



Council approves PEO-OSPE agreement, calls for balanced 2001 budget

OCTOBER 12-13, 2000 MEETING

by Alison Piper

Council passed unanimously a motion to approve and authorize the President to sign a legal agreement between PEO and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), similar in all material aspects to the agreement in its agenda package.

A legal agreement between PEO and OSPE, covering transitional funding of OSPE and mechanisms to negotiate the transfer of non-regulatory programs to OSPE, has been in negotiation since PEO's April 2000 AGM. At the time of the Council meeting, the agreement had been reviewed by PEO's and OSPE's lawyers and the Attorney General's office and was close to being finalized. It calls for a one-time transfer to OSPE of \$933,277 from PEO's members' equity, plus a transfer of \$30 per full-fee-paying member for a transitional period of three years.

In discussion, Councillors expressed concerns that the agreement still did not address some major issues that might be expected to arise as a result of PEO divesting its non-regulatory functions to OSPE. "There is competition between what chapters do and what OSPE will be doing," said Councillor Anthony Warner, P.Eng. "Under this agreement, if chapters continue their current programs, PEO won't be able to support them."

Councillor George Comrie, P.Eng., said that although the agreement lays out a dispute resolution mechanism for conflicts between PEO and OSPE, there is "little on how the two organizations will work together in the future, particularly after the three-year transitional period."

However, Past President Patrick Quinn, P.Eng., noted that the wording of

the agreement provides room for cooperation between PEO and OSPE, and the details of program transfers and operation will be the subject of future agreements. In the end, Councillors generally agreed that the policy issues that aren't touched on by the agreement could be resolved outside of this first agreement.

2001 budget

Council passed a motion calling on the Finance Committee to bring forward a recommendation for a balanced budget for 2001, excluding the transitional effects of funding the start-up of OSPE. At the October meeting, the Finance Committee proposed a projected deficit budget of \$1,747,804—about \$1.1 million of which represented the shortfall PEO expects to incur in 2001 from implementing a \$20 annual fee increase, while paying \$30 per full-fee-paying member to OSPE. The proposed 2001 budget was developed using the 2000 budget as a baseline, with variances based on known or anticipated program or economic changes.

The Finance Committee is scheduled to present a balanced budget for Council's discussion and approval at the November 17 meeting.

Rethinking software engineering accreditation

Council received a progress report from the Software Engineering Task Force, which was established following Council's September meeting, when Council decided that PEO cannot support the concept of a separate body to accredit software engineering programs as proposed in the Software Engineering Panel's report. The proposal would involve creating a new and separate accreditation board comprising representatives of the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board and the Computer Science Accreditation Council of the Canadian Information Processing Society, which would accredit all Canadian software engineering programs.

(See "PEO declines to support joint accreditation of software engineering programs," *The Link*, October/November 2000 issue, p. 1.) The two-part motion passed by Council also authorized creation of a task force to prepare a response that describes the rationale for PEO's concerns and proposes alternatives.

At the October meeting, Council approved the task force's membership and mandate, and a budget for expenses. The task force will prepare a response to the Software Engineering Panel's accreditation proposal, which sets out PEO's concerns. After being circulated to and approved by Council, the response will be submitted to the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers in time for its November board meeting (check under the "What's New" banner on PEO's website for the full text of PEO's submission). The task force will also prepare by January 2001 a document that outlines other options that will better satisfy the objectives of professional engineering associations in licensing software engineers, and regulating software engineering practice.

Definition of harassment is revised

Council passed a motion to amend previously approved wording of the definition of harassment as professional misconduct, to make it consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code. To be added as section 72(2)(n) of Regulation 941/90, the revised definition defines harassment as: "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and that might reasonably be regarded as interfering in a professional engineering relationship."

The terms "vexatious" and "reasonably" were added to the previously approved wording at the request of the Ministry of the Attorney General. The definition of harassment in the Ontario Human Rights Code uses the same terms.

Presentation on the state of engineering education

Sujeet Chaudhuri, P.Eng., dean of engineering at the University of Waterloo, and chair, Council of Ontario Deans of Engineering (CODE), addressed Council on the issues with which CODE is currently dealing. He said that industry now views an engineering degree as a "good first degree" on which to build a strong academic record. For the finance industry and business management consulting firms, an engineering background is a "hot" commodity much like MBAs were in previous decades, he said, noting that what makes engineering grads attractive to these employers is their practical, problem-solving skills and ability to arrive at cost-effective solutions quickly.

Chaudhuri also told Council that the demand for university education is expected to rise sharply over the next six years, due to demographics and the elimination of the OAC year, which will result in a year in which both grade 12 and OAC students enter university at the same time. Rising enrolments and retirements among

existing faculty are expected to create 11,000 vacant engineering faculty positions at Ontario universities over the next seven to eight years, he said. He stressed that engineering schools will have to find ways of luring talented engineers from industry to faculty positions, since university salaries do not match those in industry. They will also have to find ways to attract students to chemical and civil engineering programs, which have become less popular with students than newer disciplines, but are experiencing workplace growth in demand.

Registrar's report

CEO and Registrar Roger Barker, P.Eng., presented to Council a summary of recent PEO activities, as well as regulatory activities at the national level. Among the highlights:

- ◆ This fall, the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board will be paying accreditation visits to software engineering programs at McMaster University, the University of Ottawa and the University of Western Ontario.

Software engineering programs have begun, or are in the process of development, in engineering faculties at Lakehead University, Carleton University, the University of Waterloo, the University of Toronto, Concordia University and the University of Calgary.

- ◆ Amendments to the Regulations for Industrial Establishments under the Occupational Health and Safety Act have been passed to change the requirements for pre-start health and safety reviews (formerly called predevelopment reviews; see "Amended health and safety regulation now law," on p. 9). PEO's Professional Practice Committee will review PEO's existing guideline on health and safety reviews to determine its suitability for the new regulation.
- ◆ For the past several months, PEO has been consulting with the Ministry of the Attorney General on proposed amendments to the Limitations Act. In October, it submitted to the ministry a response to a briefing package on the proposed amendments. ◆