

ADDING RELEVANCE TO THE PROFESSION AND GETTING OUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT



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President

IN THIS, MY FIRST MESSAGE to you as PEO president, I would like to thank you for your support and for providing me with a clear mandate to lead our self-governing profession.

Since being elected as president-elect in 2011, PEO council has solicited the opinions of licence holders on two significant issues through referendums: terminating PEO's legal agreement with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE); and whether members should maintain the ability to vote for the president-elect as opposed to council appointing the president from among elected councillors. Conducting these referendums shows the willingness of our leadership to engage licence holders fully in the governance of our profession, and supports my vision of the democratic process to which we should adhere. I thank each and every one of you who voted. The result in each of these cases left little doubt as to the beliefs of our voters and I am confident council will respect these sentiments.

As the new 2012-2013 term begins, my overriding priority is to engage council and the membership to increase the relevance of the profession. Today's landscape is different; society is continually changing and there is ever increasing pressure on fees. Engineering must adapt to remain relevant. PEO is now producing professional standards to level the playing field and ensure professional engineering is practised with competence and integrity.

Contrary to a commonly held belief, PEO has the opportunity only about once a decade to request changes to the *Professional Engineers Act*. With the government having approved several significant changes to our act in 2010, calls for further changes are several years and much consultation away. In the meantime, I will ensure that PEO provides balanced solutions that fully protect the public in the least intrusive manner for the members.

In the March/April issue of *Engineering Dimensions*, Past President Adams laid out our

responsibilities as defined in the act. Further to this, I will be asking council to examine ALL PEO programs over the next 12 months to ensure they fall within our mandate as currently approved by the provincial government. If programs are deemed to lie outside of our mandate, they should be stopped and an effort made to have them supported elsewhere. If substantial action is required as the result of a review of our programs, I am committed to requesting council to consider a referendum of the members to ensure your voice is heard.

As a profession, we are under attack—from people with different and, as we see it, lesser qualifications; from people in other countries; from government departments trying to save money at our expense; from a bottom-line culture that wants savings through our absorbing substantial working time to enable this. OSPE was created to take on these problems and undertake activities to benefit its members. These are ongoing problems that someone must tackle. As a regulator, PEO can enforce against those practising professional engineering without a licence, but it is important that our profession still have a strong advocacy body to speak on behalf of the members to government and other key stakeholders.

The world is emerging from the worst recession in generations, but I think things will get worse before they get better. Government lessened the pain for many by investing in infrastructure, but that investment was reduced in the recent federal and provincial budgets. We must keep these issues in mind as we put together PEO's budget for the coming year. The fiscal realities we face require hard choices. We must confront the difficult decisions; otherwise, we may be on an unsustainable course. I will ask council to establish budget priorities to drive unnecessary cost out of programs and set out a path for long-term success.

Our council includes 24 professional engineers and five well-qualified laypeople. I believe we have the expertise needed for success and together we can accomplish much during the next year. I will continue posting on the discussion forum pages of the PEO website and I welcome input from members. After all, we are defined as self-governing. Within the constraints that we have, let's do it. Σ