



**Professional Engineers**  
Ontario

## **EQUITY AND DIVERSITY**

### **POSITION PAPER**

#### **Equity and Diversity Committee**

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PEO must be seen by its members, staff, and other stakeholders to be a progressive organization that embraces the values of respect and dignity for all persons. To this end, the Association should have a formal position regarding equity and diversity for its stakeholders. This position document is about the processes and methods of carrying out activities, not about the criteria to become a Professional Engineer. No aspect of this position document or the activities arising from it may contravene or otherwise circumvent the provisions of the Professional Engineers Act or its Regulations.

## **1. ISSUES:**

- 1.1 PEO does not have a formally documented policy regarding equity and diversity.
- 1.2 The current demographic of PEO's staff, volunteer base, and its general membership might create a perception that members of one or more of the identifiable groups in Ontario's population have been excluded from the structural life of PEO<sup>i</sup>.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

### **2.1 *Equity***

Equity is the result of a comprehensive pro-active strategy designed to ensure that all members of society have fair and equal access to opportunities. Equity initiatives may include removing or neutralizing barriers that might limit the participation of individual stakeholders in PEO processes, procedures or activities.

### **2.2 *Diversity***

As a working definition, the Equity and Diversity Committee considers that diversity refers to any characteristic that makes people different from each other. These differences include gender, race, age, ethno-cultural background, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, education, class, marital status, family status, as well as any other characteristic that shapes an individual's attitudes, behaviours, and perspective. Each individual's abilities and needs in the work place can differ according to visible or invisible variables<sup>ii</sup>. Diversity is about respect for differences among individual stakeholders, and during interactions with identifiable groups.

## **3. OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 PEO will develop a formal equity and diversity policy that will be actively reflected in all relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.2 PEO's positions on equity and diversity will be clearly communicated to all staff, members, and other stakeholders.
- 3.3 All regulatory procedures for licensing, complaints, discipline and enforcement, and all PEO programs, meetings and communications with members, the public and other stakeholders will reflect the values set out in PEO's formal Equity and Diversity Policy.
- 3.4 Members of the diverse groups will be encouraged to consider engineering as a career and profession.

## 4. RATIONALE

- 4.1 Increasing diversity through representation of minority and under-represented groups is more than a question of fairness for organizations. It helps them do their work better and is essential to understanding and voicing concerns that are central to the organization's mandate. In practical terms, a homogeneous organization is unlikely to draw upon the fullest possible range of skills and support from members and staff, and or meet the needs of a diverse clientele.
- 4.2 Representation of some identifiable groups within the engineering profession is not keeping pace with corresponding representation in other areas of society. For example, women represent 50.6% of the population of Ontario closely matched by 2001 post-secondary education data: 56% of persons holding a bachelor's degree and 52% holding master's degrees were women.<sup>iii</sup> Despite their equal participation in post-secondary education, women are under-represented in faculties of engineering. In 2005, only 17.9% of all engineering students in Ontario were women.<sup>iv</sup> Previously participation was even lower, resulting in the current percentage of women licensed in Ontario: 7.5%.<sup>v</sup>
- 4.3 Women have been used as an example because the statistics are available; however, it is possible to observe that First Nations and visible minorities are under-represented. Other groups are less simple to identify. Similar data for all constituent groups of PEO stakeholders could be used to identify specific areas where aspects of an equity and diversity policy should be developed, and where immediate corrective action is needed to comply with policy changes.
- 4.4 In December of 2004, the EDC undertook research and received the survey report, entitled *Towards Fairness*, of the equity and diversity practices of twelve Canadian regulators and professional associations. Most of the organizations had much the same character as was later mirrored by PEO, e.g. associations that have special equity and diversity programs rarely have procedures in place to analyze the impact or to evaluate their programs. The special equity and diversity measures developed by these professions are primarily for foreign trained applicants for licensure. These measures have often been encouraged or initiated by government programs and funding. One notable exception whose activities could be considered as a model was the Law Society of Upper Canada. In 2003 LSUC stated that its commitment to equity and diversity would focus on embedding equity and diversity principles within operational departments of the Society and the programs, policies and services to members, students, the public and employees. The Society's actions started with a formal commitment to organizational change. The Society created an Equity Department to play a leadership role in helping make both law and the practice of law reflective of all the peoples of Ontario. A significant equity and diversity section<sup>vi</sup> on the Law Society's website outlines the information and activities that show this commitment. E.g. statistics are posted about *The Changing Face of the Legal Profession*.<sup>vii</sup> "Enrollment in the bar admission process: 2002 – 2006" notes that "Percentages obtained from applications for the bar admission process in 2002 through 2006, in which applicants voluntarily self-identified."
- 4.5 *Towards Fairness II* is a report on the scan of PEO carried out in early 2005 to identify the current programs and practices that demonstrate support for E&D

values and principles. This scan indicated that there is no explicit or implicit E&D policy in effect at PEO; there is a general need among staff to clarify and ensure a common understanding of what equity and diversity means and what a fully implemented equity and diversity policy might accomplish. Subsequent consultations with the volunteer leadership of PEO demonstrated that, of the laudable programs and policies that are in place, it is not clear that they are not well understood by staff, volunteers or members.

- 4.6 The core challenge for PEO is to create an organizational culture that fosters critical self-reflection, where we are all accountable for learning about and appreciating differences among our employees, applicants, members and partners. Equity and diversity awareness and capacity building is an ongoing, evolving, learning process for all PEO stakeholders.

## **5. PEO POSITION**

- 5.1 PEO's environment is one in which all stakeholders are treated equitably and where members of diverse groups are recognized, welcomed and valued.
- 5.2 PEO is committed to creating a culture of shared values and behaviours consistent with the mission and core values of the association. This culture will be characterized by:
  - 5.2.1 Respect for the diversity of gender, race, culture, ethnicity, age, abilities, religion and sexual orientation, which is demonstrated by inclusive practices and policies in relation to governance, volunteer service and employment.
  - 5.2.2 Open, responsive and respectful communication with all staff, volunteers, members, applicants, and other stakeholders in the communities served by PEO.
  - 5.2.3 Collaboration and partnership with the community in interactions regarding issues of equity and diversity, as well as with staff, members, and other stakeholders.
- 5.3 PEO will ensure that equity and diversity considerations are fully integrated in its operations and measured through research, and monitoring of training and development, cultural interpretation and community partnerships.

## **6. IMPACT ON PEO OF IMPLEMENTATION OF A FORMAL E&D POLICY.**

- 6.1 By developing and implementing a formal E&D policy, PEO will be seen as a leader among Canadian technical regulatory bodies.
- 6.2 By developing and implementing a formal E&D policy, PEO will be seen as socially responsible to the full spectrum of its members and staff as well as to the population of Ontario.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 That PEO develop a policy document on equity and diversity.
- 7.2 That PEO Council demonstrate leadership regarding equity and diversity, including review of its own processes and training programs and seek new ways to ensure the organization is responsible and answerable to its members, staff and stakeholders on these matters.

- 7.3 That, through the EDC, PEO develop an initial 3 year equity and diversity action plan that includes:
- 7.3.1 Data collection.
    - 7.3.1.1 Member survey and self-identification.
    - 7.3.1.2 Functionality review of current membership database.
  - 7.3.2 Communication plan involving materials in a variety of formats.
  - 7.3.3 Review of policies and recommendations for identifying if changes are needed.
  - 7.3.4 Mechanisms to monitor awareness, understanding, compliance and effectiveness of the equity and diversity policy.
  - 7.3.5 Assessment of impact of change initiatives e.g. training and development, cultural interpretation and community partnerships.
- 7.4 *Training/Orientation*  
That PEO deliver ongoing information, training and resource support to help all staff, volunteers, committee and board members develop capacity to address equity and diversity issues and understand their rights and responsibilities.  
That such training be a fundamental part of orientation for new volunteers and staff.
- 7.5 *Governance*  
That PEO incorporate equity and diversity provisions in its organizational decision-making, priority-setting activities, visioning, strategic planning and budgeting.
- 7.6 *Goals and Accountability*  
That PEO require that committees and task forces incorporate specific, measurable equity and diversity provisions into their annual work and program plans.  
e.g. That plans for outreach to prospective licensees be analysed for sensitivity to the culture of Ontario's First Nations people. That such activities be reported on in annual program reviews.  
That PEO hold staff and volunteers accountable for their roles in implementing these plans through performance management expectations and benchmarks.
- 7.7 *Outreach*  
That PEO actively solicit viewpoints from diverse groups within PEO and in the communities it serves and seeks to serve.  
That PEO's activities in recruitment and retention of staff, volunteers and prospective/current licensees have a specific focus on achieving equity and increasing diversity within the engineering profession.  
That PEO identify and work to remove barriers that limit access to its services and programs in areas such as information dissemination, human resources, physical space, and cultural difference.

## **8. DESIRED RESULTS**

### *Qualities of Outcomes for the Organization*

- 8.1 Implementation of an equity and diversity plan will be broad and inclusive.

- 8.2 The equity and diversity policy and action plan will affect every part of PEO, including the structures, systems, plans, behaviours and values of the association, and will lead to an environment that reflects and is sensitive to equity and diversity.
- 8.3 The efforts of staff and volunteers to change PEO's culture and promote diversity will be recognized, appreciated and validated.
- 8.4 The activities of staff and volunteers, along with policies and communications tools, will promote an environment free of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, harassment and marginalization for all stakeholders.
- 8.5 Everyone working at or on behalf of PEO will have a respectful, positive working environment.

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i EDC was mandated by PEO Council in 2004 to ensure that there are no groups excluded from the structural life of PEO and to communicate PEO's clear commitment to the values and principles of equity and diversity.

ii This definition is consistent with the *Ontario Human Rights Code* that protects against harassment and discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, same-sex partnership status or disability.

iii <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/990122/d990122.htm> Accessed December 7, 2006

iv Data from CCPE.

v PEO membership data.

vi <http://www.lsuc.on.ca/about/b/equity/> Accessed December 13, 2006

vii <http://www.lsuc.on.ca/news/a/fact/changing/> Accessed December 13, 2006