LETTERS

Conspicuous absence

I read with interest the President's Message in the March/April 2006 issue of *Engineering Dimensions*. Conspicuously absent, however, was any reference to cooperation with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), despite the fact that a substantial portion of the plan [2005-2009 Strategic Plan] was related to advocacy on behalf of the profession.

For those skeptical of the efficiency of the combined PEO-OSPE effort, it would have been helpful to highlight any such cooperation and, if cooperation is not appropriate, an explanation would be in order.

Ian Williamson, MSc, P.Eng., Ottawa, ON

Tough to stomach

I am always saddened by how it seems our profession is under duress, and how we are ineffectual at protecting it. The March/April issue of *Engineering Dimensions* is particularly tough to stomach; although the table of contents denotes sections, it could simply be replaced by "a profession under attack, chapters I through V."

When a colleague wrote to say that he thought it was a waste of resources for a married couple of P.Engs to receive two copies of this publication ("Is it just me?," Letters, *Engineering Dimensions*, p. 8), the editor's response was to have a copy donated to a library, or school where people can learn what engineers do. Please don't do so! I don't want the population at large thinking that all we do is draft internal procedures and take the province to court.

Engineering Dimensions should be about showcasing new technologies, great companies, and cutting-edge research conducted at Canadian universities. After reading the magazine, I should feel proud of this profession. The accountants, physicians and lawyers seem very adept in protecting their respective fields. Perhaps we should benchmark what they do, compare best practices and draft a Pareto list of what should be reviewed first. But please, don't take 25 pages in the publication; a web address would suffice.

If published, this letter will draw a lot of fire from the professional engineers in private practice. Regretfully, many others would agree with me, but won't nod their heads because they stopped reading this magazine a long time ago.

Stéphane P. Cloutier, P.Eng., MEng, MBA, Rochester Hills, MI

Difference is clear

I would like to respond to Arnold Janson's letter to the editor, ("What's the difference?," *Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2006, p. 9). Not because I am compelled to answer as the president and chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), but because I firmly believe that every professional engineer in Ontario should understand the difference and embrace it.

In his letter, Mr. Janson appears to have difficulty determining the difference between the roles of OSPE and the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE). He cites his own personal confusion over OSPE's reports on the issue of oversupply of engineers and believes that "an explanation as to how OSPE's role is different than CCPE's is needed."

To help clear up any confusion for Mr. Janson, I would like to invite him and any other professional engineers in Ontario who are not clear on our differences, to visit our website (www.ospe.on.ca) and join OSPE. Since OSPE is the voice of Ontario's professional engineers, it's a surefire way to see first hand how OSPE successfully advocates for engineers and enhances our profession.

As for the CCPE, well, a simple visit to their website will explain their role. In their words, "the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) is the national organization of the 12 provincial and territorial associations that regulate the practice of engineering in Canada and license the country's more than 160,000 professional engineers. CCPE serves the associations, which are its constituent and sole members…"

So, while OSPE was created by engineers to advocate on behalf of professional engineers in Ontario, the CCPE works on behalf of regulatory bodies and not individual members. And that's a big difference, especially when it comes to professional engineers' livelihoods. Because if your profession or future depends on advocacy efforts that will help ensure your success, you need to rely on a society like OSPE that's dedicated to your success.

While CCPE and OSPE have different agendas, we often collaborate on issues if it will bring us greater efficiencies. For example, OSPE is working with CCPE on the oversupply of engineers issue because we have a multitude of professionals and international engineering graduates landing in Ontario every day, believing there are plenty of jobs available.

And if anyone read Mr. Janson's letter, he would have you believe OSPE is confused over whether the oversupply of engineers issue is a geographic or sec-

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–Daniel J. Young, P.Eng., president and chair, OSPE

tor-based issue. The reality is the issue is both. That is why we work together and have repeatedly pressured the government to support the CCPE for funding to prepare a labour market study. And CCPE has asked us to be on the steering committee.

So, are we duplicating any efforts by the CCPE? Not on your life. Because, when it comes to fighting for issues like the *Limitations Act* (where the government plans to remove the 15-year liability limitation), or QBS (we're fighting to change the procurement system for engineers), or Brownfields (where the government wants to certify engineers), you can rest assured that OSPE will be in the corner of our professional engineers, fighting all the way.

And since we were formed by professional engineers to advocate for professional engineers in Ontario, we will continue to advocate to whomever and whenever we see fit. That is why we are the voice of Ontario's professional engineers.

Daniel J. Young, MEng., P.Eng., president and chair, OSPE, Toronto, ON

Sparks flying?

I read with interest the letter titled "Potential bombs" by Andrew Block-Bolten, P.Eng. (*Engineering Dimensions*, March/ April 2006, p. 10). The possibility of the Joule-Thompson Effect initiating a spark, or whatever, to cause hydrogen to ignite upon a sudden pressure release is something I had not heard before. This would certainly put a damper on high pressure storage of hydrogen in vehicles.

My understanding is that the Joule-Thompson Effect results in the cooling of a gas as it expands. I cannot understand why this would cause an ignition event. I am not saying the concept is wrong, just that I do not understand it and would appreciate an explanation.

H. Douglas Lightfoot, P.Eng. (retired), Baie d'Urfe, QC

Dubious language

I am writing to express my distinct distaste for the use of the words "It's War" on the cover of the March/April issue of *Engineering Dimensions* magazine. While I am certain we all agree that self-regulation is an issue of monumental importance to our profession, evoking the imagery of "war" is both unnecessarily dramatic and very insensitive.

We live in good homes; we have good water; we have no rebel soldiers wandering the streets. We have democracy; we have law enforcement; we have hospitals; we have jobs! Belonging to this profession likely puts our income in the top 10 per cent of all wage-earners. Let's not confuse the administration around the way we earn that cheque with genuine atrocity. It only perpetuates the stereotype that engineers are self-centred, self-righteous, and out of touch with the realities of the world around us.

I hope that the language chosen to cover this and other challenges facing our profession in future issues of *Engineering Dimensions* will be more appropriate to the nature and scope of the problem, and more reflective of engineers' collective role as a productive and rational participant in finding solutions, not throwing around heavy rhetoric.

Erica J. Lee, P.Eng., Mississauga, ON

Online only

In the March/April issue of *Engineering Dimensions*, a member expressed his concern with regards to the latest increase in the cost of the membership ("Is it just me?," Letters, p. 8).

I believe that your current process of mailing *Engineering Dimensions* to your members should cease. Instead, members should receive their copies electronically via email. The electronic process should be implemented to maximize the effective use of technology and staff resources, and to reduce costs related to paper, printing and postage. Even better, you could email reminders to members whenever a new issue has been posted on your website.

I would assume that the majority of professional engineers have access to the Internet.

Upon request, only those members who do not have Internet access should receive *Engineering Dimensions* by mail. For them, you might consider using cheaper paper, similar to the paper used for daily newspapers. I believe that nobody really needs the magazine printed on that shiny, perfect-quality paper.

Marijana Bulatovic, P.Eng., Toronto, ON

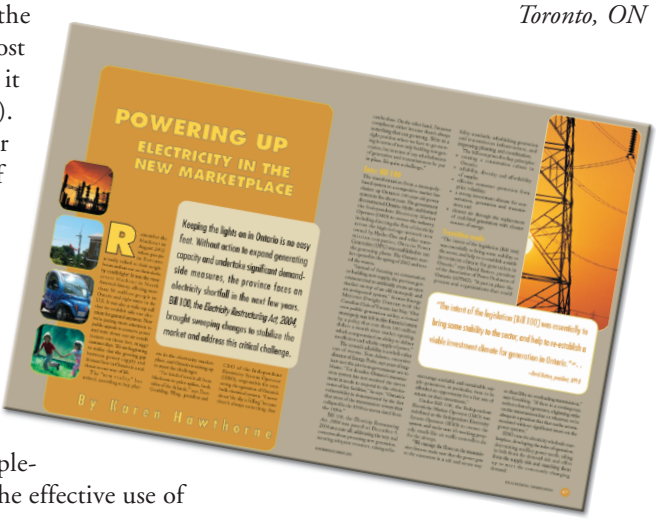
Power study

Neither the author of "Powering up: Electricity in the new marketplace" (*Engineering Dimensions*, November/December 2005, pp. 46-49), nor many others seem to be aware of the massive 1989 four-volume study by Ontario Hydro, *Balance of power: Ontario Hydro's plan to serve customers' electricity needs*.

It discussed the expected coming gap between electricity demand and supply if no new generation sources are provided.

Newspaper ads offered copies of the report to the public for review and, during the first six months of 1990, all could comment through a public feedback program. There were about 60 locations in Ontario that provided explanations and encouraged feedback.

Joseph Quittner, P.Eng., Toronto, ON



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"Crimes" not created equal

Every two months after *Engineering Dimensions* arrives on my doorstep, I skim through the pages including the Decision and Reasons in Gazette. I am struck by the fact that, regardless of the crime, if I may use that word, every engineer is charged with the same statement: professional misconduct. In reality, there are two types of crimes being committed. The first type is miscalculation, improper use of a formula, or incorrect reading of a statute, regulation, or code (*Ontario Building Code*, for example.) The first of these types of incidents by an individual is a mistake; the second, especially after retraining, is incompetence, and the third, well, perhaps more on this later.

The second type of crime is one exemplified by Kwan in Gazette (*Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2006, p. 40). Kwan claimed to have done something that clearly he did not do and was paid for (not) doing this activity. In most criminal codes, taking money under false pretences is known as fraud. Yet Kwan and all those before him were treated much the same as if they had racked up too many traffic demerit points. Their wrists were slapped; they were made to attend a one-day driver's ed class; they paid a small fine; and their licences were reinstated. I wonder what the recidivism rate is?

The *Toronto Star*, the largest circulated newspaper in Canada, often presents really nasty exposés of incompetent doctors and the cover-ups and whitewashes conducted by the various medical associations. Doctors have performed needless operations while incompetent to perform those operations. Others have used less than sterile equipment spreading hepatitis and other diseases. It was only when the *Toronto Star* went public with these facts that the medical associations began to act differently. The medical associations are still fighting, claiming privacy laws, but the door has been opened for more public scrutiny.

One of the stated objectives of PEO is the raising of public perception of the engineering profession. We will know PEO has succeeded in gaining public recognition and respect for engineering when the *Toronto Star* begins to write similar articles.

David Moffat, P.Eng., Toronto, ON

Not easy on the eyes

May I ask you to take pity on my aging eyes and print the body of *Engineering Dimensions* in easily readable type (11 pt minimum) on matte white paper? I make this request because, at best, the May/June 2006 issue of the publication is not easy to read and, at worst, the white type on grey background [2005 Annual Report] makes reading impossible.

By following my suggestion, you will help to promote energy conservation. The easier it is to read a publication, the lower the illuminance required on the page and the fewer the watts required to provide that illuminance.

Ernest Wotton, P.Eng., Toronto, ON

P.S. In May 2005, I was presented with the Silver Medal of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (London, UK) for services to lighting. It is awarded annually, but rarely for work in lighting, and never before for work in lighting in Canada. You will appreciate that the suggestion I make above stems from my professional interest!

Respect and visibility

I read with interest the editorial message by Patrick J. Quinn, P.Eng., the newly elected President of PEO. He has touched on a topic of which all engineers are interested and on which have their own personal opinions. I have the following comments to offer on improving the visibility of the engineering profession.

Respect: In order to gain respect from outsiders, we should first learn to respect our own profession from within. A simple example to illustrate this point is: any engineer who obtains a PhD degree has earned the right to be addressed as doctor. Why are the PhDs not addressed by such a title even by PEO? This encourages others to also drop the title. There are thousands of PhDs among PEO's ranks. A person with an earned title must be addressed as such.

Information: Have a good engineering magazine which 1. exalts the outstanding engineering achievements over the centuries, and 2. publishes technical articles on the latest engineering developments. This will make engineers proud of themselves and their contributions to world technology.

Pay scales: Negotiate with engineering companies fair wages for engineers, who are relatively poorly paid. Almost everything in life from all moving machines, taps, heating, air conditioning, roads, bridges, computer and electrical items, and so on, have engineering achievements recorded on them. Why are we so poorly paid?

Drum beating: Arrange engineers to address the local high school students and participate in periodic seminars to local communities. These should highlight the role of engineers in everyday life and engineering achievements. This is one way to remind the public of engineering contributions to the community.

Engineering syllabus: Review/revise the engineering degree syllabus in consultation with the universities and make it more engineering-oriented, rather than the current heavy emphasis on math and computers. This is extremely important to produce practical engineers.

Unless we focus on all fronts simultaneously, "the desire to bring more visibility to our profession," as stated by the PEO President, will remain just another dream.

Ashok N. Kumar, PhD, P.Eng., Georgetown, ON

Letters to the editor are welcomed, but should be kept brief and are subject to editing. 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 jcoombes@peo.on.ca.