

PEO should shed all non-regulatory activities

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I am a relatively new engineering practitioner, having received my LEL in August 2017; however, I have been practising in my area of expertise (air quality regulatory issues) in Ontario for almost 20 years and have been involved in several professional organizations along the way (Environmental Business Network, ONEIA, AWMA-OS, etc.). Having gone through the process and having been involved with PEO (and recently joining OSPE) for about a year, I now see the value of such a professional licensing system.

However, after coming into PEO and OSPE with a fresh pair of eyes, I've noted some oddities I'd like to comment on and humbly put forth some suggestions:

1. For an organization whose sole purpose is regulating the profession, it seems rather odd that PEO is involved in so many non-regulatory activities. For example, although I view the local chapter system as valuable, why is this not being organized by OSPE rather than PEO? Local chapters provide valuable activities, but they are not regulatory in nature.
2. It seems to me that PEO should shed all non-regulatory activities. Hopefully, that would free up resources to devote to core regulatory activities. For example, the complaints and investigation process is extremely slow—likely due to a lack of resources there. There also seems to be a lack of proactive enforcement by PEO. Where

are the staff that actively go out and conduct inspections to ensure that engineering is not being practised without a licence? Freed-up resources may also allow PEO to engage more professional staff for certain duties rather than rely on volunteers, who may not always be readily available, for example, when interviewing new licence applicants. In this vein, and in my own field, I think PEO should argue that air/noise assessments for Land Use Compatibility Assessments (under the *Planning Act*) and for Environmental Assessments (under the *Environmental Assessment Act*) ought to be defined as engineering, and that such assessments should require a licensed practitioner's signature and seal.

3. With all non-regulatory activities shifted to OSPE, there would be much more impetus for engineers to join OSPE. This, through increased membership fees, would also provide OSPE the resources to manage all new activities (e.g. local chapter organization). Perhaps OSPE membership should be mandatory for all engineers?
4. With PEO focused on its regulatory mandate, there can be no accusations leveled at PEO due to conflicts of interest; governing engineering versus promoting engineering. Agriculture Canada went through a similar exercise in the late 1990s, when the regulatory activities were separated into CFIA after claims of conflict of interest levelled against Agriculture Canada at the time.

I submit these observations and suggestions not to criticize, but because I see two good organizations that can be made better, perhaps into great organizations. To that end I am willing to put my shoulder to wheel and lend assistance in any such efforts.

How will Pikangikum thrive in the long term?

Konrad Brenner, P.Eng.,
Ramara, ON

Regarding "Pikangikum: A northern Ontario First Nations community in transition" by Adam Sidsworth (*Engineering Dimensions*, November/December 2018, p. 35): The physical improvements achieved in Pikangikum by the three engineers and described by Sidsworth are impressive and laudable. This work will improve the lives of the people in the village. What is missing in the article is a hint of how, in the long run, sufficient employment opportunities will be created to build an economically viable and socially healthy village.

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David Grant is a hero

Ross Turek, P.Eng.,
Whitby, ON

Retired Manitoba engineer David Grant, P.Eng. (Manitoba), is a national hero; however, readers would not know this from reading your report (“Retired Manitoba engineer faces disciplinary hearing over amber light comments,” *Engineering Dimensions*, November/December 2018, p.14).

You omit that Winnipeg is the only city in the world to have a four-second static amber time policy, regardless of the speed limit, with the higher speed intersections producing 1100 per cent greater violation and collisions than the slower speed intersections, where four seconds is adequate. All other cities increase amber time with higher speed—due obviously to the laws of physics. Quote: “He believes a four-second amber light often is not enough time for a vehicle to completely clear the intersection before the light turns red.” Don’t you believe this? Region of Durham Engineering and the rest of the world gets this; see the YouTube video below:

Amber (Yellow) Light Durations in 80 km/h zones, Durham Region, Ontario:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CK_ZcUtvE

Nothing could be of greater safety concern than intersecting traffic, yet our profession is dragging David Grant through hell? How does this look in the public eye? How does this showcase our profession? I would expect our profession would support this whistle blower, not trip him up. Shame.

The north represents opportunity to innovate

Peter Broad, P.Eng.,
London, ON

My thanks to Bob White, Irving LeBlanc, David Steeves, Tori-Lea White and other engineers who work in northern Ontario. It is always difficult to separate between who an engineer is and the work we do. The role of lauding engineers for prestigious effort lies within the bailiwick of OSPE. However, as a regulator, PEO’s concern is with public protection and thus it has a duty to recognize areas of public deficiency and enhance efforts to eradicate such problems. Thus, my thanks also to associate editors Marika Bigongiari and Adam Sidsworth for highlighting the special challenges that are faced by those who divide the four seasons into almost winter, mid-winter, deep-winter and black-fly season.

Northern Ontario is certainly a region where engineering challenges prevail. Twenty-nine southern PEO chapters are crammed into just 12 per cent of this province, while just seven chapters share the remaining 88 per cent, though the north does have five of Ontario’s 20 universities, including the only francophone centre d’enseignement supérieur.

Internet access is limited in over three dozen northern communities living without hydro, and our famed Trans-Canada Highway is blocked far more frequently than I-90, so practising engineering presents its own challenges.

Rail reaches further north than the paved highway and provides a link to Ontario’s only saltwater port, Moosonee. Ice roads require one metre (40 inches) of ice, so climate change may make the north even more remote, rather than bringing accessibility.

Sudbury’s landscape was once considered a suitable training ground for lunar explorers, but environmental awareness and revegetation is what they now offer. Despite harsh weather, the north innovates!

That small dot between the cliffs of the Sleeping Giant—that graces the cover of *Engineering Dimensions’* November/December 2018 issue and was voted number one of seven Canadian wonders—is Silver Islet, where mining began in 1845. Ojibway legend claims that it was this discovery by white men that caused the Giant Nanabijou to be turned into stone.

North America’s Great Depression was ended by engineers and mega-projects. This opportunity still exists. Perhaps more southern chapters and communities should twin with northerners and help provide fundamental engineering services and gain further insights to this remarkable area.

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