

OUR COMMITMENT TO ONGOING IMPROVEMENT



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BY THE TIME you read this, changes to the *Professional Engineers Act* discussed by council and reported on in *Engineering Dimensions* (May/June 2010, p. 26 and July/August 2010, p. 15) are scheduled to have passed third reading and received royal assent. These changes will serve to strengthen PEO's ability to carry out its statutory mandate of protecting the public interest and safety where engineering is concerned.

Two act changes that received a lot of attention at the AGM and in recent emails relate to bringing all fees into PEO's bylaw (from Regulation 941) and enabling bylaws to become effective as soon as council passes them, except for those that council decides members must confirm. It has been suggested that council will abuse these provisions. Council and the executive are so concerned by the suggestion of abuse that they have asked staff to prepare a ratification bylaw in draft for review at the September council meeting. Further, it is the intention to deliver this draft document to chapters, committees and task forces for review and comment immediately thereafter. Broader licence holder comments will also be solicited through email.

Council is 100 per cent committed to seeking member input as is evidenced by the consultation undertaken with regard to the proposed governance changes

related to the way in which the president is elected. In fact, council has the authority to enact a change to appoint the president from members of council, but chose not to do that. Council chose instead to seek member input on this issue and values the input that has been willingly provided by licence holders.

While the summer is often a period of downtime for many organizations, the leadership group at PEO has spent the past several months examining issues that will impact the association's ability to achieve its "envisioned future"—to become the global leader in professional self-regulation that responsibly improves the quality of life for all.

In June, council and senior staff attended a three-day workshop to discuss key issues facing the association and the profession. The discussions were held with the intent of increasing PEO's accountability to the public while continuing to be a model of fairness in its operations. Specifically, the conversations focused on issues in two areas: membership and licensure, and complaints and discipline.

Council identified five key principles that demonstrate best practices in a regulator's complaints and discipline function. These included timeliness, fairness, multiple avenues of complaint resolution, transparency and consistency in remedies, and public accountability.

Timeliness is one principle that can be quantified fairly easily, and several options to improve PEO's process were discussed. Some of the many suggestions included: a hard rule of 180 days for dealing with complaints from their receipt to the decision of a discipline panel; establishment of a mandatory alternative dispute resolution process as a route prior to the complaints process; expanded use of in-house legal counsel; and the creation of a lessons learned task group.

The concept of membership versus licensure was another important topic

that council discussed. The main question: Do we simply let those who are interested in licensure come to us when ready, or should PEO take a more proactive role in their recruitment? It was decided at the workshop that the association would focus more attention on the recruitment of applicants and the retention of our licence holders. In doing so, we plan to maximize the use of our volunteers' time and expertise by increasing the engagement of our chapters in the mentoring, recruitment and development of the next generation of P.Engs, combined with a broadened engagement of PEO within the profession.

Many opportunities exist to increase the profession's accountability to the public and the value of the licence to our members, and I look forward to reporting on the results of the action plans developed at our meeting.

The council workshop reflects PEO's commitment to a process of ongoing improvement, one that is designed to bring continual improvement to PEO operations through constant review of the manner in which we operate.

As part of this process, PEO chapter members and volunteer leaders had the opportunity to increase their leadership skills last month at the association's first-ever ExecuTrek initiative (see p.18). This unique, day-long excursion at Canadian Forces Base Borden allowed PEO representatives to observe members of Canada's reserve force in action, providing a first-hand view of the quality of military training and its benefits, including management skills, values and work ethic. This shared experience enabled our leaders to learn new skills and discover new personal leadership attributes that can be incorporated in their PEO activities. Many thanks go to the members of the Canadian Forces Liaison Committee who organized this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Σ