

# AN AGILE GAME CHANGER TO MAKE PEO GREAT AGAIN



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WHEN I BEGAN my term as president and chair of PEO, I committed to engaging with the engineering community to help raise the relevance and value of our profession. As a long-time volunteer with the association, I have always believed that enhancing the relevance and value of the P.Eng. licence to society and to our licence holders is one of the most important roles of the association. I am pleased to report we have taken great strides on this front by leading change throughout PEO operations,

with an agile strategic thinking approach in three priority areas: innovation, recognition and collaboration.

### INNOVATION

During the year, I challenged PEO senior management to find innovative ways to reduce costs and improve the organization's efficiency and operational effectiveness. The team responded with a surplus budget and was devoted to fiscal responsibility, while delivering high-quality regulatory programs, designing thoughtful policy and, above all, working to improve and protect the health, safety and well-being of Ontarians. We also enhanced our outreach efforts to students, interns and women in engineering, and increased learning and development opportunities for our nearly 1000 volunteers working in the chapter system and in the various committees of PEO. PEO's 36 chapters also received a 10 per cent increase in funding in 2016, to enable healthy growth, outreach efforts in their local communities and enhanced involvement with regulatory functions.

Innovation is based on taking good ideas and developing them into something new and valued. And PEO's Ottawa Chapter is doing just that with its Innovative Entrepreneur Leadership Program. I was privileged to attend the kick-off of this innovative program in Ottawa on September 30, 2015. Also in attendance was Councillor Marianne Wilkinson (Ward 4 Kanata North, Ottawa), who praised it as a "lead to win" entrepreneurship program. I commend the program's fusion of the entire innovation chain, stretching from basic and applied research through the business case to the proposal for early-stage financing for new companies. A true collaboration and fusion of PEO, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), the learned societies, universities, govern-

ment and industry, I believe this program, rolled out across the province, could play a real part in helping to shift our economy into high gear again, restoring growth, boosting employment, helping small business thrive, restoring manufacturing competitiveness, bringing back Ontario's leadership in high technology, and shifting the country away from resource dependency.

I will watch the program's growth with interest, from an intra-entrepreneurship to inter-entrepreneurship synergy, acting as an enabling tool to stimulate economic development with engineering as the innovative backbone. It can further blossom into a new innovation hub, engineering/technology incubator and accelerator, or engineering change lab. It helps recognize and nurture the innovative talents of the best and brightest engineering practitioners to help them grow their big ideas. I look forward to seeing it emulated in other chapters.

### RECOGNITION

Continuously improving our core, self-regulatory functions is key to PEO earning greater recognition, which is why we devoted significant attention to enforcement efforts and the development of additional professional practice guidelines and standards to ensure engineering work is done by professional engineers. It is also why we expressed our displeasure at the government's surprising decision, without consultation, late in 2015 to cancel the repeal of the industrial exception, subsection 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, without consulting us. Permanently abandoning this repeal, which has been interpreted much more broadly by Ontario industry than originally intended, signals to that sector that it does not need engineering licence holders to be successful. In fact, it misleads manufacturers into thinking they do not need to make engineering "investments" to fuel their future growth of new products and productivity enhancements. This perception is incorrect in philosophy—and in law.

Good engineers reduce costs, improve productivity and protect the health, safety and well-being of all Ontarians. Engineering must be viewed as an investment for the future of any wealth-generating enterprise, not as a cost of production. Canadian companies need engineering help to ensure they stay in business for the long term. Money chases good ideas. If we stimulate economic development with engineering as the innovation backbone, we will generate many more good ideas. Remember that engineering creates wealth, well-paid jobs, public safety, prosperity and a better quality of life for those in Ontario and around the world.

PEO is also working with OSPE to increase the profile of volunteers to the profession through the creation of a new



PEO President Thomas Chong, P.Eng., FEC, speaks to attendees at the East Central Region town hall November 12, 2015.

form of volunteer recognition award. If approved, this award would be presented by the lieutenant governor of Ontario, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, at PEO's Order of Honour gala. Let's keep our fingers crossed that this worthy cause for our profession is realized.

### COLLABORATION

I have always supported the idea that, as a self-regulating profession in Canada, each member has a part to play in regulating it. Future leaders in self-regulation will have to make a commitment to self-monitoring, self-surveillance, and relentless self-improvement that makes Orwell read like Pollyanna.

I believe members should be involved in all major regulation changes affecting our profession.

The seven town hall meetings held throughout the province from late September until late November were certainly an exercise in collaboration. These meetings provided an opportunity to consult with members on how PEO might best strengthen the engineering profession by implementing recommendations from the Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry in ways that make sense for both practitioners and the public. Specific attention was paid to the recommendations aimed at creating a specialist designation for those inspecting existing buildings and signing structural adequacy reports, and putting into place a continuing professional development program for PEO licence holders. My sincere thanks go to the more than 500 engineers and engineering interns who attended the meetings and gave us valuable feedback.

Along with our work serving the public, PEO also extended its support to local communities and charities this year, including our Big Bike Ride with OSPE, which raised donations for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I am deeply proud of the strong culture of volunteering across PEO, and I would like to thank all our volunteers for the passion and dedication shown to these very important causes. I'm pleased to report we are already working toward our Big Bike Ride in 2016.

I have been fortunate this year to have served on such a co-operative and productive team. I have enjoyed working with the dedicated men and women on council who shared my focus on regulatory matters and worked hard to advance and regulate the practice of engineering to protect the public interest. My heartfelt thanks to PEO's registrar, Gerard McDonald, P.Eng., his senior management team and their staff, for their ongoing support of our concerted efforts, as well as to everyone who contributed to PEO initiatives.

It has been an honour to represent you as PEO president.  $\Sigma$