

**Title of Submission:**

# COVID-19 Misinformation in PEO Council Agenda

**Submitted by:**

James Andrew Smith, P.Eng. (*mover*)

David Elfstrom, P.Eng. (*second*)

Joseph Fox, P.Eng.

**Briefly describe the issue:**

In the agenda for the March 2023 PEO Council meeting, Mr. Gregory Wowchuk included a link to a presentation document containing factual errors and conspiracy theories about vaccinations and COVID-19.

Perhaps Mr. Wowchuk did not observe the disclaimer on the Canadian COVID Care Alliance (CCCA) website which states, unequivocally: *“Do not make any decisions based on the information contained or presented on this website without consulting an appropriate professional.”*

Perhaps Mr. Wowchuk was unaware of investigations by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario related to members of the CCCA and associated organizations.

With this submission, we wish to bring these possible oversights to the attention of both Mr. Wowchuk and Council so that rectifying actions can be taken and to, hopefully, ensure that similar oversights do not happen in the future.

## **Summarize the action that you are requesting from Council and how it will address the issue**

Five actions are requested. They are that:

1. the Council motion in question be formally retracted,

2. Council release a formal statement rejecting the inclusion of misinformation in its business,
3. Councillors be required to engage with governance education and/or obtain governance designations prior to participating in Council business,
4. Future potential Councillors receive communications prior to elections regarding desired qualifications and required duties, and
5. In the lead up to elections, members should be clearly notified in writing of candidate status within PEO (e.g. Practising status, disciplinary history, etc.) and any potential conflicts of interest.

## **Cite and briefly summarize any research that supports the proposed action**

The presentation cited in the Council agenda was by the Canadian COVID Care Alliance (CCCA). The co-founder of the CCCA, Dr. Ira Bernstein, has had his licence restricted by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. His associates in Canadian COVID Telehealth and Angels' Heart, Drs. Patrick Phillips and Christopher Hassell, have also been investigated by CPSO. One has been suspended and the other was found to have engaged in "professional misconduct".

1. CCCA Presentation webpage, including disclaimer:  
<https://www.canadiancovidcarealliance.org/media/the-pfizer-inoculations-for-covid-19-more-harm-than-good-2>
2. Separate CCCA disclaimer page:  
<https://www.canadiancovidcarealliance.org/disclaimer>
3. Toronto Star article by Lex Harvey regarding CCCA, Dr. Ira Bernstein, the presentation cited by Mr. Wowchuk, and the CPSO investigations:  
<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/01/21/toronto-physician-co-founder-of-canadian-covid-care-alliance-under-investigation-by-medical-regulator.html>
4. CPSO page on Dr. Ira Bernstein :  
<https://doctors.cpso.on.ca/DoctorDetails/Ira-Paul-Bernstein/0048404-62382?type=nu&term=62382>
5. Tribunal case summary against Dr. Christopher Hassell:  
<https://www.canlii.org/en/on/onpsdt/doc/2022/2022onpsdt46/2022onpsdt46.html#document>
6. CPSO page on Dr. Christopher Hassell:  
<https://doctors.cpso.on.ca/DoctorDetails/Hassell-Christopher---Hilton/0026114-30937>
7. CPSO page on Dr. Patrick Phillips:  
<https://doctors.cpso.on.ca/DoctorDetails/Phillips-Patrick---Brian/0310033-109364>

## **How the proposed action will contribute to serving and protecting the public interest**

Just as we require that PEO members demonstrate knowledge, skill and judgment in the undertaking of their professional responsibilities, Councillors should endeavor to do likewise in Council. Supporting documentation used within Council business should be reasonably free of error and, when errors are discovered or pointed out, Council should engage in efforts to rectify any and all affected items of business.

One only needs to look to the recent actions of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to see how another self-regulating body deals with misinformation related to COVID-19 in order to protect the public interest. Through its investigative and enforcement actions, the CPSO has shown itself to be worthy of emulation. PEO should follow the example set by CPSO and review how we can improve ourselves, both in the internal policy context but also, if the need arises, in the professional engineering enforcement context.

## **Identify any legal considerations that may affect Council's ability to implement the proposed action.**

There are no legal considerations that we are aware of that would prevent Council from implementing the proposed actions.

## **Any additional information**

None.

## **List any attachments**

Video link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/14LG51sApGRhmcsX2KQyjXD2AyVef5-Ei/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14LG51sApGRhmcsX2KQyjXD2AyVef5-Ei/view?usp=share_link)

Member #1 (name/signature)



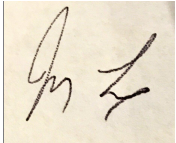
James Andrew Smith, P.Eng. (*Mover*)

Member #2 (name/signature)



David Elfstrom, P.Eng. (*Secunder*)

Member #3 (name/signature)



Joseph Fox, P.Eng.

Date: April 19, 2023