Committees present their year-end reports

FEBRUARY 28, MARCH 1, 2002 MEETING

by Joan Bailey

In his Registrar's Report, Roger Barker, P.Eng., reported that PEO's admissions department has issued a fact sheet for prospective immigrants on engineering licensing in Ontario, in partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and that the information is also available on the PEO and government websites. He introduced a report written by Norman Williams, PhD, P.Eng, deputy registrar, admissions, highlighting issues that had been discussed at the February 2002 meetings of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) standing boards. The report noted that:

◆ initial assessment applications are declining, according to CCPE (see "CCPE lobbies to continue assessment program," p. 15);

◆ undergraduate enrolment in engineering at Canadian universities in 2000/01 increased by 3000 from 1999/2000, according to the Canadian Engineering Resources Board (CERB);

◆ the Canadian Engineering Qualifications Board's EIT committee is working to develop a national EIT program with input from the associations/ordre; and

◆ CERB is completing a draft national engineering student policy and implementation plan with input from the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students and the associations/ordre.

Work done by the complaints, discipline and enforcement department included a visit by Barker, Ian Eng, P.Eng., deputy registrar complaints, discipline, and enforcement, and Johnny Zuccon, P.Eng.,

director, professional affairs to the attorney general's ministry. Ministry staff, he said, had expressed concerns about the perceived slow pace of the complaints process.

Noting that the registrar had reported that virtually all of the approved recommendations of the Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement (ACDE) Task Force have now been implemented, Councillor Max Perera, P.Eng., asked about PEO's use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to reduce the number of complaints that must be formally processed, as recommended in the ACDE Report. Deputy Registrar Eng reported that PEO has used ADR in three instances, with resolutions reached before formal complaints were filed with the registrar. Perera said he is concerned that PEO's use of ADR had not yet been formalized, and noted the use of ADR as a recognized part of the complaints and discipline procedures in other regulated professions. He asked that staff prepare a position statement to Council on the pros and cons for PEO of formalizing the ADR process. Eng cautioned that under the *Professional Engineers Act*, the window for PEO to use ADR is narrow; once a complaint has been filed with the registrar it must proceed to the Complaints Committee, he said, so ADR can be used only at the very front end and "there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship of using ADR and reducing complaints." He said PEO attempts to use ADR only for issues that are determined to be minor in nature and where public safety is not an issue.

Accountability reports

The registrar presented operations accountability reports for 2001 to Council. Much of the core work of the association departments highlighted in the reports has been

covered by *Engineering Dimensions* over the year, including:

◆ PEO's Walkerton Inquiry Part II submission, contributions to the environment ministry's Drinking Water Regulations and *Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act*, review and discussion of the housing ministry's Building Regulatory Reform Advisory Group recommendations and the transport ministry's Quality Verification Engineer requirement, by the professional affairs department;

◆ an admissions department fact sheet for prospective and new immigrants to increase their understanding of the requirements for professional engineer licensing in Ontario; and

◆ the enforcement work done to have Microsoft remove the word "engineer" from its MCSE certification program.

Other accountability reports presented a picture of the daily work of the association. Accountability reports are available under Registrar's Corner on the PEO website at www.peo.on.ca.

Dealt with separately, the finance report discussed PEO's unanticipated deficiency of revenue over expenditure of $511,294. Ron Sparrow, CGA, manager, accounting, explained that the deficit was caused by several factors, the most significant of which was the inability until about year end to remove from the register individuals whose licences had expired, which caused their past due licence fees to show up on the books as revenue. A second major factor was that a reconciliation of the subsidiary ledger balance had not been done for several years. Poor forecasting of other revenues also contributed.

Barker explained that to prevent future year-end surprises, forecasts of PEO's year-

end position will be done quarterly, so that corrective measures can bring budgets back on track, if necessary.

On the presentation of the Finance Committee's investment report, Councillor David Sims, LLM, QC, asked whether the association uses a financial advisor to help determine the appropriateness of investments, and to review its investment policy. He questioned whether PEO's policy is too conservative in its stipulation that all of PEO's investments must be in interest-bearing instruments rather than in a more diversified portfolio that includes equities. Sparrow explained that PEO has advisors at several financial institutions, adding that the investment policy is founded on not exposing the association to risk. Sims suggested the investment policy be "revisited" at some time by the Finance Committee.

Committees

Denis Dixon, P.Eng., chair of the Advisory Committee on Committees (ACC), reported to Council that the ACC wants to formalize getting committee reports to Council. ACC is approaching chairs to come up with ways to bring information to Council.

Some of the work done in 2001 and reported at the 406th meeting:

◆ The Academic Requirements Committee (ARC) has overhauled its operating procedures manual, updated the syllabus for geological engineering, and provided feedback to the deputy registrar on the software engineering issue, a proposed national professional practice exam, and the Michigan/Ontario licensing reciprocity discussions. ARC has also initiated work on a quality control/assurance program to be worked on closely with staff. The program will provide a systematic checklist for staff to consult to ensure consistency and expediency in admissions activities.

◆ The Experience Requirements Committee (ERC) is working on a policy manual for its operation.

◆ The Complaints Committee has begun discussions with the Professional Practice Committee about recurring issues in complaints, in hopes of developing guidelines or bulletins for the membership on these matters.

◆ Ken McMartin, P.Eng., speaking for the Enforcement Committee, reported that the Association of the Chemical Profession in Ontario (ACPO) and the Technical Standards and Safety Authority have seals similar to a professional engineer's seal. He said PEO is in talks with ACPO to have it withdraw the seal. The efforts to have Sun Microsystems cease using the software engineer title appear to be successful, he reported.

◆ The Discipline Committee reported 15 hearing days in 2001 for six hearings. Chair Brian Ross, P.Eng., reported one major change in procedure, which was the elimination of the recording secretary. From now on, he said, each discipline panel will prepare the decision and reasons of each hearing. He said the committee is concerned with the demands its work places on the Councillors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, because each hearing panel must include an appointed Councillor. He also noted that when the Discipline Committee meets as a whole, quorum is sometimes difficult to achieve because there are 44 people on the committee.

◆ The members of the Certificate of Authorization (C of A) Review Task Force had difficulty coming to a consensus on what the C of A adds above and beyond the P.Eng. The members of the task force, reported Chair Gina Cody, P.Eng., felt that the C of A does

have merit as a register of individuals and firms offering engineering services to the public and can be improved. Council approved many of the task force recommendations for procedural improvements, and the creation of an implementation group for these. The implementation group is also to consider the basic principles on which the C of A program should operate, and prepare policies and procedures. Cody recommended to Council that this group be diverse in its make-up.

◆ Council approved recommendations from the Engineering Disciplines Task Group (EDTG) on processes to identify possible emerging areas of engineering practice, develop bodies of knowledge and exclusive scopes of practice, work with government to secure demand-side legislation, and implement enforcement processes. Council also approved PEO examining the implications of a discipline-specific licensing model.

◆ Council endorsed the recommendations of the Bioengineering Subgroup of the Engineering Disciplines Task Group defining terms such as bioengineering, biochemical food engineering, biomedical engineering and bioresource engineering. Council also endorsed areas of practice and minimum educational requirements for a "bioengineer" as described in the subgroup report. ◈