

COUNCIL MOVES AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

491ST MEETING, FEBRUARY 7, 2014

By Jennifer Coombes

AT THE FEBRUARY meeting, council once again discussed the future of a continuing professional development (CPD) program for PEO's licence holders. The most recent round of discussions regarding CPD began at the September 2013 meeting, at which council unanimously supported, in principle, the development of a PEO CPD program.

At the September 2013 meeting, council referred a June 2013 report by the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers' (OSPE) Continuing Education Working Group (http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.ospe.on.ca/resource/resmgr/doc_advocacy/2013-06-20_ospe_cpd_study_fi.pdf) to the Professional Standards Committee (PSC). The OSPE report proposes a mandatory program modeled on the one in place for Alberta's engineers, which also aligns with the Canadian Framework for Licensure. Council requested that the committee review and provide its comments on the report at the February council meeting, while also considering other recommendations for a CPD program and input from PEO's membership.

In the briefing materials for the February meeting (http://peo.on.ca/index.php/ci_id/27606/la_id/1.htm), PSC provided comments on the OSPE report and outlined steps it took to solicit feedback from PEO members via a stakeholder consultation held between November 12 and December 12, 2013.

PSC's comments about the OSPE report concerned:

- (a) the effectiveness of Alberta's CPD plan—as the OSPE report doesn't present evidence of how the program is effective (e.g. reduces the number of discipline cases), having evidence-based data that supports the effectiveness of Alberta's CPD plan would be valuable to council. In addition, what is the evidence that a similar program in Ontario would be effective in protecting the public interest?
- (b) more experienced engineers require less CPD—this assumption is not proven by evidence in the OSPE report and since senior engineers tend to take responsibility for more difficult projects, they may need to be more up to date with technical issues than younger engineers.
- (c) levels of CPD reporting needed to protect the public interest—the OSPE report recommends CPD reporting and auditing requirements not be onerous, but PSC believes PEO should instead be asking what level of CPD reporting and auditing is needed to protect the public interest.

Feedback from PEO membership was grouped into categories:

1. opposed to mandatory CPD (39.5 per cent);
2. in favour of OSPE report (25.9 per cent);
3. opposed to OSPE proposal but not mandatory CPD in general (20.9 per cent);
4. members who commented but did not state an opinion for or against (14.7 per cent).

The top five concerns of members were (summarized):

1. No justification for implementation of a program (45 comments);
2. What about the expense?, i.e. who pays? (28 comments);
3. CPD will not improve public safety/public perception (21 comments);
4. Report lacks clarity and analysis/more research needed (20 comments);
5. Practising engineers must already remain current to stay employed/engineers know best how to ensure their own professional development (18 comments);
5. PEO will lose members if mandatory CPD is implemented will discourage licensing (18 comments).

Although there is no consensus on what shape a CPD program might eventually take, council as a whole agreed that some CPD program should be in place for PEO's licence holders.

To move the process forward, council tasked PSC with preparing a problem definition statement to determine best practices for professional development and improvement as they apply to professional engineering in Ontario, and also to consider quality assurance, competence and the Certificate of Authorization in the process. PSC will provide input to the Executive Committee to help it set terms of reference for a Continuing Professional Development and Quality Assurance Task Force and a budget in time for the March council meeting.

ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS AWARDS GALA

A motion passed by council at the February meeting seeks to restore elements of the Ontario Professional Engineers Awards (OPEA) gala for 2014 that the PEO Awards Committee believe made it a more high-calibre event in years past, including the video vignettes of awardees.

Council voted to have PEO again resume responsibility for the production of the awardee vignettes and accompanying citations and approved additional funding, not to exceed \$50,000, to cover their cost.

As well, council approved restoring the original intent of the gala to a partnership between PEO and OSPE, with shared co-hosting roles, and with the PEO/OSPE OPEA Gala Advisory Subcommittee (GAC) of the Awards Committee providing direction to and oversight of OSPE staff working on the gala and providing input on keynote speakers, themes, sponsorship sources and areas for improvement.

PEO's proposals for enhancing the 2014 gala had yet to be approved by the OSPE board as of press time. Σ