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R E S I D E N T ' S
M E S S A G E**ROBERT A. GOODINGS, P.ENG.**
PRESIDENT

All of us—Councillors and members—must do everything possible to prevent unwarranted government intrusions into areas already regulated under the *Professional Engineers Act* (PEA), the statute through which the government has delegated certain powers to PEO, and through which members of the profession set the profession's standards of knowledge, skill and ethics in the public interest. PEO has traditionally looked on the PEA as a sort of contract between government, PEO and licence holders for self-regulation of the profession, with an expectation that the government will not regulate areas that fall within PEO's purview, without a demonstrated need. President's Messages in recent years, however, have focused with increasing frequency on the theme of unjustified government intrusions into what PEO understands to be its business under the PEA. Whether we write about Bill 124 or Brownfields, please appreciate that these are only the symptoms of an issue that could potentially apply to any of our practitioners at some time.

The word "engineer" is included in many of Ontario's acts and regulations dealing with areas in which PEO licence holders practice. However, PEO issues licences to practise professional engineering in forms other than the full licence denoted by the P.Eng. title, with particular qualifications for each. When defined in other legislation without referring to definitions in the PEA, the use of "engineer" can lead to situations where the other legislation excludes qualified PEO licence holders from practice for which they are qualified under the PEA. I am pressing PEO to become more aggressive and proactive, so that situations like the exclusion of PEO limited licence holders from the list of Qualified Persons under the *Environmental Protection Act* and regulations will no longer occur.

This is why I am so pleased to have PEO Council's approval on September 23, 2005, of the broad framework for the full integra-

tion of a Government Liaison Program into PEO operations. It is an important step in the right direction. It puts our words about preventing government intrusions into positive action.

The approved framework will allow the association to build on the work already achieved in the Government Communications Program, whose six-month pilot Council also authorized extending to the end of the year.

Value of self-regulation

The new program will enable us to identify provincial statutes that involve engineers/engineering and to take ownership of them under the PEA, because the government will be aware of PEO and attuned to our mandate, and we will have mechanisms for fast response, grounded in approved policies and positions, to political issues.

This initiative will rely heavily on volunteers, not only those involved in the chapters, but also those generally interested in this activity, as well as those with expert knowledge of the technical areas in which the government has an interest and of government itself.

The goal of the ongoing, integrated program is to ensure that the government maintains its awareness of the role of PEO and the value of a self-regulating engineering profession.

Ongoing MPP contact

Once established, PEO's Government Liaison Program will rely behind the scenes on expanded chapter support; development of policy and position statements; liaisons with external groups to ensure sources of intelligence and allies for PEO when needed to manage issues; media relations; and communications and coordination activities, including ongoing contact with both external groups and PEO committees.

Maintaining ownership of the engineering profession

We also anticipate that the program will periodically require our use of a government communications/public affairs consultant in such areas as strategy formulation, the opening of doors, ongoing MPP contact, and the training of spokespeople. In my discussions with MPPs, I ask them to be sure, when an issue comes before them involving the regulation of engineering practice, including the setting of standards of qualification, to ask: "Minister, has PEO been consulted?"

Because approved policies and positions must underlie our communications with government, all aspects of the program must integrate fully with PEO's policy development. To this end, the Executive Committee, as the committee responsible for our policy development process (see page 56 of this issue for an overview of the process), will provide the overall volunteer oversight for the program.

Dramatic shift

The Government Liaison Program was the recommendation of an Executive Committee working group, on which I served along with Past President George Comrie, P.Eng., President-elect Pat Quinn, P.Eng., and Vice President Diane Freeman, P.Eng. Council asked the working group in June to consider how a permanent government relations program might be built into PEO operations going forward from our spokesperson recruitment and Engineering for Ontarians Day successes.

The program will be detailed in 2006 through one of Council's approved strategic plan initiatives and, once fully established, will provide a more proactive way for PEO to work with government in conducting our business.

I believe it represents a dramatic shift for us, with the aim of being ahead of and influencing the development of government policy that might have an impact on self-regulation in engineering.