



Lighting a fire within our profession

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President

In this first column as the 82nd President of Professional Engineers Ontario, I want to outline my objectives for what I believe can be a pivotal year for PEO. In future columns, I will expand on these objectives, and discuss factors that are influencing our direction.

Finalizing the plan

My first objective is to finalize as much as possible PEO's Strategic Plan, and begin to work toward achieving its imperatives. The Strategic Plan will be the touchstone against which PEO's chapters, committees and Council can assess their current programs and activities, and with which we will drive development of new programs and activities for the coming years. The plan calls for strengthening PEO's role as regulator of engineering in Ontario to ensure the public interest is protected in all matters involving engineering work.

However, while it is my aim that we should begin implementing the plan this year, I also realize that it is a living document, which will evolve as goals are achieved and circumstances change. Accordingly, I hope that we can heed the words of our 2001 Gold Medallist, Bob Gillespie, P.Eng., and not become bogged down in finessing each and every word in the plan. As Bob eloquently reminded us when he accepted his award and endorsed the plan, there are no perfect plans, and if we don't seize the moment to concentrate on the big ideas in the plan, we will

never even begin to achieve our goals. For those of you who haven't yet reviewed PEO's Strategic Plan, you can find it on the website at www.peo.on.ca. I urge you to read it, as well as the background information in its appendices, and to give us your feedback.

Enhancing Relevance

The major reason for developing a new Strategic Plan is the need to improve relevance of the P.Eng. licence and PEO to practitioners, Ontario business and industry, and the public. This is the issue that underpins the Strategic Plan. With the plan as a guidepost, I am optimistic about the future of our profession and the future of PEO. Indeed, I look forward to a future where graduates of engineering schools see acquiring their P.Eng. as being an imperative step in their formation as professionals. Certainly, my vision also includes increasing the value with which we all hold our professional designation, so that we will always view ourselves as professional engineers—regardless of whether we are pursuing traditional engineering career paths, careers in higher levels of management, or going where no engineers have gone before.

Redefining boundaries

This is why another of my objectives is to redefine the boundaries of the profession, to keep up to the fast pace of changing technology and to continue to incorporate emerging disciplines, thereby ensuring the public interest is served and protected. To achieve this, we must work closely and effectively with the government as it crafts legislation that affects the public interest where applied science and technology are concerned.

We must also work closely with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE). As with almost all of the other professions in Ontario, engineering needs two viable and vibrant organizations, working in partnership wherever possible. The first is PEO, the licensing body that safeguards the public interest and maintains the profession's integrity. The second is OSPE, the advocacy body that raises the profession's profile and serves the professional needs of individual engineers. But for this partnership to be strong, it is absolutely essential that all professional engineers in Ontario support OSPE by becoming full members, as I have done.

It's also imperative that PEO play an active role in the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), the federation of Canada's 12 provincial/territorial licensing bodies. By working with the other associations/ordre through CCPE, PEO can have an effective voice on national issues of concern to the profession. And as Canada's role in the global economy increases at a fast pace, such a voice speaking to the interests of Ontario society can only become more important.

Igniting the spark

As you can see, there is much to be done this year, and I am inheriting a full plate. Yet I am confident that we can achieve much if the expertise of PEO's Council, committees, chapters, licensees and staff is directed toward common goals. Just as it is possible to start a forest fire by strategically directing sunlight through a magnifying glass, so can we begin to light a fire within the profession by focusing each of our efforts through our Strategic Plan. ♦