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The 2000 referendum brought closure to a long standing debate with regard to separating both member interest and advocacy issues from PEO's regulatory role. Since that time, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, or the Society as it prefers to be called, has been launched and is growing in strength.

A negotiating team comprising representatives of both PEO and the Society was formed to handle the negotiations surrounding the transfer of non-regulatory PEO programs to the Society.

Some transfers have been effected while others, such as the Women in Engineering Advisory Committee (WEAC) and the Education Committee, are under active consideration.

The conundrum that seems to be arising is the question of how to deal with the possibility that activities heretofore carried out by PEO may not, in fact, be pursued by the Society through either its lack of resources or through its own perspective on priorities.

On the one hand, our association has formally agreed to withdraw from activities that are non-regulatory in nature in order not to compete in any way with the Society. On the other hand, if programs are not transferred, they would disappear and, it is argued, this would be a loss to engineers and to our profession.

WEAC and the Education Committee both embrace the activities of dedicated groups of engineers devoted to the work being undertaken. It has been suggested that it would serve no one's interests to see these groups disappear after years of activ-

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ity and the involvement of a large number of engineers in programs that they regard as being important and meaningful.

The opposing argument, presented just as strongly, is that if there is not a clean break, engineers will continue to lean on PEO and will never really support the Society.

Another situation illustrates the dilemma more clearly. While the Members' Salary Survey has been transferred to the Society, the second survey, that is undertaken based on salary information culled from employers, has not. This has been due to reluctance on the part of company representatives to deal with an advocacy body. The question, then, is whether to continue it under the auspices of PEO, or to drop it completely.

There is probably no one criterion that can be applied to all activities.

While I am personally of the opinion that a hard line should be drawn, I suspect that, in the Canadian way, we will seek to compromise, dropping some programs but allowing for a longer transfer period for others. However, there is no reason to believe that the Attorney General would be prepared to extend the transition period beyond the three years originally authorized.

There is, of course, an arena outside of Ontario. Along with its sister associations from other provinces, PEO is a member of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. CCPE's role is manifold, encompassing both regulatory and advocacy activities: It provides our voice to government on national affairs. The CCPE directors representing PEO are now careful to limit their participation to regulatory matters, such as admission standards.

However, there are other provisions in the CCPE mandate that reflect the non-regulatory activities of the other provincial associations. Until the Society fills the void, no one speaks for Ontario engineers in the CCPE forum on matters of national policy that affect the interests of engineers rather than the public.

In this entire debate, we have tended to focus on the ability or the willingness of the Society to take over programs, rather than the actual function and requirements of a regulatory body. For instance, what place does a fee schedule have in a regulatory body, or the dispensation of standard contract documents, or the convening of an annual conference?

In fact, Council has not been blind to the need to re-evaluate all PEO activities and has convened a Governance Task Force, which is reviewing all governance aspects of PEO's organization. In so doing, it is dealing with far-reaching proposals of Councillor David Sims, a Lieutenant Governor appointee, which suggest that a purely regulatory body demands a different type of Council, and brings into question such matters as the selection and number of Councillors, terms of office, and election of Officers.

So far, there has not been extensive news coverage of the work of this task force, although progress reports have been published in *The Link* and posted on PEO's website. However, I am pleased to note *Engineering Dimensions* will feature work of the task force in its March/April 2003 issue, and information is being spread through word of mouth. In this connection, Porcupine/Kapuskasing Chapter Chair Peter Broad, P.Eng., has posted his views on aspects of the governance issues being discussed to the PEO website members' forum (www.peo.on.ca), and is urging others to take heed and to become involved. I applaud this message, recognizing that while, at present, only alternatives are being discussed, input at this stage is most important.

I assure members that no decisions involving far-reaching or fundamental changes have been made, nor will recommendations be acted upon without full consultation. Notwithstanding opinions to the contrary, Council is vitally interested in the viewpoints of chapters and of all PEO members. ❖