




---

by Kenneth C. McMartin, P.Eng.  
President

---

**D**uring the coming year, my goal is to make sure the values of our profession to the public and of PEO to our members are measurably increased. This can only be achieved by introducing a professional excellence program. But, to be successful, this program must be centred on the voluntary commitment of individuals to pursue continuing education and professional development.

To continue to have the privilege of self-regulation, our profession needs to demonstrate the professional competence of our practitioners. PEO's efforts in this matter are currently limited to promoting public and government awareness, investigation, disciplinary measures and enforcement.

A 2002 survey by the Ontario College of Teachers found that public protection and professional growth were the main reasons for the development of continuing learning programs. Although learning does not equal competence, I believe it is a necessary prerequisite.

Over the past several years, the Ontario government has increasingly demanded demonstration of the qualifications of "qualified persons," as evidenced since the Walkerton tragedy, and more recently, the *Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act* (Bill 56).

Some have argued that the PEO Code of Ethics, which binds engineers to practise within their expertise, should, along with the P.Eng. designation, be sufficient to demonstrate professional competence. Both government and the public, how-

## Increasing our value

ever, are demanding more accountability in many areas. Professional development is a means for engineers to proactively provide the assurance of continuing competence.

To develop such a program, PEO needs to consult with licensed practitioners, other stakeholders, and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

A program where our members voluntarily commit themselves to lifelong learning, continuing education and professional development is necessary to continue PEO's tradition of maintaining the highest standards of professional ethics and competence.

Increasing the value of both professional engineering and PEO can be achieved by strengthening our performance in protecting the public, informing the public about the responsibilities of the profession, and by making sure that only those licensed by PEO perform work that is defined under our Act as professional engineering.

By doing this, we also protect members of the public and individual practitioners from situations where unlicensed, poorly trained individuals seek to provide engineering work below the standards set by Ontario's professional engineers.

But if PEO sets the standards of competence and professional conduct, we must also ensure that licensed professional engineers meet these standards.

PEO has an obligation to the public, under the *Professional Engineers Act*, to see that licensed engineers take responsibility for their work. This is achieved through the use of engineering seals. According to Section 53 of Regulation 941, any professional engineer, "who provides to the public a service that is within the practice of professional engineer-

ing shall sign, date and affix the holder's seal to every final drawing, specification, plan, report or other document prepared or checked by the holder as part of the service before it is issued."

Sometimes demand-side legislation mandates that particular tasks involving the safety of the public can only be performed by those having the qualifications specified in the legislation. For example, under the new *Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act* professional engineers are required to certify infrastructure reports and management plans for water and waste water systems.

For years, PEO has been concerned about increasing the demand for licensed engineering in industry. PEO needs to demonstrate the business case for Ontario's corporate leaders to realize the added value of having licensed practitioners take responsibility for professional engineering work. To do this, PEO needs demonstrated, measured proof of the range and currency of the competencies of our practitioners.

What standard of measure do we currently have to demonstrate the competence of our practitioners? The voluntary return, by PEO members, of the Professional Profile questionnaire is a beginning in the process of developing these matrices. However, in order to increase the relevance of our profession to the Ontario government, bring value to the public, and raise the recognition of licensed practitioners, we also need to introduce a professional excellence program centred on voluntary participation in continuing education and professional development. I have promised that this program will be developed through consultation with PEO members and with the Society.

*continued on page 6*