

[LETTERS]

CPD UNNECESSARY

I chuckled when I read the article "Continuing professional development now a requirement in Manitoba" (*Engineering Dimensions*, March/April 2012, p. 17). Apparently, APEGM is going to force 100 per cent of its members to comply with its continuing professional development (CPD) program even though it was approved by only 11 per cent of its members—hardly a resounding endorsement! The other 89 per cent who didn't vote in favour of it will be made to pay year after year for their failure to fend off the central planners, at the rate of 80 hours per year.

The regulator's claim that all this extra red tape and lost hours of productivity will result in an increase in "job satisfaction, mobility and advancement potential" for engineers is simply laughable because it is entirely without evidence. (In fact, how much job satisfaction will be had by engineers who are erroneously, and illegally, charged with professional misconduct simply for not agreeing to be slaves to the CPD bureaucrats?) Regardless, why on earth should such happiness factors even be a concern of engineering associations in the first place? I thought their job was to



keep the public safe by selling yearly licences. In fact, you can rest assured that no CPD programs will ever be correlated to an increase (or decrease) in public safety.

The reality is that CPD programs are entirely unnecessary. I doubt that the Big Thinkers realize that all engineers learn new skills every day. They must because their customers and employers demand it, not because some engineering overlord forces them into a fake back-to-school program. From a logistical point of view, many engineers could not even report their training and new skills due to customer and employment confidentiality agreements.

Where will this end? At 301 Wellington Street in Ottawa, of course!

I look forward to the day when an engineering association in Canada has to explain to the country's nine Supreme Court judges why its arbitrary and ineffective CPD program, which turns engineers into quasi-slaves to its bureaucratic feel-good ambitions, is legal and just law and is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Only then will all this nonsense come to an end. Only then will the 89 per cent be freed to practise engineering in a manner that satisfies themselves, their employers and their customers.

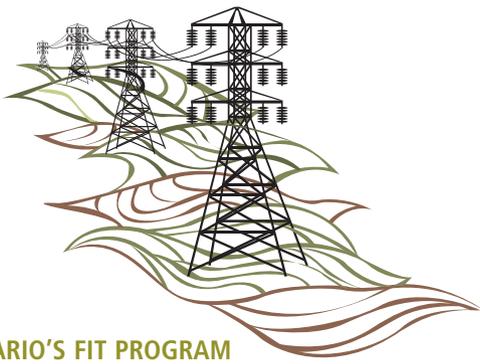
Roger Toutant, P.Eng., Ottawa, ON



PEO'S OFFICIAL VISION

I heartily endorse President Adams' message in the March/April *Engineering Dimensions* (p. 3). As a PEO member of about 40 years, I think it is by far the best and simplest description of what an engineer is and what he/she should be doing, that I have ever read. I would suggest that the principal object and the five additional objects in italics (along with the explanatory notes that follow them) be adopted word for word as the official explanation of PEO's vision and calling.

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ONTARIO'S FIT PROGRAM

I would like to take exception to the claims made in the article "What's next for Ontario's *Green Energy Act*?" (*Engineering Dimensions*, January/February 2012, p. 44) that there is no "digression" in Ontario's FIT program. It seems ironic that at the time the article was published, the Ontario Power Authority was in the process of undertaking just such a review of the generation rates paid for all renewable sources under the act. The new rate announcement was released in March 2012, and will be effective for applications made on or after September 1, 2011.

This review process has always been a published aim of the FIT program, and will apply to new applications over the entire life of their contract. This only makes sense, as the primary cost of renewable energy is upfront capital cost. Early adopters who have already purchased their systems at higher prices need firm rates to justify their investments. I understand this mechanism is based on the German model.

Please find more information at the OPA website: www.energy.gov.on.ca/en/fit-and-microfit-program/2-year-fit-review/.

Bruce Milliken, P.Eng., Belleville, ON

SYMPTOMS OF A LARGER PROBLEM

Three articles in the January/February 2012 issue drew my attention. Two of them are Viewpoints (p. 20 and 21) for and against a direct election of the president. The view that engineers of Ontario have a serious problem, which is attributable to the way in which the president is elected or who gets elected, is interesting.

The other article is on the history of PEO's beginnings (p. 26). It is remarkable that many of the concerns regarding the status of engineers in 1922 appear to be valid even now. In his visionary speech, as quoted in this article, F.H. Peters compares the "closely united organizations possessed by the lawyers and doctors" as a model for engineers to emulate. The profession has been self-regulated for so long now, and

COUNCIL WORKING TOGETHER

In reference to the two Viewpoints found in *Engineering Dimensions* on pages 20 and 21 (January/February 2012), let me start by saying I support the view of Denis Dixon, et al., who wrote that members are capable of electing their own president. I have trouble with Diane Freeman, who wrote that electing presidents "has, far too frequently, resulted in presidents who were ineffective, ill-prepared, out-of-touch or ill-informed"... just because they were elected! Why would this be the case only for presidents? Why not for all of our council members who are elected? Can an equally inept council draw from itself one who is a leader? Diane's analysis is wrong here.

But Diane is quite correct when she says: "the presidents themselves do not understand their role." This is not a matter of election but that of job description of the president and the president's role (this should also apply to councillors). It should include: "The president does not have special powers or authority" (see what Rob Ford tried to do to Toronto city councillors), but working together to develop a strong consensus should be the goal.

Also, the person elected as president-elect should sit on council for one year and become the president the following year, giving that person time to "learn the ropes." You will have the past president, the current president and the learning president-elect. In this position, the president-elect can understand where council is headed and how to develop "alliances" to press ideas when he or she becomes the president.

Harry Nagata, P.Eng., Downsview, ON



I see three features that may be symptoms of the problem:

1. There are so many engineers working as engineers, but without being a licensed member of PEO;
2. There are licensed engineers who do not work in the profession, but continue to retain the licence; and lastly
3. There is no single trade union that speaks for all engineers, regardless of their employer (perhaps Peters was wrong to say that "we must not become a trade union").

Addressing these three issues is fundamental to raising the status of the engineering profession, in my opinion. To what extent can any president, directly elected or otherwise, address these issues?

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GOVERNMENT INFILTRATION?

Any sense of entitlement to democratic representation on PEO's governing council is misplaced.

The authority to regulate engineers in Ontario is delegated to PEO by the Ontario government. Ontario citizens have civic rights, including the constitutional right to democratic self-governance. Ontario engineers have no analogous rights. Professional self-governance, unlike civic self-governance, is a privilege, not a right. The fact that we have this privilege is reflective of the trust placed in professional engineers by the provincial government and general public.

The purpose of regulation is the public interest—never PEO's interest, or the interest of engineers as individuals or as a group. The government has delegated authority to council for regulation of professional engineering solely for the interests of clients, and the third-party public.

Self-governance means the profession is regulated, mostly by its own members. This does not mean it must be regulated by a democratic representation of its members; it doesn't mean the representation of members has to be elected rather than appointed.

It would be a completely legitimate regulatory model for the Ontario government to hire its own engineers, who would then advise bureaucrats on the specialized aspects of engineering, but the bureaucrats would retain the ultimate decision on education standards for entry and disciplinary conduct, etc. Similarly, it would be within the ambit of the government to appoint the entire council.



Happily, a long history of good relations means that democratic input from engineering members is valued by the government, and so we are permitted to elect the majority of council positions. But the delegation of council authority comes from the government, not from the membership, meaning the appointed seats are as legitimate as the elected ones.

To grant engineers full discretion for complete and unfettered self-governance would be to establish a system where we are the only check and balance on our own conduct. Hopefully, it is redundant to say that such a system would be entirely devoid of accountability.

Government appointment of council members, an act fully within government discretion as the government is the source of the regulatory authority, instills accountability in the organization.

The requirement of non-member seats is there to create accountability of PEO to the third-party public.

Council represents the public via the authority council receives from the government. Council does not (and should not) represent engineers. That is not its purpose. There should never be constraints of membership approval for any of council's actions, by AGM, referendum or otherwise.

Our input into our own regulation is a privilege. If we want to keep that privilege, our understanding of our role must improve and this sense of entitlement to authority must be abandoned.

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Letters to the editor are welcomed, but should be kept to no more than 500 words, and are subject to editing for length, clarity and style. Publication is at the editor's discretion; unsigned letters will not be published. The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the association, nor does the association assume responsibility for the opinions expressed. All letters pertaining to a current PEO issue are also forwarded to the appropriate committee for information. Address letters to naxworthy@peo.on.ca.