

In transition—a year in review



by Walter Bilanski, PhD, P.Eng., President

This year, Council made significant progress toward its linked goals of fostering development of an effective, independent, member-interest professional society for engineering, and refocusing PEO on its core regulatory role. This column (my last as your President) is a status report on our major initiatives.

Software engineering

In the January/February issue of *Engineering Dimensions* (pp. 4-5), I detailed PEO's concern that software options and specialties are being mislabeled as software "engineering" at some Ontario universities. I also expressed my disappointment that the presidents of Ontario universities appeared to be unwilling to discuss the issue, pending the outcome of a lawsuit involving Memorial University, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland (APEGN) and the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE). APEGN and CCPE's are suing Memorial for infringing on CCPE's trademark of the words "engineer" and "engineering."

In light of the university presidents' stance, I have written to Ontario Attorney General Charles Harnick asking that he and the minister of education and training intervene to resolve this matter in the public interest (see p. 10). As my letter says, PEO believes that a negotiated solution will best serve the public interest.

However, I must also report that on February 25, APEGN withdrew its consent for accreditation evaluation of Memorial's four undergraduate engineering programs until the university changes the name of its software "engineering" program. (See "APEGN gets tough on 'software engineering' title," p. 13.)

PEO Council agrees fully that the integrity of the term "engineering" must be protected. Council is monitoring develop-

ments in Newfoundland carefully, and will discuss them at a special meeting in early April. I continue to be hopeful that an amicable resolution will be possible in Ontario; however, our prime obligation remains the protection of the public.

Member-interest society

Over the past year, Council has worked to build the foundation for an effective professional association for engineering. I believe we have made real progress in making this a reality.

Last summer, we conducted a membership survey, which indicated that PEO members prefer to see a renewed member-interest body built through an existing organization, such as the Canadian Society for Professional Engineers (CSPE). To that end, PEO formed a joint committee with CSPE, and discussions are underway toward a staged transfer of PEO's non-regulatory functions to CSPE, which was created by PEO for this purpose. I would encourage all members to join the member-interest professional society.

To facilitate any future separation of the association's regulatory and non-regulatory roles, PEO's staff structure has also been realigned to focus resources on PEO's core functions: registration, licensing, discipline and enforcement.

Regulatory review

We have also progressed on the review of the association's admissions, complaints, discipline and enforcement policies and procedures, which Council endorsed as one of its first acts. This review is aimed at improving PEO's regulatory processes to make them more fair, equitable, open and transparent, without unnecessary bureaucracy. So far, the Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement (ACDE) Task Force, under the Hon. Douglas H. Caruthers, Q.C., has compiled information on regulatory practices in other jurisdictions and other professions, and is considering over 30 submissions from interested indi-

viduals and groups (PEO members and others). I look forward to its final report and recommendations.

Licensing model/ C of A review

Council is also reviewing two licensing issues: a model for the professional development of Ontario engineers and the Certificate of Authorization (C of A) program. In November, Council appointed a subcommittee to revisit the proposed Professional Excellence Program to devise a program that is both functional and meaningful. Meanwhile, the Professional Practice Committee is reviewing the C of A program to examine such issues as a graduated fee structure and under what conditions practitioners—especially those who consult only occasionally—should be required to hold Cs of A. Current C of A requirements are the same for firms of all sizes, including sole practitioners.

Geoscientists

On February 2, the Toronto Stock Exchange/Ontario Securities Commission Mining Standards Task Force released its final report. The report recommended the licensing of Ontario geoscientists under their own act. It also called for the sign-off by a licensed "qualified person" of technical documentation to support future stock exchange listings for mineral development.

Certainly, PEO welcomes the recommendation for sign-off by a licensed "qualified person." Professional engineers are ready and willing to assume this role.

As for the licensing of geoscientists, PEO will need to ensure that the scope of practice for licensed professional geoscientists does not overlap with the practice of licensed geotechnical and geological engineers.

I believe that this year commenced the transition of the engineering profession into the 21st century. I hope that next year will see this transition completed. ♦