

# Fare thee well



by Pat Quinn, P.Eng., President

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s the year of my presidency draws to a close (this is my last message), it brings an end for me to a decade of public activism for change.

After many years of working behind the scenes to effect change, I concluded that public activism seemed to offer the most hope of making a difference. It is only on an individual basis that ideas are contributed and commitments made. But it is in the organized cooperation of individuals that actual building is done—or change accomplished.

## Laying the groundwork

With the hard work and support of many people, the changes that were necessary to restore our profession and adapt it for the future are now firmly underway. Space does not permit naming individuals, but to all those who contributed, I sincerely offer the profession's, and my own, very special thanks.

It has been a most productive year, in which the groundwork was laid for the creation of an advocacy/member-interest body for Ontario engineers. I am pleased to report that in the February referendum on advocacy, members voted overwhelmingly in support of creation of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (see In Council on pages 16-17 of this issue for referendum results). PEO also wrapped up an in-depth review of its regulatory processes and policies, culminating in Council's approval of 66 of the Task Force on Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement's recommendations.

But what has been achieved this year is only the beginning of what is required to bring the profession to the stage where I believe it should be.

As your representative, I have brought

greetings to almost every provincial association, and listened closely to the issues discussed at their annual general meetings. I am concerned about the state of the profession across the country, as well as PEO's chapter system. I'll explain why.

## Engineering's relevance in question

In the engineering profession, there is a major disconnection between regulatory bodies, their members and potential new members. In increasing numbers, new engineering graduates who have no legal need for a professional stamp or a licence are deciding that belonging to a regulatory body is a low priority. This is partly because in many emerging fields, such as software engineering and bioengineering, the need for professional engineering licensure to protect the public is not yet well defined and a P.Eng. licence is often not a job requirement.

But I believe it is also because many young engineers don't see the profession as relevant. These engineers ask not what they can do for their profession, but what the profession can do for them. Making some contribution to the engineering profession, whether of fees for regulatory or advocacy bodies, or one's pride in the form of volunteer participation, seems for many to be a future consideration—something they may do once they've built their careers. This reality must be acknowledged in order to be changed.

In the last century, it took bridge collapses and engineering disasters for the public to recognize the need for regulation for safety's sake and for wise engineers to promote self-regulation for the profession's sake. Will environmental disasters and the flawed software of this century bring public demands to ameliorate the thrust for total deregulation? Will we, as engineering's regulator, have the wisdom to foresee and cooperate with emerg-

ing engineering disciplines, and convince the public and engineers of the necessity for regulation in these disciplines that recognizes the reality of the global marketplace, while also protecting the public?

My hope is that engineers, and mainly young engineers in tune with modern realities, will be introspective and smart enough to find solutions.

## Fairness and transparency

Over the past year, every effort has been made to open up the association's processes, to be seen to be open and fair, and to be as inclusive as possible, without compromising public safety or lowering standards. Council, committees and staff have made a concerted effort to share with you as much information as possible about all our initiatives. We have worked in a positive spirit of trust and cooperation, as we put under scrutiny such major association issues as admissions, complaints, discipline, enforcement; a meaningful professional excellence program; election reform; advocacy for the profession; and the Certificate of Authorization program, and plotted directions.

The tilling and planting went well, the harvest is for another season and, as with all creative tasks, our hopes and patience will prevail with faith.

It was a great honour to serve as President of our association, the profession of which I am so proud, and to have worked so closely with such a dedicated group of volunteers and staff.

Before I say farewell as your President, I would like to apologize to those who may have been upset by my impatience and criticisms of some of our practices. I hope they will accept that my underlying goal was to promote the profession's progress and growth. I also hope that we as a profession can now, united, move forward more effectively than ever. ♦