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Some things never change!

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PRESIDENT

My attention was recently drawn to the President's Message in the January/February 1996 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* where David Anderson, P.Eng., quoted the following: "Based on taxation statistics from Revenue Canada, the total revenue of engineers and architects (they happen to be combined in Revenue Canada) has doubled from 1968 to 1988 thanks largely to inflation, while the income of most other professions has increased fourfold or more, representing a net or serious loss for engineers. If you look at the situation today, it comes as a surprise to young engineers to find that 20 years ago, their peers earned nearly twice as much as lawyers, and definitely more than dentists and accountants. Today, we are behind all of those groups and we are about to be passed by grade school teachers."

David continued, "I believe this is the sort of external measure we must establish as we move forward. If the things we are doing enhance engineering practice and engineering culture, I would expect that the benefits the engineering profession brings to society should be rewarded on a more equal basis. So I believe the decisions we make and the ways we choose to spend our money should be focused on ensuring a healthy and vibrant engineering profession in 1996 and beyond."

So, what happened? Here we are, in 2007, and engineers are still on a par with grade school teachers (who many believe are underpaid).

I can see three areas where decisions made did not bode well for the engineering profession. First was the reticence to update engineering education. According to the figure, only engineering began as a four-year program in 1900 and is *still* a four-year program. Most major professions have advanced to higher educational levels than engineering and, consequently, greater prestige and remuneration.

Incidentally, I've been told that many students are taking more than four years to complete their engineering degrees. Are they taking additional courses, working part time, finding it too demanding, or exploring different areas of engineering before determining a career path? Shouldn't we know, not only *what* they are doing, but *why*?

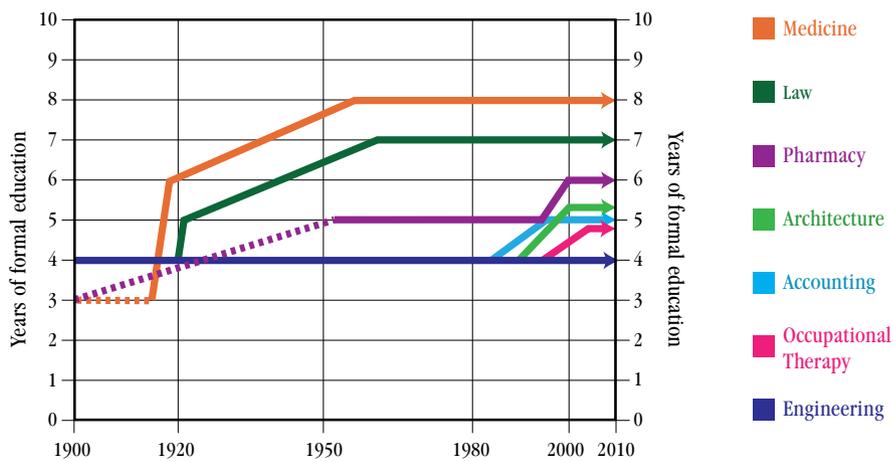
Second was the federal government decision to advertise overseas that there was a shortage of engineers in Canada. Perhaps in some areas of engineering in some parts of Canada, there *might* have been shortages, but that message opened the floodgates and international engineering graduates (IEGs) poured into Ontario. As all of you know, it's a case of supply exceeding demand.

The Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, former minister of training, colleges and universities, spoke at our September Council meeting (p. 22), urging us to emphasize to the federal government that the number of IEGs coming to Ontario every year is far greater than the Ontario economy can absorb, which benefits neither the immigrants, nor the citizens or engineers of Ontario. To protect the public, we must speak out!

In addition to the IEGs, the 15 Ontario universities that teach engineering gradu-

ate about 5000 every year. Why are so many Ontario universities teaching engineering? Could it be that the tuition for each student plus the government subsidy to the university for each engineering student is greater than the cost of educating the student?

The third problem was the federal government decision to allow foreign corporations to take over some of our industrial leaders. Research and development are generally carried out in the country of ownership. Hence, there will be fewer places for students, recent graduates and IEGs to receive their Canadian experience, which is comparable to a medical internship or legal articling. *Will industrial placement for engineering applicants become as difficult as hospital internship placement for medical students?* Much of the current backlog of applicants awaiting licensure is a result of candidates not finding suitable employment to fulfill their engineering experience requirement. **We should be looking into a more structured engineering experience model.** Already, some of the experience gained through co-op programs may fulfill part of the engineering experience requirement. Experience gained in a graduate program may also qualify. Any other ideas out there regarding engineering experience models? 



Years of post-secondary education to practise in various fields