

## Our pragmatic approach

It is disappointing to see that the official journal of the engineering profession in Ontario has decided to side with the catastrophists on this most contentious issue. The March/April issue ("Engineers and climate change:



What you need to know," pp. 51-53) claims to focus on climate change, whereas it is actually about global warming, a term not used very much nowadays because it is regarded by increasing numbers of thinking people as irrelevant and a colossal bore. Yet again, we can see the same old dogmatic assertions, starting with the editorial quote, "World leaders need to recognize that climate change is the single most important long-term issue that the planet faces."

It seems to me that terrorist attacks on civilization are much more important, with dirty atom bombs in suitcases, anthrax in the reservoirs, airliners crashing into skyscrapers, and so on. Also, two million children die every year from polluted drinking water, not to mention the accelerating spread of AIDS.

David Lapp says there's no doubt that climate change is happening. Fair enough—it always has. But he then goes on to say that what's happening now is different from naturally occurring phenomena, and is caused by human activities—the rallying cry of the global warming

experts. However, a considerable number of highly qualified, respected professionals hold views similar to mine, that global warming is a myth sponsored by self-serving politicians and fringe environmentalist pressure groups, having no basis in reliable, testable facts. In this connection, I would refer you to Michael Crichton's book, *State of Fear*, which, in addition to being a great yarn, presents all the pro and con arguments in clear, understandable prose. The narrative is backed by page after page of actual scientific data and 20 pages of references, a pleasant change from the usual hysterical claptrap associated with the subject.

Finally, my disappointment stems mainly from the feeling that one should expect a more pragmatic approach from an engineer. For example, as dwellers in Canada, I fail to see how you can believe that things are getting warmer! Secondly, what is the point of subscribing to the ludicrous Kyoto Protocol when the United States, the biggest polluter of all, ignores it? Thirdly, although the ju-ju men cannot reliably tell us if it is going to rain tomorrow, they are quite prepared to tell us what will happen 100 years from now.

*John Tysoe, P.Eng., Cheltenham, ON*

## Highlighting environmentalism

I was certainly interested to see Michael Mastromatteo's article on Elizabeth Edwards and University of Toronto's entry into bioremediation ("Helping nature take care of civilization's mess," March/April 2005, pp. 58-59). However, the need to research "p r o v i n c e Toronto" seems to cast a sad reflection on PEO that it is unaware that there are



about 30 to 50 engineers in Canada doing this work on a daily basis. If PEO had a better register of member activities it could present a much more informative article.

Mines around the world rely on engineers such as I, who are current with the latest technology on aerobic and anaerobic micro-organisms as well as nano-particle iron and other recent developments to purify industrial effluent.

I will concur with Dr. Edwards that environmental engineers deserve more prominence. It has been said that engineers can do twice as much work for a dollar as non-engineers and with a much lower risk, which can assist the corporate bottom line. As a consultant, I need to be aware both of the most cost-effective technology and of the best international standards (especially in developing countries) so that I can provide world-class solutions. This is why I am a member of a European legislative review panel.

More articles of this type would certainly be welcome, but so too would a PEO task group that studies and reviews international development.

*Peter Broad, P.Eng., London, ON*

## Essence of self-regulation

The March/April issue of *Engineering Dimensions* carried a letter from Tim Middleton on Bill 124 ("Applauding the MMAH," pp. 8-9). In the letter, he implies that the new regulations introduced through Bill

124 and controlled by the Province of Ontario were brought about because of deficient engineering in his field.

For some years, I held a position where I reviewed consulting engineers' drawings on behalf of the government and I agree with Mr. Middleton that frequently the quality of the submissions left something to be desired. While I agree

with him on this point, I strongly disagree that this should have brought on provincial government interference in engineering regulation.

Mr. Middleton is missing the essence of a self-regulated profession. It is not the job of the universities or accreditation board to assure that engineers perform in a professional manner. It is up to the fellow members to see to it! In Mr. Middleton's case, if the submissions to his organizations were unacceptable, he should have advised the engineers' association and the disciplinary section of PEO should have dealt with it.

***“I would not choose an engineer based on his or her ability to flip quickly through the code any more than I would choose a surgeon in this manner.”***

—Sheena Sharp, Licensed Architect

It is an admission of defeat if we, as engineers, say that we cannot control our own members and, if true, we may as well convert the association into a social club or union.

Konrad Brenner, P.Eng., Orillia, ON

### **An architect's opinion**

I am afraid that I do not understand Tim Middleton's assertion (“Applauding the MMAH,” March/April 2005, pp. 8-9) that a substantial portion of engineers are unqualified. In my experience as an architect, this is not the case. I have worked closely with many engineers, and while we may disagree on some points, their competence or commitment to public safety has not been in question.

I also do not understand why Mr. Middleton believes that exams are the answer. PEO has a disciplinary committee intended for just the situations he describes. In order for the current system to work effectively, it is particularly important that public officials, who have a heightened level of knowledge, take the time to use it and, in doing so, protect the wider public. These are serious accusations

and they deserve to be examined on a case-by-case basis so that the problem can actually be corrected.

Finally, I would not choose an engineer based on his or her ability to flip quickly through the code any more than I would choose a surgeon in this manner.

Sheena Sharp, Licensed Architect,  
Concord, ON

### **Government foolishness**

Shame on you. I can't remember when I've seen an article that was a greater waste of paper and ink. What has David Brezer, P.Eng., done to deserve a glossy picture in

well. Plans are routinely turned back by building officials, who perceive the plans are not in accordance with the OBC when the real problem is that they fail to understand engineering and seek levels of reinsurance that far exceed the OBC requirements. More times than I wish to count we have dumbed down our engineering so that permits could be issued on a timely basis. If consulting engineers have to write OBC exams, why don't building officials have to write engineering exams to demonstrate that they have the knowledge appropriate to review the works submitted?

I was particularly incensed by Mr. Brezer's parting shot: “Not surprisingly, engineers are quite pragmatic, and hundreds have been completing our examinations and preparing to register.” Yes, when the government passes legislation that gives us a choice between working and not working, feeding our kids and not feeding our kids, we will do what is necessary to survive. We will waste hundreds of thousands of dollars on useless efforts, decrease our profits and productivity and pay less tax to the ill-informed government that attacks our profession. We can be forced to comply but please, no more articles in *Engineering Dimensions* from government hacks trying to legitimize this foolishness.

T.G. Orpwood, P.Eng., Brampton, ON

### **No year of the engineer**

In the report on the discipline hearing of John J. Kadlec, P.Eng., in your January/February issue (pp. 35-38), the panel noted that “the actions of the member were purely of ethical and legal concerns and not of a technical nature.”

If a breach of ethical and legal concerns is considered of minor consequence in the conduct of professional engineers, it does not bode well in your attempt to make 2005 the year of the engineer.

G.W. MacDonald, P.Eng., Oakville, ON

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