



# Fact Sheet—What is PEO?

Established on June 14, 1922, Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) is the licensing and regulating body for professional engineering in the province. PEO operates under the authority of the *Professional Engineers Act* (the Act), a provincial statute, to serve and protect the public interest by setting and upholding high academic, experience and professional practice standards for the engineering profession. PEO's mission is to regulate and advance the practice of engineering to protect the public interest. Its vision is to be the trusted leader in professional self-regulation.

## PEO's Legislated Mandate

PEO regulates the practice of professional engineering and governs those individuals and organizations that it licenses in order "that the public interest may be served and protected." PEO is also mandated to carry out the following additional objects under the Act:

1. Establish, maintain and develop standards of knowledge and skill;
2. Establish, maintain and develop standards of qualification and standards of practice for the practice of professional engineering;
3. Establish, maintain and develop standards of professional ethics; and
4. Promote public awareness of the role of PEO.

## Public Protection

PEO protects and serves the public interest by:

- Ensuring all licensed professional engineers are qualified – and by licensing all who qualify;
- Disciplining professional engineers found guilty of professional misconduct;
- Taking action against unlicensed individuals who illegally describe themselves as engineers;
- Similarly, PEO can prosecute companies or entities who illegally provide engineering services to the public;
- Investigating all complaints brought to it about unlicensed, unprofessional, inadequate or incompetent engineering services;
- Conducting disputes resolution and hearings;
- Preparing performance guidelines as benchmarks for quality of service in the engineering profession; and
- Preparing performance standards in regulation.

There are approximately 86,000 professional engineers in Ontario. Individuals licensed by PEO are the only people permitted by law to undertake and assume responsibility for engineering work in Ontario. Individuals may not call themselves a professional engineer, an engineer, a P.Eng., or use any similar title that may lead to the belief that they are qualified to practise professional engineering, unless they are licensed by PEO.

Companies and individuals may not offer or provide engineering services to the public unless they obtain a PEO certificate of authorization. There are approximately 5800 certificate of authorization holders in Ontario.

## **Governance**

PEO is governed by a Council, the composition and operation of which is dictated by Regulation 941 under the Act. Most councillors are elected by PEO licence holders. Some councillors are appointed by the office of the Attorney General of Ontario. These appointed councillors may or may not be professional engineers. Council provides the overall direction for the association and the profession and an appointed CEO/registrar is responsible for staff implementation of Council decisions and policies. Council mandates the creation of committees to help develop specific policies that guide the association. Some committees are ongoing and are written in the Act because they reflect PEO's core purpose. Others may be temporarily arranged to deal with special projects or issues.

The Act also gives PEO the power to make regulations for administration of PEO (such as fixing the number of professional engineers elected to Council), admission to PEO (such as academic training), and standards of professional engineering practice and ethics (such as setting a code of ethics). The Act permits PEO to make bylaws relating to its administrative and domestic affairs, such as defining the duties of the registrar.

## **Regulation 941/90 of the Act**

Regulation 941 of the *Professional Engineers Act*, amended to O. Reg. 75/15, is a regulation made to provide additional details and guidance for implementation of the Act. For example, the regulation prescribes the process to be followed when electing professional engineers to Council. With respect to professional practice, the regulation prescribes a Code of Ethics, defines negligence and professional misconduct, addresses the requirement for professional engineers to report unsafe situations and unethical practices, and states that all professional engineers shall have a seal and describes its use.

## **Regulation 260/08 of the Act**

Regulation 260 of the *Professional Engineers Act* establishes performance standards for professional engineers, initially relating to general review of construction of a building as provided for in the building code and to demolition. It was expanded in 2014 to include standards for design of certain buildings, engineering evaluation reports under the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*, and environmental site assessments.

## **Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics is a basic guide to professional conduct and imposes duties on the practising professional engineer, with respect to society, employers, clients, colleagues, (including employees and subordinates), the engineering profession, and himself/herself.

Section 77 of Regulation 941 states that it is the duty of the practitioner to act at all times with:

- ◆ fairness and loyalty to the practitioner's associates, employers, clients, subordinates and employees;
- ◆ fidelity to public needs;
- ◆ devotion to high ideals of personal honour and professional integrity;
- ◆ knowledge of developments in the area of professional engineering relevant to any services that are undertaken; and
- ◆ competence in the performance of any professional engineering services that are undertaken.

Through the Code of Ethics, professional engineers have a clearly defined duty to society, which is to regard the duty to public welfare as paramount, above their duties to clients or employers. Their duty to employers involves acting as faithful agents or trustees, regarding client information as confidential and avoiding or disclosing conflicts of interest. Their duty to clients means that professional engineers have to immediately disclose any direct or indirect interest that might prejudice (or appear to prejudice) their professional judgment.