

PEO COUNCIL: COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL LICENSURE MODEL REQUIRES FURTHER STUDY

451st MEETING, SEPTEMBER 18, 19, 2008

By Jennifer Coombes

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING began on Thursday evening with a plenary session to seek council's consensus on a comprehensive national licensure model. It is thought a national model would better protect and serve the public interest, provide registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair, and enhance members' interests.

Council and PEO staff in attendance at the meeting met in small groups to discuss a proposed draft comprehensive national licensure model. The model, a multi-tiered approach intended to ensure broad inclusion into the engineering profession and recognition after licensure is achieved (*Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2008, pp. 60-61), incorporates motions council has previously passed to update the licensing process and the ideas of previous licensing task forces, including the Licensing Process Task Force (*Engineering Dimensions*, January/February 2008, pp. 46-48; March/April 2008, p. 28, 63) and the Evolution of Engineering Admissions Task Force.

President David Adams, P.Eng., said the model is "a fresh look at the licensing of all involved in engineering." If accepted as a national model that is operated provincially, he said, the model would allow for full mobility because all engineers would be licensed to perform the same activities in each jurisdiction.

While in the discussion groups, council and staff considered whether a comprehensive national licensure model is needed and whether the proposed model required any changes to ensure it aligns with council's intentions for the licensure process.

While there was consensus on the idea of moving toward a consistent national licensure model, several councillors voiced concerns that the assumptions and problems the proposed model sought to solve weren't clearly defined and that they needed to know the principles guiding development of the model before they were prepared to proceed.

Council, therefore, directed the CEO/registrar to continue developing a comprehensive national licensure model and to engage council in the development using its knowledge-based approach. Specifically, council directed the CEO/registrar to:

- compile a list of the problem(s) with PEO's licensure model and categorize them to determine the main problems;
- compile a list of guiding principles, criteria, constraints and expectations to be used to judge licensure model options;
- compile a list of assumptions being made (implicit and explicit) and make an initial determination on their validity;
- identify the value to both the public and members in each stage of the current and any proposed licensure model;
- compile a list of views that answer the questions, "Who are we?" or "Who should PEO license?"; and
- engage a wide range of stakeholders.

2008 WORK PLAN

While in camera at the September meeting, a motion was brought into open session that states that the president, councillors and staff must refrain from promoting the Ten-point Work Plan until such items are approved by council.

2009 ELECTION

Elections procedures review

Over the last two election years, concerns have been raised by candidates regarding some of the procedures used to tabulate election ballots and their inability to determine preliminary ballot totals. In addition, the Central Election and Search Committee (CESC) has had concerns regarding candidate election material, election publicity procedures, the role of the CESC and the general handling of queries about the conduct of the elections.

Accordingly, at the June 2008 meeting, council directed the CESC to:

- develop a protocol for an annual review of PEO's election procedures;
- review the election procedures and submit a report to council at its September meeting; and
- in preparing the report for council, consult with members of the 2007-2008 CESC, the 2007-2008 election candidates, the 2007-2008 chief elections officer, the PEO elections agent, PEO staff involved with the elections, the mover of the member submission regarding elections procedures at the 2008 AGM, and any other party the committee deemed necessary.

Council received the CESC report at its September meeting, as scheduled, and approved recommendations that will result in the following policy changes for council elections:

- introduction of a formalized protocol for the annual review of election procedures;
- use of locked and sealed ballot boxes for ballot returns;

- ability of candidates/scrutineers to object to ballots and receive interim vote counts;
- employees of the official elections agent no longer to be appointed as returning officers;
- members to be appointed as returning officers to oversee ballot counting process;
- less restrictive ballot marking to indicate vote;
- establishment of a spoiled ballot definition;
- declaration of candidate on nomination acceptance forms; and
- current photos for all candidates.

The 2009 voting procedures (pp. 22-23) reflect the CESC's recommendations, as approved by council.

Election appointments

Scott Clark, LLB, replaces Mark Baruzzi, LLB, as PEO's general secretary. Clark has also been appointed chief elections officer for the 2009 elections.

LICENSED SPECIALTIES AND DESIGNATIONS

At the September meeting, the CEO/registrar presented proposed criteria to establish licensed specialists linked to demand-side legislation, as well as specialist designations and official marks. The criteria were developed at the request of council, which at its March meeting had received a licence discipline and specialist designation study exploring the concept of licensing by discipline and creating certified specialist designations.

Under the proposed criteria, creating a licensed specialist by discipline would relate to demand-side legislation, the public interest and a need for specialized knowledge. The criteria for developing a specialist designation would also include a requirement to provide more clarity in the professional engineering services offered to the public.

In presenting this item to council, Councillor Chris Roney, P.Eng., BDS, said: "We've suffered in the past by not identifying individual practitioners and disciplines, and government responded

by setting up its own system. We need specialties to assure the public that engineers are doing the right jobs."

Council directed the CEO/registrar to apply the newly approved criteria in reviewing demand-side legislation and council motions, so he could provide recommendations to council by February 2009 for the future development of licensed specialists and designations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the *Professional Engineers Act*, PEO is obliged to maintain and develop standards of knowledge and skill, qualifications and standards of practice, and standards of professional ethics, which suggests the regulator should implement a continuing professional development requirement for its members. The act does not, however, specify a means for doing so. Consequently, PEO does not yet have a continuing professional development requirement for members, despite years of ongoing debate on the subject.

To move this issue forward, at its June meeting, council directed the CEO/registrar to:

- develop a system where licence holders must declare they have maintained competence in the performance of any professional engineering services they will be undertaking;
- develop a protocol for council to approve the ongoing learning requirements for future specialist designations; and
- develop a position paper to support PEO's professional development system.

At its September meeting, council received for peer review the CEO/registrar's position paper on a proposed professional development system, which details a mandatory requirement for annual self-declaration of competence for all members and a protocol for ongoing learning requirements for future licensed specialties and designations.

On the suggestion of West Central Region Councillor Colin Moore, P.Eng., council approved re-establishing PEO's former Professional Development Committee, to which it referred the position paper for further consultation. Council tabled approval of the position paper's proposed professional development system. Σ

