

### Public could be better served

I enjoyed the article "Taking Exception" by Kenneth McMartin, P.Eng., in the March/April issue, p. 20. Clearly his article and the related "Interpreting the Exceptions" show that there are

instances where the *Professional Engineers Act* applies within an employer's facility (industrial setting). I am quite dismayed and personally offended by Mr. McMartin's statement: "After careful thought, I have therefore concluded that the exception is a red herring, upon which is blamed all of the aspects of the profession with which engineers are dissatisfied." Since the *Professional Engineers Act* does apply to instances of the practice of professional engineering in-house, within an industrial setting, why such a dearth of Cs of A for these companies? I submit that many employee engineers are dissatisfied with aspects of their profession, because they see little if any enforcement of the Act within the industrial setting. Because Mr.

McMartin concludes that no action is needed, he must be satisfied with the status quo. I submit that the public would be better served, employee engineers would be more apt to see a reason for licensure and be less dissatisfied, if PEO would look into the requirements for Ontario's corporations. The majority of PEO members are employee engineers who face these issues daily, not to mention graduates contemplating membership.

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### On taking exception

In settling on the exception in Section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, by what fantastic leap of logic did the government arrive at the very questionable assumption that all industrial employees in and around equipment designed and installed in-house were somehow involved in its construction and design and because of this were somehow not worthy of protection as a "public"? This premise is reprehensible. If, as stated elsewhere in *Engineering Dimensions*, "...PEO's legislated purpose is to serve and protect the public interest with respect to professional engineering matters by governing the members and regulating the practice..." then surely this means the interest of all "publics," not just those allowed us by the government. For this reason, Section 12(3)(a) should be scrapped. Assuredly, industrial opposition will be predictably massive and formidable, but if the primary purpose of PEO is to protect the public, this should not deter us. It's time to take a stand or become irrelevant.

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### Clear up misunderstanding on industrial exemption

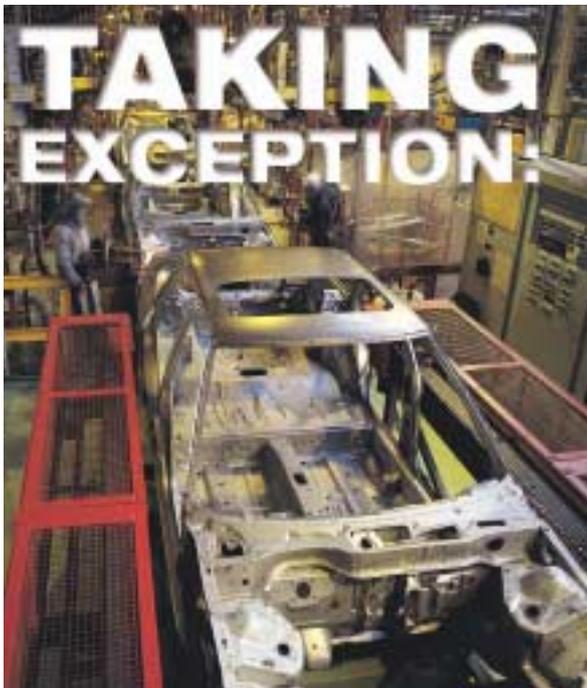
My heart jumped as I read the first part of Ken McMartin's article de-bunking the "industrial exemption" and upholding the notion that licensure is necessary for public protection. Finally, recognition and public acknowledgment of the issue by a President-elect of PEO! Further on in the article, on p. 22, McMartin writes "...the exception is a red herring, upon which is blamed all of the aspects of the profession with which engineers are dissatisfied."

I understand that we capture roughly half of all engineering graduates for P.Eng. licensure: the balance, along with all those foreign-trained engineers who fail to complete the required Canadian experience year or technical exams, go unlicensed. Surely, even the most deluded amongst us cannot imagine that all those engineers have foregone engineering for a career in real estate. Or that they practise engineering which is of no consequence in terms of public safety, or work under the very narrow existing exception, or under the direct supervision of a professional engineer who reviews and takes responsibility for all of their work.

How, therefore, can we even pretend that we are regulating the profession of engineering for the protection of the public—when we license, by my estimate, less than half of those actually practising engineering?

PEO must clear up the widespread misunderstanding about the so-called industrial exemption. Ken's article makes a good start, but PEO must also walk its talk by making a major effort to educate industry, not only of the added value to them of having professional engineers take responsibility for professional engineering work, but also of the fact that if businesses permit the non-licensed or non-engineers to carry out professional engineering, they do so in contravention of the Act. Until the non-licensed, and the businesses who employ them, are subject to a real and credible threat of enforcement action from PEO, our licences will remain de-facto meaningless. For the lion's share of professional engineers, the P.Eng is not a licence to do anything.

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Debunking the myth of Industrial Exemption



little admiration for engineers. In my opinion, there is a very fundamental and simple, yet perhaps not so obvious, reason for this. As a practising aerospace structural engineer for the past 15 years, I have on several occasions heard engineers complain about their status in society, lack of appreciation, and low salaries. Several theories have been proposed as to why this is so; however, none really seem to get at the heart of the problem. Most of the major professions identified by the public as being highly respected and trustworthy are those that provide valuable services and are ultimately extremely well paid. Therein lies the problem with public perception.

ing graduates who end up obtaining engineering jobs requiring their level of education is approximately 30 per cent. Essentially, the remaining 70 per cent of engineering graduates serve to lower the salary of the ones doing engineering jobs requiring true engineering skills. I have seen engineering graduates working in sales, real estate, and as librarians.

With so many engineers around, why would society value them? Doing great things for society at arm's length is not good enough to improve public perception, and this is unlikely to change in the near future. My friends, colleagues, and family appreciate what I do, which is all that I really need and expect, so why not just learn to live with it.

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### Ethics courses not enough

How does one teach engineering ethics? In Jim Ridler's Viewpoint on ethics education in the March/April issue, p. 24, it is suggested that a mandatory ethics course near the beginning of an engineer's education would create a platform for the development of ethical engineers. My experience illustrates why ethics courses are not enough. The students in my mandatory ethics course absorb the material with a mixture of resentment and boredom. We can memorize the Code of Ethics, but why should we follow it? If I had not worked with some very talented and ethical engineers during my co-op placement, I would not notice its importance. Ethics cannot be taught in a course, but rather must be developed by experience. Professors, lab technicians, teaching assistants: Students need to see respected people making ethical decisions. We need to see that the Code is more than an appendix in our text.

*Katherine Ellerker, engineering student  
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### Oversupply of Engineers

Mr. Crone's letter in the last issue, titled "No Mention of Engineers," p. 7, reminded us that Canadian society in general has

I believe that engineers are generally not highly paid simply because of supply and demand. The value of any professional is very much tied to this very simple concept. Reports that I've read suggest that the number of young engineer-

### Passport process rankles readers

We received many phone calls from *Engineering Dimensions* readers in response to the article, "Retired P.Engs no longer to act as passport applicant guarantors" (p. 15, March/April 2003). Many of you expressed disappointment with the Canadian government's passport application process. Below are answers to a few of your questions.

**Q. Can retired professional engineers act as guarantors for passport applications?**

A. It depends on what is meant by "retired." *The Vital Statistics Act*, dated December 5, 2001, states: "Canadian citizens who have known the applicant for at least two years and who are practising members in good standing of a provincial regulatory body..." may act as guarantors. So, if "retired" means non-practising, a "retired" engineer cannot act as a guarantor.

**Q. What is PEO's definition of a member in good standing?**

A. A member is considered to be in good standing when annual fee payments are up to date, and there is no disciplinary action against the member. Both full members and retired members who pay the reduced fee are considered to be in good standing if they have met these requirements.

**Q. How does the government enforce its eligibility requirement?**

A. A passport office will contact PEO to check an engineer's status. PEO's Records Department confirms only whether the engineer is a member in good standing. Experience suggests that the degree of follow-up by individual passport offices is somewhat varied.