

WHY PUBLIC AWARENESS OF OUR PROFESSION IS SO IMPORTANT

By Changiz Sadr, P.Eng.



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BACK HOME IN MY native Iran, the engineering profession is thought of as one of the top professions in society—to some, it's even more highly esteemed than medicine. Long before I was licensed by PEO in 1999, I realized the engineering profession here in Canada, and specifically in Ontario, is not where it should be in the minds of Canadians.

It's been my experience that the majority of foreign-trained engineering graduates and new Canadian graduates are very keen to get their P.Eng. licences shortly after landing in Canada or graduating from university. However, PEO still has only a slightly higher than 30 per cent rate of capture of Canadian engineering graduates. Why?

Why do these enthusiastic engineers not want to get a PEO licence? The main reason, I think, is the lack of public awareness about the engineering profession and the impacts engineers can make on lives.

How many people do you know who have never heard of PEO? How many people, even engineers themselves, do you know who can't name more than one or two engineering fields? Do we have the same issue with doctors or lawyers? Do these professionals not know about the areas of practice for medicine or law? I don't think so! Family doctors who send us to a specialist must know exactly which areas of practice exist in medicine to be able to guide us to the right person and field of practice.

When we engineers don't care about our profession and don't show interest in getting involved or encouraging engineers to get their licences because we may not believe in the value of the P.Eng. licence ourselves, how then can we compare engineering with medicine and law?

How many times have you reported people who misuse the title of engineer? Why don't we enforce the *Professional Engineers Act* through PEO by reporting cases of violation? The bottom line is that if we want a better life, better recognition by the public, and a higher income, we must get involved and do whatever it takes to educate people about engineering and encourage new grads and newcomers to get their licences.

One of the tools we can use is mentoring—sharing our experience and knowledge with people considering engineering as a career, including high

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school students, before they are lost to the profession. We must get involved and help more engineers register with PEO. The more members we have in the profession, the stronger community we have, and the more recognition and value engineers get.

Mentoring is just one of many ways to increase public awareness about engineering and what engineers do to make everyone's life easier. Participating in National Engineering Month activities (February 26 to March 6, 2011, in Ontario) is another way to let the public know who we are and the value we can bring to their lives.

Please step forward, get involved, and help your profession and other engineers as much as you can—in whatever way you can. Σ

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