

Natural Science Societies Reach Tentative Agreement with PEO Regarding Exemption Joint Communiqué

(Dated 2010 September 3)

Over the past week we, as representatives of the scientific societies listed below, have been dealing with a proposed amendment to the definition of “practice of professional engineering” in the Ontario Professional Engineers Act through the Open for Business Act, 2010 (Bill 68). This Act removes an existing exemption clause for natural scientists. A letter-writing campaign resulted in over 600 letters expressing concern about this matter being received by the Ontario Attorney General's Office. As a result of this, the Attorney-General's Office raised the matter directly with the Professional Engineers of Ontario (PEO). On September 2, 2010, a CAP-led team of representatives from CAP, ACPO, CSC, CMOS, and COMP, on behalf of the natural scientists, met with the PEO's President, Diane Freeman, and CEO/Registrar, Kim Allen, to discuss this matter.

As a result of this discussion, an agreement in principle was reached between our societies and the PEO to introduce an exemption for natural scientists by modifying the Regulations in the Professional Engineers Act. These modifications will define a class of persons -- “Natural Scientists” -- that are exempt from being prevented by the Act from carrying out any act (including management) that requires the application of scientific principles, competently performed. The authorization for recognition of individuals that are in the category of “Natural Scientists” will reside with the respective scientific societies covered under this agreement. This agreement must still be ratified by the Councils of the various parties. Implementation of these procedures will be worked out by our respective societies as soon as possible. The Attorney General's Office of Ontario will be monitoring developments in this matter until an agreement is concluded to the satisfaction of all parties.

The memorandum of agreement between the PEO and our societies is under review by the different groups to make sure it captured all of the points agreed to and should be finalized on Tuesday. It will be made available on our website as soon as it has been signed off by the parties involved.

Although this issue is particular to the province of Ontario, it is potentially precedent-setting, with implications across Canada. We believe that the proposed changes will greatly strengthen the practice of natural science, and we would not have reached this point were it not for the successful letter-writing campaign and the cooperation of the PEO and the Attorney-General's Office.

Our sincere thanks are sent to everyone who took the time to get involved. We will keep our respective communities informed of developments as they progress.

Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP)
Association of the Chemical Profession of Ontario (ACPO)
Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA)
Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (CMOS)
Canadian Organization of Medical Physicists (COMP)
Canadian Society for Chemistry (CSC) Chemical Institute of Canada (CIC)