

Jun 13, 2022

Municipal Councils of Ontario

Subject: The Retention of Professional Engineers at Ontario Municipalities

The purpose of this letter is to stress the importance that municipal engineers play in the successful operation of cities, counties, towns, and townships across Ontario.

The Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) is a non-profit association representing the municipal engineering field in Ontario. We have a membership base of over 1,000 municipal engineers across Ontario who are employed as professional engineers at Ontario municipalities and other provincial agencies serving in the engineering/public works field.

We advocate for sustainable municipal infrastructure practices and our members provide significant input into the development of processes, standards, and specifications for use in municipal infrastructure systems such as drinking water delivery, wastewater collection and treatment, storm water management, waste management and transportation systems.

The MEA has been the proponent for the *Municipal Class Environmental Assessment* process since the mid-1980s. We are also a co-proponent of *Ontario Provincial Standards & Specifications* that many Ontario municipalities use when planning for and tendering municipal engineering projects.

There are a number of examples in various current legislation, where the use of a professional engineer is referenced. Key tasks include roles in transportation, natural resources, health and safety, consumer services, environment, tourism, agriculture, climate change, and energy. It is essential that municipalities consider the appointment of professional engineers, especially within the areas of engineering and public works, to afford municipal councils the appropriate due diligence toward public safety. Unfortunately, we are observing a concerning trend where this is no longer the case.

Professional engineers, through education and practical experience requirements, have the knowledge and foresight to not only understand the 'how' of an issue, but also understand the 'why' behind issues as well. Professional engineers are licensed to practice in Ontario through the *Professional Engineers Act* and are bound by statutory accountabilities, which includes a code of ethics. Under this code, professional engineers are required to act at all times with fidelity to public needs; professional engineers regard their duty to public welfare and safety as paramount.

Professional engineers also provide significant value to municipalities through their understanding of risk management, which assists in lowering exposure to claims against a municipality. With insurance premiums rising every year, it is prudent that municipalities appoint a professional engineer to guide these decision-making processes.

As of December 31, 2019, there were 57,134 practicing professional engineers licensed and practicing in the Province of Ontario. Of this number, only 136 professional engineers work for municipalities with a population of 50,000 or less. This represents only 0.2% of licensed and practicing Ontario Professional Engineers being employed by Ontario municipalities serving populations of less than 50,000. Many of these smaller municipalities have a Public Works/Engineering Department head and would benefit by appointing a Professional Engineer.

The vast majority of professional engineers working at Ontario municipalities are employed by larger urban centres having a population greater than 50,000.

For smaller municipalities that do not have the financial resources to employ a full-time professional engineer on their staff, the MEA recommends the appointment of a professional engineer through a licensed consulting firm so that your municipality may meet the needs only a professional engineer can provide.

We would also like to take this opportunity to promote membership in the MEA. There are Ontario municipalities that currently do not have representation in the MEA. If you have a professional engineer(s) on staff and they are not MEA members, we encourage your municipality to have them apply. The MEA offers members access to knowledge, learning and the ability to stay up to date with current industry practices. It truly is great value for a very nominal fee.

On behalf of the MEA, we thank you for taking time to review this letter. Should you have any questions, please reach out to the MEA's Executive Director, Dan Cozzi, P. Eng. at dan.cozzi@municipalengineers.on.ca.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Cole', is written above a horizontal line.

**Jason Cole, P. Eng.,
MEA President 2021 - 2022**