

## Recognizing increased value

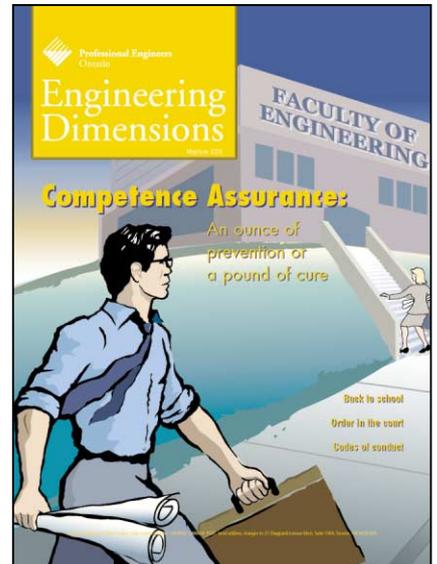
It was with some surprise and great pleasure that I read the articles related to competence assurance in the May/June issue of *Engineering Dimensions*. Pres-

ident McMartin's message "Increasing our value," supported by the Editor's Note and well-researched articles on the practice of other professional organizations make a compelling case for mandatory professional development programs and this begs the question: What will PEO do about it?

As Canada's federation of technical engineering societies, the Engineering Institute of Canada (EIC) has long promoted lifelong learning and the importance of upholding high standards of con-

tinuing education and professional development to ensure and improve the safety and welfare of Canadians as well as the international competitiveness of Canadian firms. Studies show that companies tend to be more successful when they develop and maintain a strong innovation-receptor capacity internally. Supporting the continuing education and professional development efforts of employees is a most important strategy in enhancing the capacity to innovate. A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada points out that continuous learning is essential to organizational adaptability, innovation, and change but also finds that investments in learning by small and medium-sized enterprises are much smaller than needed for Canada's competitiveness and prosperity.

The EIC is not in a position to judge whether or not professional development programs ought to be mandated as a condition of licensure. That is the respon-



sibility of licensing bodies. However, the EIC believes that much more can be done to encourage and recognize engineers and firms who demonstrate active commitment to continued competence through lifelong learning. It recently established an Excellence Initiatives committee with the mandate to develop specific activities aimed at promulgating, in partnership with other organizations, continuing education and professional development standards and the involvement and recognition of engineering practitioners in lifelong learning. PEO is one such organization that the EIC would be pleased to partner with in this endeavour.

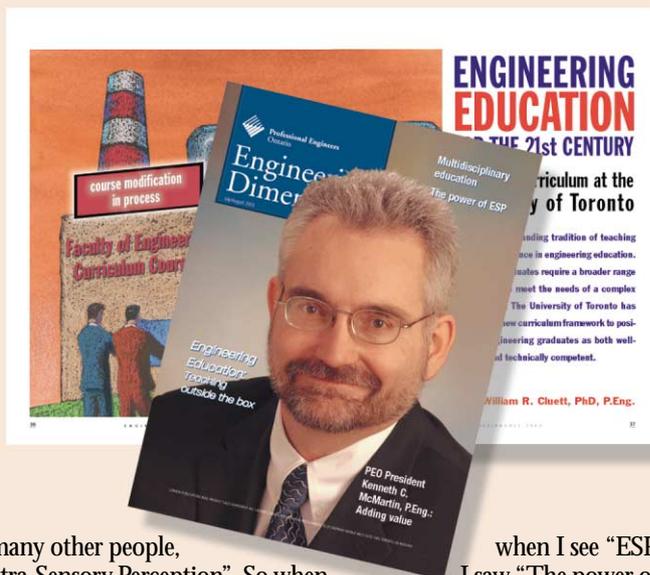
*Guy Gosselin, P.Eng.  
EIC President  
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## Processing PEO member fees

The letter "What Cost" in the July/August issue (p. 8) reflects a common "street-level" misconception of the cost structure of payment mechanisms in today's financial institutions. In fact, taking into account the cost of the association's backroom operations, the transactional cost of PEO's current manual cheque payment method is likely to be at least several times higher than that of the credit card.

The sooner PEO were to stick to its core competence of protecting the pub-

## The power of ESP



Like many other people, of "Extra-Sensory Perception". So when the cover of *Engineering Dimensions*, I thought that this was a new thrust within engineering (actually it would be quite an attractive thought). I had to scour the magazine to find what it really meant in this case—Engineering Strategies and Practice. I guess this highlights the danger of assuming that acronyms and/or short-forms have wide acceptance. I think they should be used carefully, especially on the cover of a magazine.

*A. Hill, P.Eng.  
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lic interest where engineering is concerned, and drop all in-house paper processing, the less likely it would be that we would see creeping increases in our annual dues. In that sense, PEO should definitely start charging additional fees from all those members that insist on maintaining inefficient and costly manual cheque payment method over all other more efficient and less costly alternatives.

Speaking of other alternatives, for a number of years I was also in favour of credit card payment for PEO annual dues. Ironically, as a professional and researcher involved in comparative evaluation of various payment mechanisms, I have recently changed my view. The key reason is that with wide introduction of online electronic payments, even credit card payments are rapidly becoming obsolete for all routine transactions.

It is far cheaper and more efficient for the association, and the membership at large, to process our membership dues online and to deliver all PEO annual invoices and statements exclusively in electronic formats. A majority of Canadian banks and Canada Post widely provide these services at the competitive rates that likely make internal organizational payment departments too expensive to maintain. (Note that I am not employed by either a bank nor by Canada Post).

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### **Ethically speaking**

Engineer Ridler aptly puts his finger (July/August 2003, pp. 20-21) on the vexing and embarrassing problem of student cheating in Canadian professional schools. While I fully agree with his quest for "...proactive as well as reactive measures," I wonder about the effectiveness of ethics courses, even if taught as early as the in the first year, in dissuading cheaters. Stiff penalties, such as automatic suspension for at least one year, expulsion upon repeated offence and putting cheaters' names on the Internet would be, in my opinion, more efficient deterrents.

*Thomas Z. Fahidy, P.Eng.  
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### **Instilling ethics**

In his article regarding students and professional ethics, Jim Ridler, P.Eng., suggests the "profession should encourage the schools to place as high a priority on teaching engineering ethics as on teaching technical fundamentals." Isn't university a bit late for a student to learn ethics, or is engineering ethics different from living ethically with one's fellow man?

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### **Illustration portrays wrong image**

In your July/August issue (p. 17) you published an article titled "Confined space regulation unclear, says PEO." With this article you included a photo of two jackleg miners as an example of mining practice. I take exception to this picture. It portrays mining as a low-tech, dirty and unsafe occupation. Neither of the miners in the picture is wearing prop-

er clothing, eye protection, hearing protection or gloves. Also, you left out the pick, shovel and mule. Canada is a world leader in mining technology and safety. You do your country, the mining industry and PEO a disservice.

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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 [jbailey@peo.on.ca](mailto:jbailey@peo.on.ca)