

Pat Quinn P.Eng. Dec. 2020.

PEAK AKA CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

30 years ago engineers in Ontario debated CPD and found it to be without merit. Soon after, CPD was imposed on engineers in Alberta, who in the intervening time have spent many hours and millions of dollars on the scheme, without a single study today that shows any tangible benefit.

PEAK is a version of CPD, promoted by the Continuing Professional Development, Competence and Quality Assurance Task Force (CPDCQATF).

The fact is that neither the public or government are affected by continuing professional development. What they might care about, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Algo Mall or the Ottawa Sound Stage in Ontario, is continuing competency. In Ontario, with some 85,000 registered engineers, a study of our Blue Pages shows years can go by without a single conviction of an engineer for incompetency. Competency is the ability to do a task, acquired by repetition.

Clearly, in the event of a failure attributable to an incompetent engineer, the PEAK programme, under the microscope of an alarmed public, would be revealed for the window dressing that it is. That's why these programmes are not called continuing professional competency programmes. PEAK is a solution in search of a problem and certainly should not be imposed, but subjected to the collective wisdom of our members in a referendum.

REGULATION AND PEO.

Covid 19 is the most disruptive influence in recent history and completes the transition from the age of technology to the age of disruption, the precursors of which were Apple, Google, Amazon, Uber, etc., etc.. By force of these

interventions, society has had to adapt to constant disruption. One of the causalities of disruption is regulation, which by definition is the imposition of rules to control an activity, generally with the object of protecting the public or ensuring public safety. These disruptive companies plough over government regulation with impunity and because of their vast impact and wealth production become impervious to the enforcement of regulators.

Regulation is generally now seen as an unacceptable restriction on the positive disruptive nature of progress in society, and self-regulation is seen as self-protection. A hundred years ago, regulators like PEO could be justified at a time of uneducated masses and paternalistic governance. The use of practitioners of engineering to establish regulatory rules to attempt to ensure that someone designing facilities such as bridges that could impact on public safety had basic qualifications, was defensible.

Today, disruption outpaces regulation, and it is easy to show that PEO has little impact on safety pertaining to the old established disciplines and to all intents and purposes is ignorant of the engineering disciplines emerging nonstop. In this light, PEO is a \$28 million a year drain on the profession and the economy that is unjustified financially for a licensing and accreditation system for demand side legislation. As a comparison, in the US, a comparative economy, licensing is done by States at far less cost, and the enforcement of protection and safety of the public considerations is left to civil and criminal laws. It can be argued that attempting to regulate beyond the requirements of the civil process is counter to the needs of a society where disruptive circumstances are becoming an integral and acceptable part of progress today.

There is no evidence to support a claim that PEO actually, even in the area of established disciplines, has any impact on public safety. It performs diligently as a license provider for limited demand side legislation, but dozens of emerged disciplines in technology in areas of information, software and hardware, artificial intelligence, whatever, are barely on the radar. A building failure is local, a failure of technology can bring down governments or literally shut down world commerce.

Public safety differs from public interest and it is clearly in the public interest to have a vibrant trusted engineering sector in an age rife with technology. Despite PEO's litany of faults and decay, there is much to be saved for the profession by taking urgent steps to secure the survival and modernization of PEO as a public interest force. Also, for many engineers, PEO as a self-governing body represents the soul of the profession, sustains their yearning for belonging, recognition and a sense of community, which in turn has supported PEO from its inception with selfless volunteering. Only through PEO can the earned benefits of the P.Eng brand be maintained and with it the expectation that our profession remains being recognised as a major profession esteemed by the public.

In an age where technology is a primary driver, it is in the public interest to have PEO maintain a role, however circumscribed, promoting positive progressive goals, and an engineering profession committed to high achievement and ethical practices. The profession needs to have the discussion on its future and maintaining a modern role for PEO, and to now find the leadership that can express debated, researched, agreed goals for the future of our profession, and inspire the actions that will achieve them.

