

PEO/OSPE RELATIONS—WE HAVE REACHED AN IMPASSE



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President

IN THE YEAR 2000, PEO, following the wishes of its members as determined by referendum, separated the advocacy and regulatory functions of our association in Ontario. This was contrary to the modus operandi of all the other provincial associations, but was thought desirable by our provincial government of the day.

To facilitate the start-up of the new organization, PEO contributed a one-time transfer of \$933,277 to the new advocacy body, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), plus \$30 per member for three years, plus costs of transferred programs (including experienced personnel who had formerly worked in the advocacy areas of PEO), all of which amounts to a total of \$6.3 million.

In so doing, we broke rank with the other provinces that believe they need input and control of member and profession advocacy, government relations and policy formulation, continuing education, insurance services and the advocacy element inherent in chapter programs.

Quite frankly, the majority of PEO council expected most, if not all, PEO members would enroll in OSPE, our new sister organization. However, in fact, after 10 years of operation, only 9000 (including students) have joined OSPE, which is simply an inadequate number to finance a full advocacy program for all PEO members, thereby satisfying OSPE's mandate.

In my first term as your president (2008-2009), I began preliminary discussions with OSPE to address this funding shortfall, suggesting they provide all PEO members with a limited membership, sufficient to provide basic advocacy for all engineers in our association, but excluding employment services, etc. My offer was flatly refused,

as they believed such a membership would undermine the value of full membership in the society.

Recently, OSPE demanded that PEO go to binding mediation and arbitration, to address both the division of jurisdiction between us and their funding issues. OSPE is also demanding that we transfer not only all of the current PEO programs not related to regulation, but also the monies we have budgeted for those programs.

Even if this were agreeable, our members must also consider the future impact on PEO:

1. Do we want to forsake our independent Government Liaison Program?
2. Do we want to turn over our Ontario Centre for Engineering and Public Policy to OSPE?
3. Do we want OSPE solely to govern our professional awards program and ceremony?
4. Do we want OSPE to run all our mentorship and member programs?
5. Do we want OSPE to control the operation of our chapters (70 to 80 per cent of what they do could be construed as advocacy)?

Many at PEO have come to the conclusion that OSPE's zeal to take over all activities at PEO, other than the regulation of the profession, is not based on knowledge or on their ability to raise sufficient additional funds to succeed.

With these considerations in mind, we must determine whether we proceed to binding arbitration—a costly process—with the possibility of losing complete control of several important functions, or do we dissolve our relationship through an affirmative vote in a PEO member referendum as provided for in our initial agreement of 2000, which would allow each organization to go its separate way.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. Σ