

## Council approves plan for Professional Engineers Act changes

FEBRUARY 17-18, 2000 MEETING

by Alison Piper

**P**EO now has a game plan for making non-controversial changes to the Professional Engineers Act and Regulation 941. At its February 17-18 meeting, Council approved terms of reference and a budget for the Changes to the Act Task Force, which is to prepare a proposal to the Attorney General requesting the legislative changes necessary to enable implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement (ACDE) and other non-controversial changes resulting from past Council motions.

The task force will also deal with any Act changes needed to enable the transfer of funds from PEO to the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE).

Councillor Max Perera, P.Eng., who co-chairs the task force with Councillor David Sims, said the task force plans to handle amendments to the Professional Engineers Act in a two-stage process. In the first stage, the task force will seek support from the Attorney General for non-controversial changes, so that he may recommend the changes to the province's Red Tape Review Commission for inclusion in a government Red Tape Bill—likely either this spring or fall. The government uses Red Tape Bills to enable the expeditious passage of administrative, non-contentious changes to several pieces of legislation. Perera said the Red Tape Bill approach will enable timely implementation of the ACDE recommendations, which aim at ensuring fairness, efficiency in PEO operations, transparency and access to the profession.

The planned second stage will examine proposed substantive or philosophical changes, which would require a separate bill to amend the Professional Engineers Act—a much lengthier procedure.

In March, the task force is scheduled to recommend for Council approval the legislative changes to be included in the Red Tape Bill.

The task force welcomes input on its plan

for Act changes. Comments can be submitted to Max Perera or David Sims, c/o Anita Direnfeld, PEO, 25 Sheppard Ave. W., Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M2N 6S9; fax: (416) 224-8168 or (800) 268-0496; email: adirenfeld@peo.on.ca.

### New admissions task group appointed

A major review of PEO's admissions process and policies has been set in motion. Council approved the terms of reference, budget and membership of the Evolution of Engineering Admissions Task Force. Councillor Roydon Fraser, P.Eng., has been appointed to chair the task force, which was established at the recommendation of the ACDE Task Force. In its report, the ACDE Task Force identified a need to examine the current admissions process and alternatives to it in depth, to ensure that PEO's process both protects the public and is fair—in reality and perception.

The task force is aiming to recommend to Council an admissions process that:

- ◆ maximizes protection of the public within pragmatic constraints;
- ◆ can be easily explained to the public; and
- ◆ can adapt and evolve to accommodate societal and technological change.

It is expected that the task force will present an interim report to Council in June, and a final report and recommendations in February 2001.

### Bioengineering task group to help shape growing field

Bioengineering is a growing and evolving field, in which the need for professional engineering licensure to protect the public is not well defined. Accordingly, Council has established a subgroup under the umbrella of the Engineering Disciplines Task Group to help determine how best to regulate bioengineering. At present, six Canadian universities, including the universities of Guelph and Western Ontario, offer accredited undergraduate engineer-

ing programs in either bioresource, biological, biosystems or biochemical engineering. Graduates of the programs are involved in developing improvements in agriculture, medicine and pharmaceutical products—areas that impact on public health and safety. The subcommittee is expected to work with engineering educators, the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board and other stakeholders to define a core body of knowledge for bioengineers and the areas of practice requiring the skills of licensed bioengineers.

### PEO to gather data on members' professional development

Council approved a program to gather data on the professional development activities of members, as recommended by the Professional Excellence Program Review Task Group. The program will involve using the membership renewal form to capture members' practice details and professional development activities, on a voluntary basis. The target for start-up is fall 2000. A brochure outlining details of the program is scheduled for distribution to members over the summer.

### WTO and PEO's mandate

PEO will encourage the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers to put forward a national position, on behalf of the engineering profession, calling for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to recognize the public protection mandate of Canada's engineering profession under the Professional Engineers Acts of provincial engineering associations. Industry Canada had requested PEO input on the applicability to professional engineering of a proposal for the accountancy sector, developed for upcoming WTO negotiations on liberalizing trade in services. Stressing the need to maintain high admissions standards in engineering and to protect the regulatory powers of provincial associations, PEO's position on the issue was developed

by the Academic Requirements and Experience Requirements committees.

### Database replacement underway

Council has approved the engagement of KPMG-Versa Systems of Scarborough to proceed with the first phase of a project to replace PEO's current membership database with a new system based on off-the-shelf software. The new database is scheduled to be up and running by September.

Last year, PEO put out a request for proposals and reviewed the database software of four vendors, with extensive experience in regulatory/association work. The Computer Task Force reviewed and approved the preferred solution. Versa Systems software product "LicenseEase" meets most of PEO's system requirements, including gathering and maintaining data on applicants, members and Certificate of Authorization holders; processing applications; issuing licences; processing renewals and maintaining accounting records.

The total cost for the first phase of the project, including implementation, data

conversion, training and annual support, is \$563,625. A separate recommendation for the second phase of the database replacement project, which will involve Internet and e-commerce functions, will be brought to Council after a requirements analysis has been completed later this year.

### Volunteer program review

In the interests of encouraging a broad spectrum of members to volunteer for PEO activities, Council directed the Regional Councillors Committee (RCC) to investigate the problems and barriers faced by members who would otherwise be interested in serving on PEO committees, chapter executives and Council, but can't due to financial constraints and/or workplace demands. The RCC is to report back to Council by this June, with proposed solutions to the problems it identifies, including cost implications.

One of several Councillors speaking in support of the motion, President-elect Peter DeVita, P.Eng., noted: "Peer review requires peers. This issue is fundamental to self-regulation."

### Two LGA Councillors appointed

The government has appointed two new Lieutenant Governor Appointees to Council for three-year terms: Tom Sivalingham and W. Laurier Proulx, CET.

### Advocacy referendum passes!

PEO members have voted overwhelmingly in support of creation of a separate advocacy/member interest organization. They have also approved a \$30 increase in PEO's licensing fee (phased in over two years) to help support the organization. Results of the membership mail ballot on advocacy are:

Yes:	12,047
No:	2,903
Spoiled ballots:	86

At press deadline, results of the PEO Council elections were not yet available. See the April/May 2000 issue of The Link for further information on the referendum, next steps for creation of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, and election results.