

WHERE TO FROM HERE?



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President

THERE IS NO DOUBT that support from our partners in the engineering community can be extremely valuable in PEO's work to regulate the profession in Ontario.

Now, as PEO continues its struggle with the provincial government to improve workplace health and safety, we have been fortunate to receive significant backing from the leadership at the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), as well as Engineers Canada and its constituent associations across Canada. The battle is not over yet.

As you may know, on June 12, I received the disheartening and alarming news that the cabinet of the Ontario government had decided not to proclaim the amendment to the *Professional Engineers Act* that would have harmonized our act with those across the country, improved worker safety in the manufacturing sector and, through licensure, increased public accountability of work being done.

The next day, I received a call from Premier Wynne, who told me that the government's decision to reverse its three-year legislative commitment to repeal section 12(3)(a) of the act, incorrectly known as the "industrial exception," was a difficult one and cited a lack of evidence of potential safety improvements to justify proceeding with the repeal. To say I was shocked would be an understatement. Despite this reasoning, and notwithstanding our requests, the government made little attempt to facilitate a working relationship with the Ministry of Labour for a review of relevant evidence.

Repealing section 12(3)(a) of our act is an important workplace health and safety measure that would close a serious regulatory gap. Maintaining the status quo allows engineering work by unlicensed and unaccountable individuals to continue. It also leaves a gap in PEO's ability to regulate acts of engineering and puts some workers in a position where they are required by their employers to perform work they may not be qualified to do.

Ontario is the only province in Canada with such an exception and research shows that Ontario manufacturing has the highest fatality rate in Canada and the highest accident rate of

any other business sector in the province. Elimination of the exception would have brought us in line with national standards.

So where do we go from here?

PEO has a responsibility, as part of our mandate as guardians of public safety where engineering is concerned, to let the people of Ontario know when incidents involving unlicensed workers engaged in acts of engineering have occurred. This means we will step up our tracking of workplace accidents as they are reported and gather additional information that supports our position. We will also assist PEO licence holders interested in meeting with their members of provincial parliament to share our serious concerns with this decision. I welcome your participation. Stay tuned.

PEO's positions on several other important issues were also discussed late last month at the council workshop, where our leadership mapped out strategies for the current term and beyond. The last time council devised a strategic plan was in 2009, so it was time to revise and update. This process involved deconstructing the previous strategic plan piece by piece, as well as revisiting the goals from last year's council workshop and reviewing what had been accomplished over the year and what initiatives, if any, still needed to be completed. As we considered a big picture, long-term strategy for the association, we also focused on short-term goals that could serve as benchmarks, so we can measure how well we are performing to plan. As a result, we created six goals, then consolidated those down to three to be accomplished over the remaining 10 months of this council's term. These goals will be shared with you soon!

Having twice served as president and chair of OSPE, I fully appreciate the role it plays in providing a voice to engineers in the province, as well as how important this voice can be in supporting PEO's mandate.

The unique cover of this issue, which includes current OSPE President and Chair Paul Acchione, P.Eng., symbolizes each organization's commitment to having two strong professional engineering bodies in Ontario. PEO and OSPE each have important but very distinct roles to play to advance the engineering profession in our province. I look forward to continued, positive relations with OSPE, as well as with all of our partners in the engineering community. Σ