

Why am I running for President Elect?

I am proud to be a Professional Engineer in the Province of Ontario and of having volunteered with the PEO for over 20 years. There are however issues that I am concerned about and want to address:

1. I want to ensure that the recent changes to PEOs operating structure works for everyone.

PEO's council has recently completed a major restructuring of how it operates. The conclusion of which I would have expected there to be an opportunity for the membership to provide feedback on how these changes are affecting them, to ensure that the new structures are working for everyone. Since having left council at the completion of my last term as regional councillor however I have seen no such communication. I want to correct this.

2. I want to address PEO's licencing practice under FARPACTA

When the province passed FARPACTA, PEO complied by essentially cutting out new applicants loose and making it necessary for them to have everything in place before applying. This, I feel has been a huge disservice to, not only the applications, but to the existing membership and the profession as a whole. Although this new approach makes the processing of licence application much easier it does nothing to make access to the P.Eng. licence better but does introduce potential unintended consequences that have yet to surface. Before FARPACTA, the PEOs position was to try and get new engineering graduates in the system as early as possible, so as to encourage them and help them through the system while they were still enthusiastic. PEOs approach to FARPACTA has reversed that policy, requiring new applicants to complete their 4-years experience before applying. This does nothing to improve access to the licence (which was the overall intent of FARPACTA) but does give applicants time to find loopholes to avoid seeking a licence altogether, effectively creating an underground engineering industry in which PEO will have a very difficult time overseeing. I want to address this to ensure that integrity of the profession remains unaffected and make the qualification process easier for all.

3. I want to improve our issues with member engagement.

Member engagement at PEO has always been a problem. If you look at the statistics posted on the PEO website for the last five years you will see that we haven't done better than 15% of eligible members voting. You will also see that these numbers are still in a steady decline. As I see it, there are only two reasons for this. Either 1; the membership doesn't feel that their vote means anything or; 2: the membership generally doesn't care. Both of these answers should be equally concerning. We are a profession of problem solvers. If the membership feels that they are disconnected from those on council who are deciding on policy, we run the risk of those members eventually viewing having a P.Eng. licence as problem that needs to be solved, making PEOs mandate much harder to fulfil. If, however, the majority of them membership simply doesn't care, then there is a lack of interest in the profession, again making PEOs mandate much harder to fulfil. I want to address this problem in a three-step process. Inspire: Motive are members. I want to approach OSPE and get their assistance in dealing with this problem but developing an aggressive public awareness campaign on the nature of Engineering. At the same time, I want to start a dialog with out members in a series of town hall meetings, either in person and virtually, to give them a forum to discuss what is a priority for them. Enquire: Using the town hall meetings, I am proposing also gives us a chance to find out from the membership how they feel the PEO is meeting its obligations, both the membership and to the general public. Improve: I intend to bring

the results of these discussion to council as part of the president's report so that they these views can be used for future policy decisions and address any concerns brought up.

4. I want to ensure that PEO stays ahead of emerging technologies and develop guidelines, with cooperation with industry professionals and schools.

With the introduction of Artificial Intelligence, we are now at a point where many of our traditional engineering roles can be done by computer. Where does the responsibility for this work lie? What safeguards must be in place to ensure that public safety is being appropriately addressed? How far should we responsibly allow the development of AI proceed? These all sound like question that would normally be answered by governments however these are questions that the we need to get ahead of to ensure that we are still able to meet our mandate effectively. I am proposing to set up guidelines and, as necessary changes to the Professional Engineers Act to ensure that as a profession, we are not left behind with all of these emerging changes.

So, to summarize: Why and I running for President Elect. My simple answer is that I want to make a difference. I want to give our members voices back and make sure that council hears what your priorities are and acts accordingly. I want to bring pride back to the Engineer and ensure that our profession is being managed in a way that benefits us all. The recent changes to the PEO were intended to make it a modern regulator. I want to make sure that it is an effective and responsive regulator also. With your help I can. If you wish to discuss these, or any other issues, please feel free to contact me at: wkershaw@kpaeng.ca or by visiting me on facebook at: @ **WK4PEOPRES**