

1. Engineering Profession Past Present Future Executive Summary

Engineers form an important role for a society; they innovate and build everything a society relies on every day. Recognizing this fact, Ontario regulated engineers to ensure that this critical profession is used for the betterment of society. Hence PEO was formed as an association of engineers that was given the powers to self-regulate the engineering profession. Similar regulation schemes are used for other professions, such as doctors and lawyers. Self-regulation, as implemented by PEO worked well in the past, but does not serve present needs. This is due to the following reasons,

1. The sheer pace at which knowledge is increasing. Currently existing licensing structure does not encourage continuing education.
2. Also, detachment of mainstream engineers from the organization meant that only vested interest groups participate in the board. Council election policies and process exacerbates the issue greatly.
3. PEO is failing in its primary mandate to license the practice of all Engineering in Ontario. Licensing process is outdated and only categorizes people into a limited number of engineering fields. The majority of engineering disciplines today do not enjoy the privileges of a proper Licence.

Government has stepped in multiple times to force PEO to change its course of action.

Recently this has happened after government demanded continuing education

requirements for Professional Engineers after the Elliot Lake Mall collapse incident. PEO

dragged its feet on the issue and the government had to threat dissolution of self-regulation

for PEO to change its position. This situation is not tenable and both sanctity and reputation of the profession needs to be protected from further harm.

The continuing education issue is currently being addressed by the PEAK program, but it is voluntary for now. There are lot of good examples from other jurisdictions and regulatory bodies that PEO can refer to. Term limits have been recently set by the PEO council to avoid similar faces every year. Also, council election policies have been overhauled recently with a focus on encouraging candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Outstanding issues include outdated licensing approach as well as resistance to change. It is acknowledged that PEO is bound by the Professional Engineers Act and hence has limited options, but we assert that small changes are possible to make the process more fair, accountable and streamlined. These changes include,

1. Judging competency based on experience rather than on degree obtained from university. Currently, experience outside of degree specialty is ignored.
2. Clarify requirements for experience record and how to write it. PEO does try to clarify what it expects to see in experience record, but it can be general/vague at times.
3. Make the application process more streamlined by giving online status updates.
4. Reduce the current wait time of 6 months for application processing.

In short, PEO has been making positive strides towards a more transparent, accountable regulatory body. We emphasize though that a board level change needs to happen, if the profession needs to maintain its ability to self-regulate.