canadian engineering achievements—past, present and future—for a 2006 calendar!

Help us highlight Canada's engineering achievements by sending us your photos of modern day or historic landmarks such as buildings, bridges, highways or canals; biomedical and telecommunications advancements that impact on our collective well-being; innovations or inventions in transportation that help propel Canada into the future; improvements in mechanization and production found in factories or efficient energy resources such as our power plants, dams, wind farms and oil refineries, recognized around the world.

Deadline
Photo(s) must be submitted to the appropriate provincial/territorial licensing body before **September 1, 2005** with the completed release forms.
See www.ccpe.ca/e/pub_events.cfm for release forms and contact information.


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