

Strategic Plan Vision sparks lively discussion

MARCH 26, 2001 MEETING

what we regulate as 'professional engineering' or not, the public is just going to see 'engineering.'" This view was echoed by Councillor Anthony Warner, P.Eng., who commented that if the public is harmed by something it sees as engineering, whether the activity is engineering or not, it will reflect on the profession.

Also in favour of taking a broader view, was President-elect Gordon Sterling, P.Eng., who saw the question as one of serving and protecting the public interest. PEO, he said, "must look at the entire spectrum of engineering activity to see what the public needs us to regulate. We needn't be bound by the status quo." For his part, Councillor Max Perera, P.Eng., said he sees "professional engineering as a subset of the whole engineering envelope," and that there is a need "for engineers, technologists, and even craftspeople to work alongside and with each other." The question to be considered, he said, "is whether PEO is going to be limited by the status quo, or try to push the envelope." Perera also noted that PEO cannot broaden the scope of regulated practice by itself, but will have to come to agreement with others, including government.

Council is scheduled to debate the Strategic Plan further, and in particular the not-yet-approved Strategic Goals, Strategic Initiatives and action assignments, at a workshop on June 7-9. Members can find the latest version of the plan for comment on the Member News page of the Members Only section of PEO's website at www.peo.on.ca.

Regulating applied scientists

PEO has agreed in principle to hold discussions with appropriate groups on the possibility of licensing other classes of applied scientist or technologist under the Professional Engineers Act. Background to the motion approved by Council noted that the draft Strategic Plan proposes that PEO "study the public interest implications of alternative models for governing allied applied science practitioners, e.g. Regulated Health Professions Act model,

regulation under PEO legislation, etc." The issue for Council was framed as being one of deciding whether the engineering profession wants to take a proactive leadership role in additional restricted areas of practice in the area of applied science and technology, or simply wait and react to whatever proposals develop.

In supporting the motion, George Comrie noted that regulation to protect the public interest in such unregulated areas as software development is likely in the future. "The question," he said, "is whether we want to be proactive or reactive. We can try to oppose after the fact or we can get in on the ground floor." In a similar vein, Anthony Warner said: "PEO has the infrastructure to license and to regulate. Therefore, we should seek to regulate all applied science that impacts public safety."

Walkerton submission

Council received a unedited draft of PEO's submission to the Walkerton Inquiry, prepared by the Environment Committee. Presenting the draft, PEO government relations manager John Gamble, P.Eng., said that the submission's theme is the accountability that professional engineers can bring to the provision of safe drinking water. "There are other competent practitioners in facets of the water treatment and distribution process," he said. "But professional accountability is the extra assurance P.Engs offer to the public." Gamble asked Councillors to forward comments on the draft to the Environment Committee, for consolidation into the final submission. Following the Council meeting, the report was also posted to the Members Only section of PEO's website for member information and comment.

Website recommendations approved

Council received a report from the Website Subcommittee of the Communications Committee on redesign and further development of PEO's website, and approved the report's recommendations. Approval of the recommendations establishes on a policy level the place of PEO's

Registrar's report

In his regular report to Council, Roger Barker, P.Eng., highlighted several ongoing activities in the Professional Affairs area:

- ◆ *Engineer-in-Residence:* PEO has been informed that its Engineer-in-Residence program will receive funding of \$225,000 over four years (\$70,000 in the first year) from the Ontario Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. The funding will enable PEO to strengthen the program where it now operates and expand it to new communities (see related News story on p. 8).
- ◆ *Technical Standards & Safety Authority:* The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services has released consultation drafts for 13 proposed regulations under the Technical Standards and Safety Act 2000. A PEO Government Affairs Committee working group will review the proposed regulations. The working group had earlier commented on the umbrella legislation and previous versions of the draft regulations. The Technical Standards and Safety Act 2000 received third reading last fall and will receive Royal Assent when the regulations are ready. It amalgamates seven pieces of legislation (Amusement Devices Act, Boiler and Pressure Vessels Act, Elevating Devices Act, Energy Act, Gasoline Handling Act, Operating Engineers Act, and Upholstered and Stuffed Articles Act) to provide uniform provisions for such requirements as inspections and appeals for all sectors regulated under the acts.
- ◆ *Building Regulatory Reform Advisory Group:* The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing hosted a meeting recently with building industry stakeholders. It focused on proposals to streamline the preparation, submission and review of building permit applications, and the issuing of permits. PEO is requesting that the ministry clarify whether review of permit applications will be limited to compliance with the Building Code or whether there will be a peer review of the engineering. The meeting did not address the qualification or registration of practitioners, which is the subject of another ministry initiative that would require all those involved in the building approval process to

demonstrate knowledge of the Building Code. The ministry has asked PEO to be involved in administering and perhaps designing the demonstration program.

Engineering Week

Barker also reported on activities associated with National Engineering Week in early March.

- ◆ *Engineers are Everyday Heroes:* The second year of the three-year project, in which PEO is partnering with several organizations, got underway on March 3 with oversubscribed, multimedia Blast Off shows at the Ontario Science Centre, Canada Museum of Science and Technology and Science North. A simultaneous webcast of the Ontario Science Centre show (see www.heroes.peo.on.ca) was also fully subscribed. The shows featured the premiere of a new series of eight TVO Kids Engineers are Everyday Heroes educational shorts, which will be rotated on TVO throughout the year. As part of the 2001 program, a space-themed, curriculum-related school kit was developed and distributed to about 2000 schools.
- ◆ *K'Nexhibition:* PEO is facilitating this exhibit as part of its Engineering Week partnership with the Ontario Science Centre by recruiting volunteer professional engineers, engineering interns and engineering students to work with K'Nexhibition visitors and to demonstrate structural engineering principles. The exhibit opening on March 3 saw maximum crowds throughout the day. PEO's corporate display booth was an integral part of the exhibit throughout March, and PEO is being publicized in all K'Nexhibition-related advertising.
- ◆ *Engineering Week Newspaper Supplement:* PEO helped develop and was featured prominently in an Engineering Week supplement that appeared March 1 in the *National Post*, *London Free Press*, *Ottawa Citizen* and *Windsor Star*. Circulation was 530,000.

by Connie Mucklestone

Should PEO license and regulate the practice of "engineering" or "professional engineering?" This was the question that consumed Council in a wide-open discussion of the latest iteration of PEO's draft Strategic Plan.

The discussion arose because of a question raised by the Strategic Plan Steering Group, which had noticed that the wording of the Vision statement, as approved by Council in January, is not consistent with the wording of the plan's first Strategic Imperative, also approved by Council in January. At present, the Vision reads: "Professional Engineers Ontario strives to meet the needs of Ontario society by licensing and regulating the entire practice of *professional engineering* in an open, transparent, inclusive manner." The Imperative reads: "PEO is redefined as the regulatory body for *engineering* in Ontario."

"There are umpteen areas of engineering that [PEO] has no business getting involved in," said Councillor Ken McMartin, P.Eng., noting that the Professional Engineers Act defines only "professional engineering." On the other hand, Councillor George Comrie, P.Eng., said the question boiled down to whether PEO wants "to stick to our knitting, or whether we're looking [in the Strategic Plan] at the long-term future of the profession and how it impacts public safety."

Councillor Bruce Clarida, P.Eng., said that in his opinion, the only place there's a distinction made between engineering and professional engineering is within Council. "The public," he said, "just wants to see credible people. Whether we define

website as an important tool for the association. Council and the subcommittee recognized that implementation of any particular recommendation is subject to available budget resources. Members can access the report through PEO's website.

International Mobility

Council approved creating an International Mobility Task Force to recommend PEO policy in relation to Mutual Recognition Agreements and International Registers of Engineers. The task force will be chaired by Norbert Becker, P.Eng., who chaired a previous PEO Globalization Task Force. It is anticipated that the task force will report to Council by the fall.

New guideline approved

Council approved for publication a new professional practice Guideline for Engineers Acting as Contract Employees. The guideline will be published this spring. It will also be posted to PEO's website. ◆