

WHY DOES PEO HAVE AN EQUITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY?

By Ann Holmes

PEO COUNCIL APPROVED the equity and diversity (E&D) policy and guidelines in February, as noted in the March/April 2011 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* (p. 21). Concurrently, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers' (OSPE's) Women in Engineering Advisory Committee (WEAC) and Engineers Canada conducted a national survey on working conditions for engineers.¹ This survey, partially sponsored by PEO, provides a snapshot of issues facing women and men in the profession. The survey answers came from a random sample of engineers and its reliability is noted below.² Sixty-six per cent of those who responded were from Ontario.

We may have made progress on some areas, but the following examples from the survey results show there is still a significant amount of work that needs to be done on equity and diversity.

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION IN A WORK-RELATED MATTER OTHER THAN PROMOTION		
GROUP	% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS	DOMINANT FACTORS
Women	58%	Gender (49%) and age (19%)
Men	27%	Racial or ethnic background (11%) and age (8%) ³
PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION RELATED TO PROMOTION		
International engineering graduates passed over for a promotion	45%	Racial or ethnic background (22%), non-Canadian qualifications (19%) and non-Canadian experience (20%) ⁴

PEO council made its initial commitment to E&D when it developed the terms of reference for the Equity and Diversity Committee (EDC) in 2004. Since then, the EDC has been driving PEO's goal of becoming a leader in E&D among Canadian technical regulatory bodies by integrating equity and diversity values and principles into its general policy and business operations.

To make the case for action, members of the EDC first created a position paper. This document provided the overall framework for an equity and diversity policy, with the goal being that PEO general policy, business operations and membership reflect the diversity of Ontario's population. The EDC stresses this will result in changes to how PEO operates, not in changes to licensing requirements. The paper stated that developing and implementing a formal E&D policy demonstrates PEO's social responsibility to the full spectrum of its members and staff, as well as to the population of Ontario.

Through this work, the EDC is rising to the challenge of making positive change for the diversity of members in the engineering profession. While PEO's imple-

mentation of the E&D policy cannot regulate the places where engineers work, it can establish a culture such that everyone working at or on behalf of PEO has a respectful, positive and inclusive working environment. In this way, PEO can be seen by its members, staff and other stakeholders to be a progressive organization that embraces the values of respect and dignity for all people.

For further information, contact the chair of the EDC, Márta Ecsedi, P.Eng., FEC, at mj.ecsedi@sympatico.ca. Σ

NOTES

1. *Results of the 2010 Survey of Working Conditions for Engineers*, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers: Women in Engineering Advisory Committee. To be posted on the OSPE website www.ospe.on.ca.
2. "While no deliberate biases were introduced into the returns to this survey, the survey sample does reflect certain biases to bear in mind. The participation rate of women was moderately higher than the participation rate of men. There may also have been self-selection factors influencing participation, based on the survey's themes. Notwithstanding these limitations, the 2010 survey is a significant sampling of engineers and should be interpreted as a credible indication of trends in engineering workplaces." p. 8.
3. p. 69
4. *ibid.*

Ann Holmes (www.annholmes.ca) works for change. She has supported the EDC in the development of the position paper and implementation of the E&D policy.