



 L E T T E R S

Short is sweet

John Kehoe ("Letters to the Editor", January/February 2004, pp. 8-10) finds it odd that in my "Kyoto Yes" essay, I didn't actually say what I think the cost of failure will be if we fail to control the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. While he speculates as to my reasons for this omission, he fails to consider the more mundane. In a 750-word essay, it is simply not possible to cover every aspect of such a far-reaching subject. I therefore decided to concentrate on the increasing levels of atmospheric GHGs and the link to average global temperatures. At the time the article was published, the impact of higher average temperatures had been all too graphically illustrated in Europe, where thousands died in the heat waves. In addition, a month or two later, the United Nations issued a report stating that global warming was responsible for approximately 150,000 deaths a year, mostly in Africa. I would be pleased to submit a future essay on the impact of global warming should it be requested; however, in the meantime I would direct Mr. Kehoe to the Union of Concerned Scientists website at www.ucsusa.org for a well researched review of the subject.

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No laughing matter

As an engineer who is a woman, and one who works with architects and artists who are also women, I was dismayed at the reported male and heterosexual centric joke that Gord Miller, Ontario environmental commissioner, used in his opening remarks to the Ontario Professional Engineers Awards ceremony on November 14, 2003 (January/February 2004, p. 11). I was even more disappointed that the report mentioned that the audience appreciated and applauded the remark.

How can we advocate bringing and supporting women in the profession, when our own colleagues feel that portraying the profession as heterosexual male and

women in the role as the "wife" and "mistress" is okay? Replacing the words wife and mistress with spouse and lover would have embraced the women in the audience who were engineers, not singled out the wives in the audience for embarrassment, included the spouses who were male, and respected those in our profession and their partners who are same sex.

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We received other letters chastising our choice to publish the comments, which were seen as "blatant sexist remarks." The comments do not reflect the environmental commissioner's message as a whole. Our apologies to our readers who were offended by the report.

Ed.

Teaching fundamentals

In the "Editor's Note" of the January/February 2004 issue of *Engineering Dimensions*, the importance of oral communication, professional attitude, and professional ethics were reiterated as qualities employers are seeking, in addition to punctuality, reliability, politeness, and administrative skills: These were the conclusions of some recent research activities. No research was necessary to reach such conclusions. These qualities have been appreciated in employees, whether engineers or otherwise, in the past. The reason for employers to emphasize the need for such qualities now is the apparent lack of them. But it does not follow that engineering and technology schools are to teach such topics. The approach would lead to wast-

ing of time and resources. It shifts duties of high schools, families, and employers to the engineering school.

Families, in the widest sense, should help youngsters to be polite and ethical. High schools are supposed to develop good citizens with proper communication skills and general education. Employers of engineers should invest in them rather than viewing employees as replaceable parts of a machine that can be discarded if they do not meet new "specifications." Employers have the ethical responsibility to develop the technical and administrative skills of their employees and help them grow with the company.

Numerous factors contribute to the making of a good engineer, in addition to technical skills. It is important to remember that we call them "engineering" schools rather than "engineers" schools. It seems logical that one goes to an engineering school to learn engineering. Although the ability to drive, for example, is important to many employment situations, it is not expected that engineering schools should offer a course on car driving. To maintain the respect of society and prospective students, engineering schools need to focus on engineering.

Certainly, learning the fundamentals is important: high school topics in high school, engineering topics in engineering schools. If engineering schools spent more time doing the work of high schools, more time would be needed to graduate competent engineers. There would be a danger that a bachelor of engineering degree would become of less value and a master's degree would be required by employers as a minimum level of competency for practising engineering. This would be a

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sign of deterioration in quality of engineering education and degree inflation. Engineering societies and engineering educators need to be more active in guiding policy makers in government and industry to diagnose problems correctly and prescribe the most effective long-term solutions.

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Reservations not addressed

The article "Council finalizes Governance Principles" (November/December 2003, pp. 24-25) reads as if our reservations about the Governance Task Force's (GTF) recommendations had been duly addressed. Not so. We objected early when the GTF abandoned its intention of giving Council its true role per the Act of: a) setting for PEO clear, member-inspired strategic objectives, and b) defining how Council will govern itself and monitor/audit the authority delegated to committees and the Registrar.

The high level Governance Principles don't tell where PEO is headed and deny members/chapters their right and involvement in defining PEO's objectives. The GTF also recommends a structure of committees that give the Executive and the Registrar no clear direction and virtually uncontrolled power. The absence of defined strategic objectives and policies to govern Council and control delegated authority constitutes an inversion of roles, allowing the Registrar/CEO to tell the Executive Committee what needs to be approved by Council. The role of members is reduced to paying fees and serving on committees when invited.

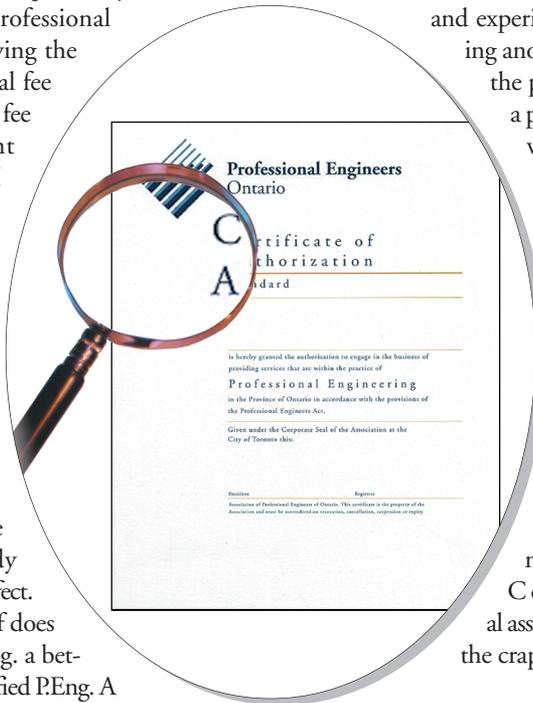
We disagree with these recommendations and, with regret, have asked Council to accept our resignation from the GTF.

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Weary of fees

I agree with Mr. Guerriero (November/December 2003, pp. 28-30) that the C of A is complex, misunderstood and controversial, and unfortunately it still is misunderstood and controversial!

The C of A is quite easy to obtain by the professional engineer on paying the \$500 or so initial fee and the renewal fee each subsequent year. Somehow, I have difficulty understanding the logic behind the C of A for someone who is already a professional engineer with a big PEO certificate hanging on the wall that already testifies to that effect. The C of A itself does not make a P.Eng. a better or more qualified P.Eng. A professional engineer by definition should be able to practise his/her profes-



sion, after all the years of education and experience, without paying another fee. Moreover, the prohibitive fines for a professional engineer who dares to practise his/her profession without a \$500 certificate is totally cruel and unjustified. We are engineers, technical people and we do not believe—most of us at least—in visionary thinking. If the PEO needs more money, add the C of A fee to the annual association fee and stop the crap!

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CORRECTION

The caption for the picture on page 11 of the January/February issue, identifying the OPEA award winners and Awards Committee, omitted the name of committee member Michael Ball, P.Eng. We regret the error.