



WHO'S LEADING?

I read with considerable dismay Patrick Quinn's Viewpoint article in the September/October 2011 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* (p. 25). I listened to the audio tapes of the beginning of the meeting of PEO council on May 7 and, to be quite frank, no one should take any credit for what took place. This was a most disruptive, non-productive, partisan start to any board/council meeting that I have heard. I have been involved in one way or another with hundreds of them. PEO council is the body charged with governing the organization.

I am an engineer, and a reasonably experienced one at that. I have also authored a book entitled *Chairman of the Board: A Practical Guide* (John Wiley and Sons, 2002), and I have presented frequently to many boards of directors, including twice to members of PEO council, on the role and responsibilities of directors, particularly of volunteer organizations.

There seems to be confusion today about how council should operate. When I read President Adams' message "Three months of progress" (p. 3), I was impressed. Here was a man exercising some vision, outlining strategic direction and seeking, in my humble opinion, to provide that essential ingredient of any organization president-leadership. One may not agree with everything he said. Ensuing debate is an essential part of the democratic process. At least he provided some stimulus for council to consider.

Why was the newly and democratically elected president challenged? What heinous crime had he committed? Why did the majority of council find it necessary to humiliate him? What had happened that so many agendas had been distributed? Where was the

consultative process in putting the agenda together in the first place? What part does the staff of PEO play in the essential run-up to any council meeting?

If the freely and democratically elected PEO president is not to be allowed to "preside," what is his role to be? After all, the president is intended to be *primus inter pares*—first among equals. He, like every councillor, has but one vote. If he is not to be allowed to preside, how can he provide leadership and help set the direction? Someone has to be "out in front" and if not the president then certainly not a chair, however charismatic, whose role, as another councillor stated, is to "facilitate." Good board chairs cannot just be referees keeping the score, which is what a facilitator does. And you cannot run an organization by holding referenda of the membership either. Councillors and directors are elected by the members to govern, not pass the buck.

By far the most important, boards of volunteer organizations must remember that they operate under an essential principle—that of collective responsibility. There has to be consensus in decision-making. PEO must not be allowed to develop into a confrontational organization. Not only is this counterproductive, but it does not serve the interests of its members. It cannot consist of partisan groups with different political agendas. It exists to serve the profession of engineering, period.

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CALL TO ACTION

I have just read Patrick Quinn's Viewpoint piece in the September/October 2011 edition of *Engineering Dimensions* (p. 25).

I am shocked and appalled to hear that government representatives have infiltrated our organization and have subverted our established procedures and protocol to further their own agenda.

To me, as a member, this is totally unacceptable, and must be put right before further damage is done.

If there is a movement or other revolutionary reaction to this situation currently within the organization, please add my name to the list. If there is not such an action to join, well, there sure should be.

Let's work together to take back our organization with all haste.
T.A. Hamilton, P.Eng., Calgary, AB

CORRECTION

On page 59 of the November/December 2011 issue, Artin Sarkis Tombalakian, P.Eng., of Sudbury was mistakenly listed in In Memoriam. He is alive and well. We regret the error.

[LETTERS]

I STAND CORRECTED

In his letter to the editor criticizing my article about Moore's curse ("Why Moore's law applied to energy generation is more like Moore's curse," *Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2011, p. 64), Ron Mantay, P.Eng., makes a valid point about one of my comments regarding Ontario's *Green Energy Act* (GEA) ("Moore's law doesn't apply," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2011, p. 56). He writes "...a minority [of the rate increases] are used to fund deployment of renewable generation facilities in Ontario." Deputy Minister of Energy David Lindsay confirmed this during the 2011 OCEPP conference in May 2011, where he said about 40 per cent of the total projected five-year rate increase to Ontarians is directly related to costs for renewable generation. The remainder is for general system upgrades. My implication that the entire rate increase is due to subsidies for renewable generation is wrong. I stand corrected.

The purpose of my article about Moore's curse was to reset the expectations of policy-makers regarding the speed with which energy technology will develop. It was not intended specifically as a criticism of Ontario's GEA, nor was it intended to refer only to the subject of electrical power generation, but energy systems in general. I would recommend that policy-makers read Vaclav Smil (vaclavsmil.com) to get a full understanding of the history of energy systems and technology. Understanding the past helps in planning the future.

In his letter, Mr. Mantay additionally makes several assertions about energy systems that need correction:

1. Renewable generation reduces reliance on fossil fuel-fired peaking plants—Intermittent renewable generation, with capacity factors of between 20 and 30 per cent, only *displaces* fuel (or water) for baseload and dispatchable peaking generation. The intermittent nature of wind and solar PV requires more dispatchable peaking-type generation, not less, and is typically sourced from natural gas-fired, simple-cycle gas turbines.
2. "Authorities" using energy density as a rational criterion for energy-related decision making—Sarcasm aside, "authorities" like the worldwide transportation industry validly use energy density, and its

time-based derivative "power-to-weight-ratio," as the primary basis of comparison for fuel and propulsion systems. For land-based electrical power generation, the low energy density of wind and solar produce footprints orders of magnitude larger than those of systems using more energy-dense fuels. This is entirely relevant in the real world from the point of view of land use, cost and political constraints.

3. Traditional generation facilities take 10 years or more to get to commercial operation—Large energy projects can take many years to build. Sometimes, long project schedules are caused by EIA and legal challenges brought about by environmental groups. Large natural gas-fuelled, combined-cycle power plants—more common now that coal is being phased out—take approximately 48 months from implementation of EPC contract to COD. The most recent simple-cycle gas turbine peaking plant with which I was personally involved took less than 24 months from EPC contract to COD.

As a consulting engineer, I take pride in taking an impartial view and not working to promote any given technology or industry. Regarding Ontario's GEA, I would be happy to write a fully-developed and balanced criticism of it at a future time.
Steven Lightfoot, ing., Montreal, QC

Letters to the editor are welcomed, but should be kept to no more than 500 words, and are subject to editing for length, clarity and style. Publication is at the editor's discretion; unsigned letters will not be published. The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the association, nor does the association assume responsibility for the opinions expressed. All letters pertaining to a current PEO issue are also forwarded to the appropriate committee for information. Address letters to naxworthy@peo.on.ca.

A CONFLICTING ISSUE

In a recent issue of *Engineering Dimensions*, President Adams expresses concern about the lack of engineering jobs at most levels and about the lack of opportunities for recent graduates to fulfill their experience requirements ("Three months of progress," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2011, p. 3). In the same issue, we read that York University plans to increase its undergraduate engineering enrolment from 250 to 2000 (a factor of eight) over the next two years ("Engineering at York poised for major expansion," p. 12). I believe it would be helpful for President Adams and for York University to comment on this seemingly conflicting situation.

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