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# Media Release

## Professional Engineers Ontario Condemns Government Reversal on Commitment to Improve Workplace Health and Safety

Toronto – (November 26, 2015) – Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), the body that licenses and regulates professional engineering in Ontario to protect the public interest, is extremely disappointed with the government’s decision, as expressed in today’s Fall Economic Statement, to remove permanently a provision in the *Professional Engineers Act* (PEA) that would have helped ensure a healthier and safer workplace at little cost to the province’s manufacturing sector.

“We are shocked the Ontario government has taken this course of action and feel misled by them,” said PEO President Thomas Chong, P.Eng. “In coming to its decision, the government held consultations with others to which PEO was not a party. This is not in keeping with PEO’s position as a valued stakeholder that traditionally works in partnership with government to serve and protect the health, safety and economic interests of all Ontarians.”

Included within the *Open for Business Act, 2010*, the provision would have repealed subsection 12(3)(a) of the PEA (sometimes called the “industrial exception), which allows non-engineers to carry out acts of professional engineering on equipment or machinery used to produce products for their employers in their employer’s facility. The repeal was to take effect on September 1, 2013, following three years of transition planning and consultation with stakeholders. On June 12, 2013, however, the proclamation date was postponed indefinitely by the government.

Since then, PEO has been working with the Ministry of Labour, undertaking research into recent prosecutions under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* involving injuries to employees in manufacturing environments. A report on this research is expected to be finalized by early 2016.

Additionally, PEO has consulted extensively with industry and invested heavily in assisting manufacturers to achieve voluntary compliance. Based on this outreach, PEO believes only 7 per cent of manufacturing employers are likely to be affected by the repeal. Through its voluntary compliance program, PEO has invested close to \$500,000 to assist companies with their licensing costs. Companies such as Bruce Power L.P., COM DEV International Products and Vale Canada Ltd. have announced their voluntary compliance with the repeal.

“The repeal would have been implemented without any expense to taxpayers and little cost to employers, since PEO had committed to offsetting almost half of the licensing fee of anyone required to be newly licensed as a result of the repeal,” Chong said. “PEO had also put in place a regulation to enable employers to transition over a one-year period. Regrettably, the government chose to ignore these factors.”

Ontario is the only province with such an exception to licensing requirements in its engineering legislation, and PEO remains committed to raising Ontario's standard to that of the other provinces in the interest of protecting Ontario workers.

"The Ontario government's troubling decision to reverse its previous commitment to repeal section 12(3)(a) of the PEA leaves a gap in PEO's ability to regulate acts of engineering and continues to put workers at risk," said PEO Registrar Gerard McDonald, P.Eng. "Engineers are committed to public safety and are professionally accountable by law for all acts of professional engineering. Not requiring engineers to carry out the work in this narrow area is a significant missed opportunity to protect the public."

PEO is committed to working with governments and industry to achieve a stable and prosperous economic future for Ontario. PEO would welcome open discussion with the government to further clarify how repealing section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act* would enhance protection of Ontario workers and manufacturing productivity, with little cost to employers.

#### **About Professional Engineers Ontario**

Through the *Professional Engineers Act*, PEO governs over 85,000 licence and certificate holders and regulates professional engineering in Ontario to serve and protect the public. Professional engineering safeguard life, health, property, economic interests, the public welfare and the environment. Professional engineers can be identified by the P.Eng. after their names. Limited engineering licensees can be identified by LEL after their names. Visit [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca).

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