

# Foundation for Education increases outreach

by Stephanie Wei

The Ontario Professional Engineers Foundation for Education has elected a new president to steer it through a coming period of growth. George R. Comrie, P.Eng., was elected by the board of directors of the foundation at their August 2001 meeting. Comrie is senior West Central Regional Councillor for PEO Council, and has been active in education outreach on behalf of the profession for nearly 30 years. Appointed Councillor Ken Lopez, P.Eng., was elected vice-president of the foundation. Other members of the board are Colin Cantlie, P.Eng., Brenda Caplan (secretary), Stephen Jack, P.Eng., Nick Monsour, P.Eng., and Linda Prince, CA (treasurer).

The foundation is a non-profit, charitable organization established by PEO as an independent entity. It provides scholarships to engineering students to encourage students to pursue careers in engineering. The foundation makes funds available to each engineering school, which awards the scholarships according to criteria established by the foundation. The scholarships are financed through donations from Ontario professional

engineers. Donors contribute by indicating their support on PEO fee invoices and adding their contribution to their annual fee payment. In 2000, professional engineers donated over \$65,000 to the foundation.

The foundation has recently approved increasing the value of scholarships to students within accredited engineering programs in Ontario.

The scholarships "establish a connection between the students and the engineering profession," states Comrie. "We don't want students to just go to an engineering school and get a job in engineering; we want them to be part of our self-governing profession, which has been given the right to title and practice to protect public safety. The scholarships are worth more than just the dollar value, they encourage students to identify with the profession that we hope they will join."

In addition to reaching out to students, the scholarships serve to reinforce the profession's support of high standards and professional competence. Comrie believes competence has two elements: knowledge and responsibility. The foundation rewards academic achievement

and gives students "a sense of belonging to a group of people who have gone before them people who care and accept the responsibility of being part of the profession."

The new president also sees the work of the foundation as building on the partnership between the engineering schools and the profession. Comrie believes that "the scholarships are a tangible reinforcement of how the profession supports excellence in engineering education." As part of the foundation's work in reaching out to the universities, board member Nick Monsour, travelled to campuses across Ontario over the past year to gauge the schools' reaction to the foundation's scholarship program. On his recommendation, the foundation recently raised the level of entrance scholarships from \$1200 to \$1500, and the level of undergraduate scholarships from \$600 to \$1000. The \$100 payment to Gold Medal recipients will be eliminated.

The foundation will need to increase the level of donations to fund the increased scholarship levels. To address this need, a new communication plan has been drafted, which Comrie hopes will make more professional engineers aware of the foundation's important work.

The board is also currently engaged in a comprehensive review of the foundation's objectives and programs to ensure their continuing relevance and viability. "We are looking at how we can increase the scope and impact of our activities. We are also considering how to expand our membership so that it better represents all stakeholders in education outreach within the profession," says Comrie. "Eventually, the foundation will have to be self-sustaining and independent of PEO's operations."

To combine a donation to the foundation with payment of PEO's annual fee, look for the tick-off box on the PEO invoice and add the donation to your fee payment. Donations can also be made directly at any time by sending them to the Professional Engineers Foundation for Education, c/o Professional Engineers Ontario, 25 Sheppard Avenue West, Suite 1000, North York, ON M2N 6S9.