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N O T E

Invisible profession no longer

If you're wondering whose face is emblazoned on our cover this issue, wonder no more. That face belongs to new PEO President Bob Goodings, P.Eng. There's irony in that cover actually, because Bob is the embodiment of modesty—certainly more content to let others shine than to be in the spotlight himself.

In our profile of him this issue (p. 46), a picture emerges of a man who is a quietly confident leader determined to work with Council and staff to achieve many goals, one of the most important of which is to win greater respect for the licence and prevent situations like Bill 124 (p. 10) from happening again.

Bob's certainly up for the job. During a distinguished engineering career, includ-

ing many years as president and CEO of Gore & Storrie, he's learned a thing or two about leadership. Bob's style is to listen, to delegate, and to trust the advice of those around him—an approach that's served him well in the past, and will again this year.

Bob has become President at the best possible time to encourage greater respect for engineering and its regulator. After remaining the "invisible profession" for many years, Ontario engineers are emerging as a force to be reckoned with. Already, our government communications program has made MPPs sit up and take notice, and never so much as on June 6 as PEO descended on Queen's Park for Engineering for Ontarians Day. PEO staff and volunteer spokespeople met with over 45 MPPs and the attorney general, who all

left with a better understanding of PEO and what engineering is (see centre pull-out for their comments).

Now to the main theme of our issue this month: ethics. Engineering ethics seems like a rather heavy topic to be dealing with in the dog days of summer. But then again, it's a topic that never takes a vacation—at least for engineers.

Sadly, many of today's engineering students don't regard ethics with any particular reverence. Yet who can blame them? Media outlets routinely report cases like Enron and other spectacular examples of people happy to park their professional obligations in return for personal gain. The message is that it's okay, everybody does it, and what's wrong with a few zeroes changing columns anyway?

With engineering it works a little differently. In business, generally nobody gets hurt (physically anyway), but engineers have the potential to cause serious harm to the public and, therefore, have a *Code of Ethics* to live by. In other words, engineers have special obligations that govern their behaviour by virtue of the fact that they deal with a special range of issues (see "Ethics and the regulator," p. 54).

While young engineers may be years into their careers before they face major ethical challenges, when that time comes, a solid ethical background will come in handy. If today's educators have a say in that, they will (p. 50). Schools are relying less on textbooks and tests, and more on guest lectures by veteran engineers to ignite awareness of the kinds of real-world ethical decisions engineers may be called upon to make in the future. And that's a good thing.

How's that for light summer reading?

Jennifer Coombes
Managing Editor