

POLITICIANS RELY ON ENGINEERS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

By Howard Brown and Blake Keidan

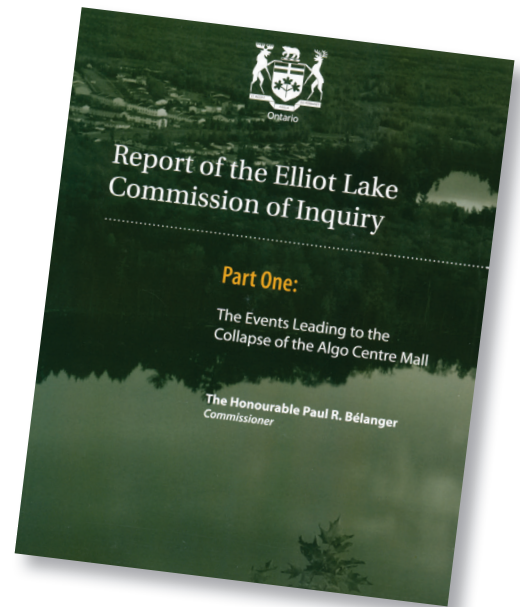
TWO RESIDENTS OF Elliot Lake lost their lives on June 23, 2012, when the Algo Centre Mall roof collapsed. It is a case that has attracted much attention from engineers, media and the general public because of its unique circumstances. Worse, it was a tragedy that could have been prevented.

It has been two years since the Honourable Paul Bélanger, commissioner of the Elliot Lake Inquiry, released his October 15, 2014 report on the incident. As a party with standing, PEO was provided a formal opportunity to recommend changes or additions to applicable legislation, regulations, standards and codes in relation to professional engineers and engineering, in areas relevant to the events leading up to the tragedy. PEO submitted 11 recommendations to the commission and was pleased that nearly all were adopted in the final report, including:

- developing a new performance standard for structural inspections of existing buildings, based on PEO's existing practice bulletin;
- mandating that a Structural Adequacy Report of existing buildings be prepared and sealed by professional engineers who are certified as structural engineering specialists; and
- releasing additional information about PEO practitioners disciplined for professional misconduct.

On the tragedy in Elliot Lake, Michael Mantha, MPP (Algoma-Manitoulin), NDP northern development and mines critic, shared that: "I've never forgotten the two members, Lucie and Dolores, of my community who were tragically taken from us in the Algo Centre Mall collapse. I want to do everything I can to ensure this never happens again. Hats off to Professional Engineers Ontario for their ongoing efforts to make Ontario a safer place to live. I have had the pleasure of meeting with PEO Registrar Gerard McDonald [P.Eng.] this past spring. I look forward to continuing the conversation and identifying ways all members of the legislature can support efforts to address gaps in our safety regime."

One of the recommendations in Commissioner Bélanger's report on the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall in Elliot Lake is that PEO should establish a system of mandatory continuing professional development (CPD). In fact, PEO council had already established a task force to make recommendations for the development of such a system. The Continuing Professional Development, Competence and Quality Assurance (CPDCQA) Task Force was formed in 2014, and presented its final report to PEO council on November 20, 2015. The report outlined the basic concept of a procedure for determining the CPD



requirements for individual licence holders. In February of this year, the Continuing Professional Competence Program (CP)² Task Force was formed to establish criteria and details for elements needed to operationalize the program. This task force is expected to present its recommendations to PEO council in November.

At the end of the day, it is important to remember that politicians rely on engineers to protect the public through regulation and continuous improvement. And based on the recommendations from the Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry, we know government has an interest in what PEO is doing in these areas.

To remain relevant to the public, PEO is obligated to meet the public's ever increasing demand for accountability. Σ

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