BY ART JOHNS, P.ENG.

Speaking out about the "E word"

To receive such a prestigious award from the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers is very special. To receive it in the city that gave birth to our great country makes it even more memorable.

When I received the Gold Medal from Professional Engineers Ontario/Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, my message then was to encourage and challenge engineers to use the "E" word more often.

There are lots of "E" words. Examples are: excellence, ethics, economical, eclectic, environmental, efficient, effective and everywhere.

But the one word that encompasses them all is the "E" word: ENGINEERING.

Image suffers

Too often today, the media and some members of our profession have chosen to substitute "science and technology" for "engineering" to the detriment of our profession's public image. Our paramount duty is to the welfare of the public, which to me is our core value. But most of the public that we serve hasn't a clue that this is so. Yet, we engineers impact the public EVERYWHERE.

The associations represented here tonight spend a lot of time and energy protecting the "E" word. At least during such disputes, the "E" word is stated publicly; we get some publicity in the press, and such exposure cannot hurt us. Branding has a lot to do with publicity and repetition.

Well, some non-engineers out there understand our profession's importance. I would like to share parts of an American journalist's published comments that followed the tragic disaster of the space shuttle Columbia on February 1, 2003. His entire report is now read at the Iron Ring Ceremony at Camp 1, University of Toronto and Ryerson University. This modern piece is called "In Praise of the Guys in Skinny Black Ties" by Dan Neal, staff writer at the *Palm Beach Post*.

"*Like children frightened by a father's tears, we have to worry when engineers cry.*
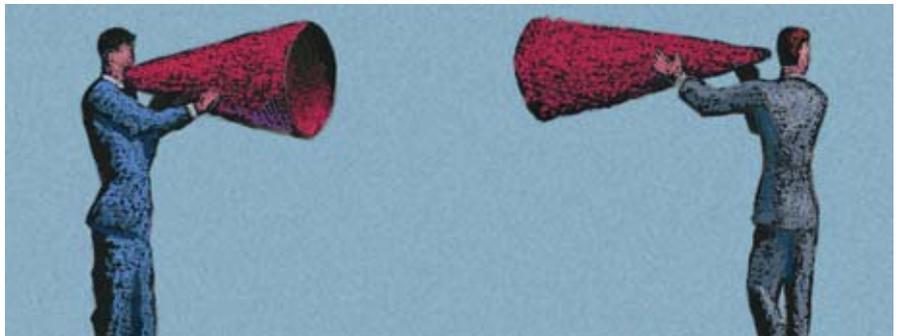
An award-winning engineer believes a new appreciation of the profession's accomplishments can begin with practitioners themselves. The following is excerpted from Art Johns' comments on being named winner of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers' Gold Medal during the CCPE annual general meeting May 15 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Amid the weekend's terrible images-the flaming shuttle, the blasted debris, the ruined families-the one that troubled me most came from the most unlikely place: a news conference.

When the guy with the pocket protector cries, when the catastrophe is so shattering that even the egghead cracks, we know instinctively that there's more at stake than personal loss. We never know why, never know exactly what's going on, but we know enough to fear that it might mean the end of the world as we know it. Because the world as we know it belongs to the engineers.

They built the cars we drive, the roads we drive on. They designed the homes we live in, developed the crop system that keeps our bellies full. The invented the TVs we worship, the phones we yak on and every one of the silly or suddenly indispensable gadgets that prop up our lives. From umbrellas that save us from the rain to medical equipment that saves us from death, engineers are the ones who make our world possible."

These are words from a non-engineer. He has grasped something that we, as a profession, should have been shouting from the rooftops for many years, but have not. It requires passion.

So this is for the non-engineers, the public and journalists. The engineers already understand. I remind you, this ritual was written by Rudyard Kipling, who, among other things, was a journalist as well. He also wrote the poem, *The Hymn of Breaking Strain*, which deals with the risks of engineering.

Fellow engineers and journalists, please use the "E" word whenever you can. ✦

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