

IT'S ALL ABOUT VISION... IN SHIFTING SANDS



David Adams, P.Eng.
President

IT'S ALL ABOUT VISION when a country decides to spend \$64 billion of borrowed money to offset the effect of undisciplined lending, which has destroyed the confidence of consumers and businesses around the world.

Referencing the 1929 depression when "anyone who had a nickel wouldn't spend it," our federal government has taken an opposing view by introducing a \$64 billion spending initiative, embarking on a long-term program to provide employment in the sectors of automotive, building infrastructure, new and renovated housing, training, the environment, security, transport and alternative energy, and provide income tax relief and improved unemployment benefits.

These stimulus measures obviously present a positive vision, ensuring economic activity continues in the short term, with long-term benefits.

It also takes vision in engineering education and immigration policy to effectively match the supply and demand of licensed engineers in a variety of disciplines, in a multitude of markets. Engineers Canada has now produced their long-awaited labour market study, which should be of significant assistance to Canadian graduates and internationally trained engineering graduates in directing their choices.

However, there appears to have been a lack of vision in our decision not to support an Engineers Canada national advertising campaign to promote our profession, especially when they agreed to tailor Ontario's segment to our real problems of licensure uptake and the encouragement of employers to recognize the benefits of hiring licensed P.Engs.

Both of these issues have been verified as important by this labour market study, which indicates that only one-third of those practising engineering are indeed licensed.

Further, I often hear laments from engineers that their status and salaries are far below those of other professions, yet, when the opportunity for nationwide recognition through advertising is presented, we decline to participate.

Some have suggested OSPE undertake this advertising initiative, which has merit in itself, but is impossible for them to finance with a membership of only 9000.

To remedy this, I recommended the establishment of a limited benefit membership category for all 70,000 of our P.Engs. Through allocation of a \$10 to \$12 portion of current P.Eng. annual fees to OSPE, a base for advocacy for the profession could be put in place. This expenditure is comparable to that sent to Engineers Canada for their services. Such funding to organizations with similar engineering interests as PEO is legally permissible.

A sizeable portion of this cost could be recouped from savings derived by having a less ostentatious OPEA ceremony. While it is important to recognize achievement, most of our sister associations make their ceremonies a fun evening of informal fellowship, recognizing that in praising our engineer colleagues, we are essentially talking to ourselves, not the outside world.

We are anticipating an enthusiastic response from our council and the provincial government on the most visionary project PEO has proposed in some time—a national framework for membership and licensing. This plan encompasses all those engaged in engineering, from the undergraduate to the P.Eng., with additional categories for technicians, etc., all based on academic achievement and relevant experience. This membership and licensure framework eliminates exceptions to regulation, which would protect the public far better.

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE]

There are five major problems we are trying to overcome with this new framework:

1. lack of harmonized standards among all provinces;
2. lack of full mobility across Canada;
3. difficulty in enforcing standards nationwide;
4. extension of public interest to dynamic supply/demand; and
5. registration of all those involved in engineering work.

The benefits of this proposed membership and licensure framework have already been recognized by our sister associations in Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia, as well as our national organization, Engineers Canada, which incidentally is a strong advocate for its usefulness and acceptance.

As we work together, developing faith in each other, we are now thinking outside ourselves and better visualizing the impact of engineering and associated skills on society and are, accordingly, seeking more comprehensive protection for the public.

The mobility vision for engineering has been long established in Canada, as we are the fourth largest supplier of consulting services in the world. Increasingly, mobility of practice is now being recognized formally in agreements among different jurisdictions.

Four of our provincial associations and Engineers Canada have already signed reciprocal agreements with several US states, Hong Kong, Australia, France and Ireland. These agreements include measures of academic training, relevant experience and practice examinations.

I expect that we will soon be following suit at PEO, offering the US examinations in the fundamentals of engineering at Ontario universities at time of graduation for those who wish to qualify for work in US jurisdictions.

In closing my term as president, I must confide that one of my motivations in seeking the presidency was to give new life to those seeking to develop an industrial policy for Canada.

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Like many of you, I have had several of my workplaces close, as companies retracted to their home countries or became uncompetitive in our world of free trade.

Rather than wringing my hands, I have made it a priority in my engineering career to develop new ideas and, recently, with others, have formulated a method of evaluating replacement technologies for our sunset industries.

The quest for pieces of a new industrial policy for Canada, and the study of technically correct solutions for these new scientific endeavours, hopefully will become a prime focus of our new Ontario Centre for Engineering and Public Policy.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president. It has been fun and challenging, but we have accomplished much. I consider many of you lifelong friends and I hope our paths will continue to cross.

I wish you all the very best in the future, as we do business in our new building; "so let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

In the words of Earl Radmacher, PhD:
"Now is a day of change; then is a day of no change.
Now is a day of becoming; then is a day of being what
I have become for all eternity." Σ