

Re: A disturbing trend

After sending my letter to the editor (*Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2007, pp. 9-10), I read it again and realized that the fourth paragraph (The reality is...degree dictates) was unkind, arrogant, inappropriate, and based mostly on hearsay. Therefore, I asked the editor to delete this paragraph should she choose to publish it. However, it was published with the paragraph by mistake. If it offended anyone, please accept my humble apology.

Don Ireland, P.Eng., Brampton, ON

Time to toughen up on licensing

I agree with President Bilanski that engineering graduates need a strengthened academic foundation ("Bringing engineering into the 21st century," *Engineering Dimensions*, May/June 2007, p. 3). Not only in academics, but there are gaps in general and practical aspects of engineering as well.

Part of the answer is more courses, more back-to-basics and, I dare say, more emphasis on English composition and business correspondence. Requiring written exams of all applicants for registration is also a worthy consideration.

President Bilanski, with all due respect, fails when he attempts to compare engineering with other professions. None of the other professions have blanket exemptions from the licensing requirement. For the engineering profession, viz "those designing equipment or processes to produce products in their employer's facility are exempted from this licensing requirement."

I've been licensed for some 30 years. Wherever I worked, engineering was practised for the employer by just about anyone or his brethren. Heads of engineering departments and supervisors often had no engineering credentials whatsoever. Internal engineering work, drawings, reports, calculations, etc., were never sealed unless the work was carried out by an outside engineering firm that offered its services to the public. What other profession can draw such a parallel?

As President Bilanski points out, "10,000 to 20,000 international engineering gradu-

ates have come into Ontario each year." These individuals can practise engineering as employees without need of a licence.

When I retired, I found that my membership placed unfair and onerous restrictions on my ability to practise engineering other than as an employee. Hence, I either provided "technical services" or became a part-time employee. My card made no suggestion that I was offering consulting or engineering services—so much for being a professional.

In closing, I encourage PEO to move on strengthening the training and entrance requirements as covered in President Bilanski's article. However, I submit that if the vast majority of engineering professionals continue to have blanket exemptions, then PEO should plan to downsize the organization as membership is bound to decrease.

Elio Comello, P.Eng., Camlachie, ON

Combining powers

So, the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) has become Engineers Canada, eh? (See "Canadian Council launches new brand," *Engineering Dimensions*, July/August 2007, p. 22.) According to its website, Engineers Canada is the national organization of the associations/ordre, but has no regulatory authority over the profession in its own right. Engineers Canada promotes greater understanding of the nature, role and contribution of professional engineers and engineering to society.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Society of Professional Engineers (CSPE) has been restructured into a non-regulatory, non-profit, federal corporation to advance advocacy and provide member services for Canada's professional engineers. However, the CSPE does not seem to be fully active in its new role.

Is there anything preventing Engineers Canada from merging with CSPE? The combined Engineers Canada could welcome the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) and other advocacy groups as its constituent members since these non-regulatory, non-licensing organ-

izations all seem to share the same goals, objectives and visions, i.e. promoting Canada's engineering profession.

Simon Sunatori, P.Eng., ing., MEng, Gatineau, QC

Enough of regulatory affairs

Why is there a photograph of the President of PEO on the cover of *Engineering Dimensions* so frequently? In the July/August issue, there are six separate poses and eight photographs in total of the President. I don't mean to suggest that the President of PEO shouldn't be included in *Engineering Dimensions* but it belies a bigger problem with the publication—frankly, it is boring. There is certainly a need for the President to express his or her mandate and for the publication to devote some space to regulatory affairs. Nevertheless, why are there no interesting technical articles? *Engineering Dimensions* is neither an academic journal nor a trade magazine, but we are all engineers and so have a technical background in general. How about some technical articles written by members about what they do? I would personally find it interesting to read about how members were able to overcome technical challenges and solve real problems in Ontario. This could be done carefully without disclosing information important to employers, yet still be detailed enough to be interesting.

Mark Fritz, PhD, P.Eng., Orléans, ON

Meaningless membership

Having read W.K. Bilanski's President's Message (*Engineering Dimensions*, July/August 2007, p. 3), I was moved to consider my own membership in PEO. I have come to the realization that PEO is largely irrelevant to me. I graduated from a Canadian engineering school and applied to join (A)PEO after securing a job. The process was automatic, essentially painless but, in retrospect, pointless. Best I can tell, I work under the "industrial exemption," and that is fine with me. I am not interested in building codes, continuing education, proof of compe-

tency, reporting scope and practice, enforcement committees, or any of that stuff (I don't even read the "blue pages"; I care not for others' dirty laundry). The most significant reason I maintain my membership is because it allows me to work in the United States and Mexico under NAFTA rules. I also sign a lot of passports within my social circle.

I feel that I am adequately reimbursed for my work; I enjoy enough prestige being a simple "engineer" instead of a Dr. or Esq. I bear in mind that I did not take two to six years of additional schooling *after* my degree, like they did. And I did not leave school with a crushing debt and enter into a dog-eat-dog profession where malpractice insurance is the cost of doing business.

Maybe PEO should stop trying to over justify its existence. Getting back to Dr. Bilanski's remarks, I feel that trying to cut into the "industrial exemption" with a tool named "Enforcement Communications Plan" is not going to get a sympathetic response.

Similarly, as for voluntary reporting of scope and practice, given PEO's almost single-minded views on discipline, that would be like sending your car's speedometer records to the police—you are just setting yourself up for a fall.

On the topic of membership decline, I recall that during the Internet explosion, PEO was making it difficult for engineering students in the field of "software" to be licensed. Maybe PEO needs to reconsider whom they want in its club—the civils, the PhDs, but maybe not us "working-class engineers." If I could, I would join OSPE without PEO, but those are the rules.

Doug Nagy, P.Eng., Burlington, ON

More on CO₂

With reference to P. Smith in the July/August edition of *Engineering Dimensions* ("CO₂ influx," p. 9) and previous writers on this thread, it appears to this casual observer that human activity *is* responsible for abnormally high CO₂—but not because of CO₂ emissions. Anthropogenic sources apparently contribute about five per cent of natural CO₂ produced. Not that significant. However, on the sink side of the mass balance, natural

forest has been largely depleted (e.g. in northern Alberta, forest has been reduced by 90 per cent). Land uptake by biota is the largest global sink of CO₂. So, little wonder that CO₂ levels are dramatically changing. Oceanic absorption is the second largest sink, but as global CO₂ increases this would probably serve only to dampen the rate of CO₂ increase resulting from global deforestation.

Martin Shaw, P.Eng., Coldwater, ON

Gore's misleading nonsense

I detect an encouraging trend among your contributors to recast PEO in the role of government policy makers for all engineering matters. For years I have been exasperated by PEO's unwillingness to take a stand on vitally important issues, starting with the ludicrous Montreal Protocol of the '90s, through the non-debate about garbage incineration, to the collapse of Ontario Hydro and the looming energy crisis, which may well stall the economy while those responsible fiddle with windmills and solar panels. But all this pales beside the latest outrageous turn taken by the global warming cabal. It appears that Al Gore's trashy pot-boiler *An Inconvenient Truth* is to be required reading in Canadian schools. This amounts to brainwashing the entire youth of the country.

Speaking as someone who ran undergraduate courses in power generation and environmental control engineering for some 25 years, I would have hated the thought of my students turning up with their heads stuffed with such misleading nonsense, put out by a failed politician trying to make a name for himself. Well, if I'm still around in 20 years, when, according to several experienced, respected climatologists, we are due to enter the next mini Ice Age, at least I will enjoy a good laugh, saying, "I told you so."

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

Examples we can learn from

I have had a lifelong interest in major bridges, which is perhaps why I went into civil engineering, and am the proud owner of a photo-essay book published possibly in 1918 by the Dominion Bridge Company on the construction of the Quebec Bridge. The article by Michael Mastro-matteo ("After the fall—What the Quebec

Bridge means today," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2007, p. 50) goes into details about the Phoenix Bridge Company's bridge that are not covered in my book; namely, the role of designer, the reasons for the errors in the design, and the Royal Commission. I will cut out that article and add it to other clippings I keep with the book.

Perhaps it is because I live outside the greater Toronto area, but I take exception with Bruce Matthews' article ("What if a similar collapse happened today?...PEO's response," p. 53), which speculates what would be the course of action if a similar event happened today. I think we can do better than that. There are recent examples of major engineering errors and we can see what *did* happen. The Heron Road bridge collapse in Ottawa in the early 1960s is the one that comes quickly to mind. I have spent my career in the nautical world and so can think of maritime accidents that have prompted changes to ship design, and to the requirements for surveys for nautical charts. But, surely, there are also examples in the other branches of engineering other than just civil.

*David H. Gray, MASC, P.Eng., CLS
Ottawa, ON*

Sustaining PEO chapters

In my opinion, PEO East Central chapters have problems with inadequate funding. In PEO today, I feel that the chapter system is confronted with ever increasing downloading of regulatory and other programs from PEO. However, chapter funding may not be adequately adjusted to make such downloading sustainable.

Most of the chapters in the East Central Region are located within the greater Toronto area (GTA), which has a higher concentration of immigrants. Our chapters provide coaching and training seminars to these newcomers who are international engineering graduates and Engineers-in-Training (EITs), enabling them to acquire P.Eng. licences. In my view, this makes us a special region of PEO.

The East Central Region chapters may also have been inadequately funded by PEO over the years, leading to a current financial difficulty. In 2006, for example,

collectively as a region, we overspent our allotment by 10 per cent to cover our expenses. This caused the chapters within our region to use up their reserves. Such persistent excess of expenditure has depleted the bank balances of the chapters in the region to the point that some have only about 26 per cent of their yearly allotment in the bank. The East Central Region has the second lowest bank balances amongst all the PEO regions, second only to the Northern Region.

At the East Central Region Congress on September 25, 2007, our chapter chairs and vice chairs reached consensus on the following issues:

1. Need for an equitable chapter funding model that reflects the needs in our chapter business plans;
2. Need for a revised Business Plan Expense Guideline, because the current guideline is outdated and out of touch; and
3. Chapters are fed up with their "poverty," which is affecting morale.

To address the above issues, the East Central Region made the following two petitions by means of presentations to the Regional Councillors Committee (RCC) meeting on September 27, 2007.

Matthew Xie, P.Eng., York Chapter chair, made a presentation called *A Fair Funding Model for PEO Chapters* to the RCC. He explained: 1. the perceived problems of the current chapter funding model, 2. recommendation of a new funding model, and 3. highlights of the York Chapter's 2008 business plan.

I, acting as the Senior East Central Region Councillor, made a presentation called *Allotment for Special Needs 2008* to the RCC. I argued: 1. that the East Central Region has special needs (see below), 2. chapter allotments should be merit-based and activities-based, and 3. requested accommodation with additional funding for our region.

East Central Region has special needs because it has:

1. the highest percentage (25 per cent) of PEO membership amongst PEO regions;
2. one of the higher volumes of activities and numbers of participants;

3. collectively overspent on the PEO 2006 allotment by 10 per cent;
4. the second lowest bank balances amongst PEO regions at \$66,000;
5. one of the higher concentrations of immigrants who are international engineering graduates and EITs. The East Central Region provides coaching and training seminars to these newcomers to enable them to acquire the P.Eng. licence;
6. proportionally higher education outreach costs because of the number of schools and universities within the GTA; and
7. relatively higher rental fees for facilities and catering costs to hold program events, licence presentations and meetings within the GTA.

Even though the outcome of the above two petitions did not increase funding for 2008, the Regional Councillors Committee has established a Chapter Business Plan Model Subcommittee to study a better funding model for 2009. This subcommittee would be grateful for input from the overall membership on this study.

We all share a common goal of making PEO program downloading sustainable. Every step that each of us can take to make chapter funding more equitable and realistic will be a collective step forward in the right direction.

Thomas Chong, MSc, P.Eng., Toronto, ON

Re: Alberta P.Engs and technologists forge deal

I want to express my disappointment with your misrepresentation of the facts in this article (*Engineering Dimensions*, September/October, p. 29). Bill 39 does not, as the article states, "bring technicians and technologists under the supervision of APEGGA."

The material that has been published on our website and in other communications has never said that "technologists and technicians will be brought under APEGGA's purview." In fact, both ASET and APEGGA have made it quite clear that ASET is being brought into the EGGP Act as its own separate profes-

sional association and not under the supervision, control or purview of any other organization.

ASET and APEGGA will act together via joint boards as equal partners in the registration and ongoing regulation of the new professional technologist category of ASET membership. Professional technologists will be licensed members of ASET and they will be able to perform and/or supervise engineering work, and accept responsibility for it, so long as it falls within the scope of practice and within accepted codes and standards.

ASET alone will regulate all other categories of certified technicians and technologists in Alberta.

I suggest you print this letter to set the record straight. This is a particularly sensitive subject and errors such as yours can lead to further misunderstandings of the agreement that has been reached and set the whole process back years.

Larry Stone, CET, Edmonton, AB

Corrections

In the September/October 2007 issue of *Engineering Dimensions*, we incorrectly identified Richard Marceau, PhD, as the president of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). In fact, Marceau is provost at UOIT and Ronald Bordessa, PhD, is president.

In the same issue, the National Engineering Week photo on p. 28 should have been credited to Glenn Ogilvie of the *Sarnia Observer*.

Letters to the editor are welcomed, but should be kept brief and are subject to editing. Publication is at the editor's discretion; unsigned letters will not be published. The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the association, nor does the association assume responsibility for the opinions expressed. All letters pertaining to a current PEO issue are also forwarded to the appropriate committee for information. Address letters to jcoombes@peo.on.ca.