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# Media Release

## Professional Engineers Ontario Condemns Government Reversal on Legislative Commitment to Improve Workplace Health and Safety

Toronto – (June 13, 2013) – Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), the licensing and regulating body for professional engineering in Ontario, has grave concerns over a decision by the Ontario government to reverse a three-year legislative commitment that would have helped to ensure a healthier and safer workplace.

Within the *Open for Business Act*, passed in October 2010 by the same provincial government, was a provision to repeal section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, which enabled certain acts of engineering to be carried out by non-engineers in a manufacturing workplace. On Wednesday, the government abandoned a previously announced proclamation date of September 1, 2013 for the repeal of this "industrial exception" to take effect.

"We are shocked the Ontario government has taken this course of action," said PEO President Annette Bergeron, MBA, P.Eng. "This is an important workplace health and safety measure that would close a serious regulatory gap, and allow workers, under protection of law, to refuse to do work that they may not be qualified to do."

"The provincial government's troubling decision not to proclaim the provision to repeal the exception allows engineering work by unlicensed and unaccountable individuals to continue," she said. "It also leaves a gap in PEO's ability to regulate acts of engineering and puts some workers in a position where they are required by their employers to perform work they may not be qualified to do."

Ontario is the only province in Canada with such an "industrial exception" and its elimination would have brought Ontario in line with national standards.

"PEO objects, in the strongest possible terms, to the government's reversal on this important issue," said PEO's Acting Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Michael Price, MBA, P.Eng., FEC.

"Manufacturing accident and fatality rates in Ontario remain significantly higher than other provinces and the government had the opportunity to enhance workplace health and safety. The repeal would have been implemented without any expense to taxpayers and little cost to employers, since PEO had committed to offsetting almost half of the licensing fee of anyone required to be newly licensed as a result of the repeal, and would have taken many manufacturing workers out of harm's way. PEO had also put in place a regulation to enable employers to transition over a one-year period. Regrettably, the government chose to ignore these factors."

Price also noted that the most recent Ministry of Labour fines under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* have averaged \$105,000 each, while WSIB costs in Ontario are in the billions of dollars.

"Ontario has a long and proud history of making improvements to workplace health and safety, at modest costs to employers," added Ms. Bergeron. "We will continue to monitor workplace accidents as they are reported, and believe we have a responsibility consistent with our mandate as guardians of public safety where engineering is concerned to let the people of Ontario know when incidents involving unlicensed workers engaged in acts of engineering have occurred.

"PEO licence holders will be looking to meet with their members of the legislature in the coming weeks to share our serious concerns with this decision, including the MPPs in key manufacturing communities like Windsor, London and Ottawa."

**About Professional Engineers Ontario**

Through the *Professional Engineers Act*, PEO governs over 80,000 licence and certificate holders and regulates professional engineering in Ontario to serve and protect the public. Professional engineering safeguards life, health, property, economic interests, the public welfare and the environment. Professional engineers can be identified by the P.Eng. after their names. Visit [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca).

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