

SAFETY IN MANUFACTURING: CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?

By Howard Brown and Blake Keidan

PEO OWES A LOT to its volunteers, especially the Government Liaison Program (GLP) chapter representatives.

These women and men work tirelessly to bring PEO's message to Ontario's MPPs.

Through grassroots events and initiatives, they are building strong relationships with MPPs that are valuable to PEO when dealing with government representatives on important issues facing the profession.

The Ontario government's decision not to proclaim the repeal of section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, often referred to as the industrial exception, was disappointing for everyone at PEO. New legislation was introduced in June that will actually remove the repeal from the government's books.

During meetings with ministers, MPPs and other government officials in recent months, PEO representatives have been asking why workers in manufacturing premises aren't entitled to the same protections as other members of the public.

For example, the lathe can be a dangerous machine and it is desirable to protect workers from potential hazards. One way is to add a guard to the machine to prevent workers from having access to the moving parts. An interlock can be used to disconnect power to the lathe if the guard isn't in place.

In the example below, the first image shows a lathe with a guard and interlock that was designed by an external contractor hired by the company. The second image also shows a lathe with a guard and interlock but one that was designed by an employee of the company.

The difference is that the external contractor would require a PEO Certificate of Authorization with the design prepared and reviewed by a professional engineer.

In the second scenario, under the industrial exception, there is no requirement that the design be reviewed by a professional engineer. It is also not required that the designer be a professional engineer.

Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not require that engineers oversee complex manufacturing machinery design where worker safety is at risk.

Making sure manufacturing machinery is safe is one step toward preventing workplace injuries. This can be accomplished by ensuring that those design-

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ing and overseeing our manufacturing equipment and processes are not only properly trained but are also willing to put their careers on the line by taking professional responsibility for the safety and quality of their work.

The struggle of moving towards increased workplace safety has been an uphill battle for PEO for many years. The Ontario government's introduction of the *Burden Reduction Act, 2016* in June would cancel the repeal. It would crush any chance PEO has of addressing a long-time goal to increase workplace safety by having all manufacturing premises in Ontario covered by the *Professional Engineers Act*.

It has often struck us that one of the reasons governments do not understand engineering regulatory issues is because there are not enough engineers in government. It is not a well-known fact that for the first time in at least four decades, the Ontario governing caucus does not have an engineer on its benches.

When Ottawa-Orléans MPP Phil McNeely, P.Eng., retired in 2014, he was replaced by the very competent Marie-France Lalonde, now the minister of government and consumer services. However, the result is there is currently no engineer in the provincial Liberal caucus.

One way to improve this situation is for engineers to actively engage MPPs, and this is where PEO GLP volunteers help. They are constantly holding discussions with ministers and MPPs. These discussions are one of the most critical avenues currently available to PEO. This is particularly true when it is part of a wider grassroots campaign taking place across the province. These meetings provide an opportunity to form relationships and foster ongoing dialogue about engineering issues with key decision makers.

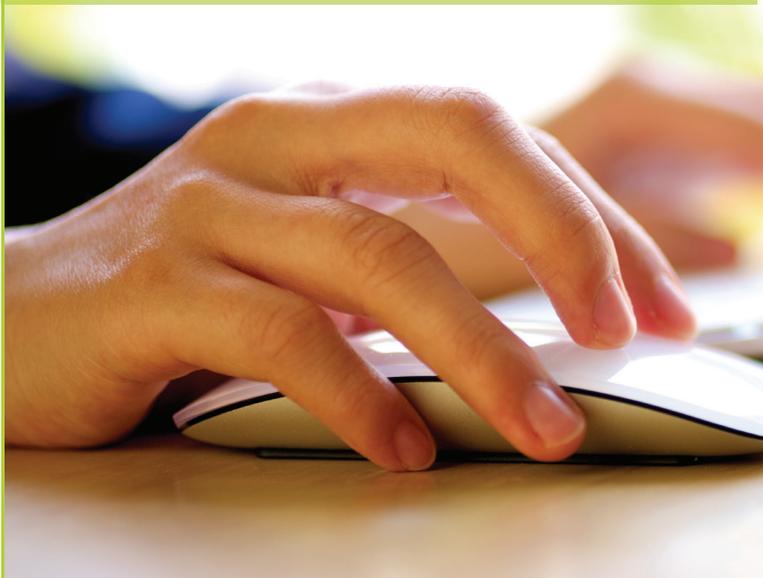
The relationships that PEO fosters through its event attendance open many doors. MPPs receive a lot of requests for their time and the organizations that tend to get heard are those whose representatives connect with MPPs on a regular basis, by attending constituency events, hosting public meetings and engaging them in the organization's activities.

"I know how important the involvement of our volunteers are to ensuring our message is heard," says Jeannette Chau, P.Eng., PEO's manager of government liaison programs. "We can't give up."

PEO will never stop addressing issues affecting the profession, including increased workplace safety. PEO volunteers make it possible to continue on. Thank you! Σ

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