



On being accountable

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Finally, while PEO has accumulated a great deal of experience and data that will be made available to the HRDC-CCPE study group, there clearly exists among the membership at large detailed knowledge of foreign schooling standards and perspectives on licensure that may be of assistance. The deputy registrar, admissions, would appreciate hearing from engineers in this category.

There will also be opportunities to participate in the other aspect of the study, that of integration, although this does not fall under PEO's purview.

Before closing, I must refer back to the *Engineering Dimensions* article mentioned earlier. That article drew attention to CCPE's Initial Assessment Program and the manner in which some immigrants had misunderstood that a favourable assessment by a national body constituted approval on behalf of the provincial/territorial associations. This led to difficult situations when applicants found that PEO criteria had still to be satisfied and that, in some cases, they could not be met by the applicant.

PEO has addressed this issue by extending its licensing process so that prospective immigrants to Ontario can obtain a more detailed, accurate and meaningful assessment of the acceptability of their qualifications before coming to Canada. PEO has also finally been able to have notations referring to the Ontario initiative put on CCPE's website for its initial assessment program.

Apart from any questions of efficiency and cost, Council and staff are concerned for those who have been lured to this country based on false or incomplete information or a misunderstanding of the situation. Disclaimers on forms don't help if an immigrant cannot get a job.

As a regulator, we strive to provide a fair and impartial process. We cannot, however, create work, nor is it our mandate to do so. However, we plan to direct our representatives on the HRDC-CCPE task force to emphasize that improvements to processes are meaningless without associated government economic initiatives.

My own perception is that the issue is not one of licensure but, rather, one of providing jobs to the immigrant engineering practitioner. ❖

ernance structure of the province's legal and medical professions.

Changes of note here in Canada include the new corporate governance guideline developed by the Association of Certified Management Accountants, which uses a balanced scoreboard approach. PEO now allows non-member Lieutenant Governor-in-Council appointees to sit on disciplinary panels (see news, page 10), joining the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Law Society of Upper Canada, which was the first professional body in Ontario to involve the public in its governance, allowing them to sit in disciplinary processes. This issue also highlights the work of PEO's Governance Task Force.

An interesting sidebar is a study done by Western Management Consultants, which asked CEOs and executive directors of professional associations and regulatory bodies: "What keeps you up at night?" Governance, along with the value of membership, and nation-wide cohesiveness, were the top three concerns.

Most identified a problem in attracting the leaders of the profession to volunteer leadership roles—roles that may be harder to fill with tougher accountability expectations. The study also listed some suggestions to deal with the governance challenge, including: enhancing the volunteer/staff relationship, constantly working to build the quality of volunteers and the Board, and appointing outside directors.

PEO is taking steps in this direction, as are other professional associations. They know they must be accountable.

Joan Bailey
Managing Editor

Corporate governance became a common topic of conversation last year in light of a series of stunning accounting scandals in large and once highly reputable firms. Even the FBI was rocked when news hit the presses, airwaves, and TV screens that employees had informed the director that one of the terrorists involved in 9/11 should be investigated, and that their warnings went unheeded. Questions had to be answered.

Why governance matters is made clear in the January 6, 2003 issue of *Time* magazine, which featured its Persons of the Year. The "Whistleblowers," as *Time* has dubbed them, a vice president and former accounting specialist at Enron, head of the internal audit department at Worldcom, and an attorney at the FBI, effectively shook the financial world and law enforcement agencies when they challenged their superiors on the illegal, unethical and negligent practices that put the finances and the lives of the public in danger. It was clear that things were not kosher, and that people in power knew and weren't going to do a thing about them. So these three did.

They called the foul; the players balked; and the rest of us, when we figured out what was happening, stood up and cheered.

One of the results is a shake-up in the accounting profession in the U.S., a loss of self-regulation and strict new accountability requirements. The Sarbanes Oxley law passed by the U.S. Congress in July 2002 requires all public companies to keep internal audit departments. It also requires CEOs and CFOs to vouch for the accuracy of their companies' books. On page 32, freelance writer Karen Hawthorne describes some of the measures that have been taken in the accounting profession in Ontario, as well as looking at the gov-