

ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROFESSION



Annette Bergeron, P.Eng.
President

IT'S HARD TO believe we've already reached the halfway point in the 2013-2014 council term. It has been a hectic six months but we have made progress on many important issues.

Council decided in September to support, in principle, the implementation of a continuing professional development program. PEO is the only Canadian engineering regulator without such a formal program, which was questioned by Commissioner Paul Bélanger of the Elliot Lake Inquiry. To begin, we have asked the Professional Standards Committee to review and

comment on a 2013 report by the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, entitled *Continuing Professional Development, Maintaining and Enhancing Our Engineering Capability*. The committee has also been directed to gather written and oral comments from PEO licence holders during its review, and to report its preliminary findings and proposed plan of action to council at its February 2014 meeting. More and more, professions are being asked to demonstrate an accountable and qualified membership, and PEO must not fall behind on this front.

Councillor Chris Roney, P.Eng., BDS, FEC, and I look forward to attending the Elliot Lake Inquiry Roundtable in Ottawa on November 20 and 21. My thanks to Councillor Roney for fielding the anticipated questions and to our Elliot Lake Task Force for all their work in a short span of time.

At our annual Queen's Park reception, we acknowledged Bruce Power, COM DEV and Vale for voluntarily complying with legislation to repeal section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, despite the Ontario government's decision in June to defer its September 1, 2013 proclamation, without yet setting a new effective date for this change. These industry leaders have shown a tremendous commitment to increasing workplace safety standards by having accountable, PEO licence holders in place to oversee their process equipment design. I was delighted that 56 MPPs, including the premier, attorney general and leader of the opposition, took the time to participate. It was very important that our MPPs see the regulation of our profession in action. Meanwhile, our efforts to see the repeal implemented continue.

One item that was troubling to council from the outset of the term was the low voter turnout for the last election. In the 2013 PEO council election, of those eligible to vote only 8.9 per cent cast a ballot—a concerning statistic to say the least. By comparison, Engineers Nova Scotia recently achieved a 33 per cent turnout by electronic ballot for the second year. They are a smaller association but a benchmark for us to strive for.

PEO has been investigating potential reasons for the lack of member engagement, including conducting a survey of members during the summer. The survey allowed for consultation on broader election

issues, including perceptions of PEO council and the organization's election process. My thanks to the 7400 members who took the time to share their views with us. The results told us, in part, that:

- professional engineers are looking for new ideas for the engineering profession and new candidates who haven't run for a seat on PEO council before;
- a strong minority are unfamiliar with the voting process;
- the electronic voting process was well received; and
- a large majority of those familiar with the voting process are satisfied, with:
 - satisfaction highest for the ease of casting a vote, followed closely by the ease of access to information on the process of voting and the clarity of information on the process, and
 - satisfaction lower for the ease of access to information about candidates, the quality of candidates, and the quality of information on the candidates.

Council is still reviewing the information gathered through the survey, which is helping us to understand the opportunities and challenges for us if we are to engage eligible voters in the election process. As a first step, council directed at its September meeting that the elections be conducted by electronic means only since this method was so well received in the 2013 election. Council also approved the voting and election publicity procedures for next year's election, both of which are available on PEO's website and are included in this issue of *Engineering Dimensions*. Information on the candidates will be distributed as a supplement to the January/February 2014 issue of the magazine, available on PEO's website, and sent to you with the list of candidates. I urge you to participate in the 2014 election, as we continue to seek additional improvements to make this important part of the governance of the profession more meaningful to you.

Lastly, we're finalizing the appointment of a registrar for PEO and I look forward to sharing that news with you soon. Σ