

## OUR FIRST STEPS TO REGULATORY RENEWAL AND CHANGE

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*"You do not have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great."  
—Zig Ziglar*

In light of the recent release of PEO's external regulatory review report, I think this quote by the late American author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar is apt throughout our organization. The review, which assessed PEO's current practices against those of the best regulators, makes 15 recommendations on improving PEO's regulatory performance (see p. 60) and clearly illustrates the need for renewal and change.

I believe undertaking this review was our first step to becoming a great regulator. Conducted by international regulatory expert Harry Cayton, an advisor to the United Kingdom-based Professional Standards Authority (PSA), the review assessed PEO's performance against the standards of good regulation across its core regulatory functions: licensing and registration; complaints, discipline, compliance and enforcement; and professional standards. The review pointed out several areas for improvement, but, in my mind, the most pressing area is licensure. However, we need to move forward with a plan.

### LICENSURE

I believe the regulatory function that needs the most urgent attention is our licensing process, and I think many will agree. Although, in my opinion, everyone we are currently licensing is qualified, there are many applicants who have had issues on the path to licensure. I'm also very concerned about applicants we have not licensed and who have been stalled in their quest to become a professional engineer.

These concerns are reflected in the review, which makes the following recommendation around licensure: "The process for application for a professional engineering licence should be simplified and speeded up; the discriminatory aspects of written examinations, a Canadian year of experience and face-to-face interviews should be discarded. Appeals against refusal of licence should be made available on request of the applicant, who should be provided with legal support in the event of an appeal hearing."

Ultimately, in the interests of both the public and the profession, we need to consistently ensure that everyone who is qualified gets a licence and disqualify those who don't make the grade. Although this might seem simplistic, it is the essence of what we need to do as a regulator issuing licences.

And to effectively make course corrections, I believe we should adopt the PSA's principles of right-touch regulation, which means understanding the problem before creating solutions and ensuring the level of regulation is proportionate to the level of risk to the public. Its foundational

principles include proportionality, consistency, targeted, transparency, accountability and agility. Right-touch regulation, coupled with good engineering principles, will help us create a licensure system that is flexible enough to encompass all engineering disciplines, including all the new fast-emerging disciplines, alongside new technologies. Indeed, this is the perfect time to renew our licensure processes, building on our past work to create a system that is not overly complex but robust enough to make sure we're protecting the public across all types of engineering, including new and emerging disciplines.

### GOVERNANCE

I believe we also need to review PEO's governance. Although governance was not within the scope of the external review, how the regulator oversees itself and sets strategies and priorities also requires thoughtful renewal and change. Strong governance and leadership at the Council level will be key to renewal and fulfilling the recommendations laid out in the external review.

PEO's new Council started the process at its June retreat, where we spent most of our time exploring governance issues, including clarity about the role of PEO vis á vis the public interest; the role of regulators versus associations (protecting the public versus professional advocacy); and the roles of Council, the registrar and staff. And we discussed what kind of Council we want (and need) to be: one focused solely on oversight and advisory roles, setting goals for the organization and overseeing performance. We must avoid acting as an operational or working board and leave operations to the registrar and staff. Clarity is required regarding the role of volunteers, the role of staff and committees' scope; and there likely needs to be a shift in the culture to one more in keeping with the saying "trust, but verify."

To assist with this, at Council's June meeting we decided to engage a governance advisor to assist Council and myself with developing sound governance and leadership practices and ensuring we continue to act in the public interest. Beginning this fall, and continuing through the remainder of the 2019–2020 term, this expert will assist Council by acting as a parliamentarian during meetings in order to ensure rules of order are followed, offer guidance around best governance practices with respect to creation of agendas, help set priorities, ensure an appropriate public interest focus and provide ongoing training and development for councillors and myself. I hope the successful candidate will help guide Council and myself through a productive year full of positive change as we begin work on fulfilling the recommendations of the external review.

I wish everyone an enjoyable and prosperous summer. [e](#)