

# Practitioners urged to act as ambassadors for licensure

The conduct and attitude of individual practitioners have enormous symbolic value to those who may be wavering on the path to professional licensure. If the adage “leading by example” still has merit, perhaps the experience of coaches and mentors can be instructive in promoting greater respect for the P.Eng. designation.

**By Michael Mastromatteo**

**A**s much as engineering regulators attempt to emphasize the value and significance of licensure by establishing academic requirements, setting standards and ensuring compliance with regulations, there is something to be said for individual practitioner’s attitude and behaviour.

A good portion of an individual’s efforts to support and uphold the ideals of professionalism is captured by adherence to a code of ethics.

One of the provisions of PEO’s Code of Ethics, in fact, is that practitioners endeavour to keep the professional licence on display in their place of business. While largely symbolic, such efforts underscore the notion of pride of membership. Yet any

practitioner keen on stressing the lasting value and significance of the professional licence would also do well to consider the importance of being a role model, or simply leading by example, especially as PEO is eager to direct as many potential engineers as possible along the path to licensure.

There are a number of opportunities for professional engineers to shed a positive light on licensing and professionalism in their dealings with interns, students and other colleagues seeking to gain entry to the profession. Several engineering schools in Ontario, for example, encourage P.Engs to sign up with mentoring programs to help students learn something of the realities of the working world. PEO, in fact, is working to dispel a lingering misconception, particularly among students, that professional licensure is of little or no importance to a

meaningful career in engineering work.

Certainly, the engineers now involved with the Career Bridge program are doing their part to add value to the meaning of the P.Eng. licence. Career Bridge is an Ontario government-sponsored program that helps internationally qualified professionals find suitable work in their chosen occupation. In addition to providing valuable “Canadian” work experience, the program links participants with coach-mentors, who provide direction, advice and career support (See “Program opening door to untapped expertise,” pp. 10-12). While the program is not exclusively for engineering-related workers, nearly 40 per cent of its pre-screened applicants come from engineering backgrounds.

Despite the high demand from those seeking internships, only a handful of engineering work placements have arisen since

Career Bridge was begun last fall. Nonetheless, those engineers acting as coaches in the program seem to understand that they can play a key role in keeping their interns focused on a professional career.

### Valuable asset

Steve Andrews, P.Eng., manager of engineering development for the Town of Markham, is now working with international engineering graduate (IEG) Mansoor Ali through the Career Bridge program. Andrews looked to Ali's extensive experience in the building and construction industry in his native Karachi, Pakistan, as a valuable asset to Markham's sanitary system redevelopment project.

In taking part in the Career Bridge coach-intern arrangement, Andrews was motivated by an interest in utilizing the enormous talent pool available among Toronto's IEGs. He also recognizes that individual engineering practitioners can play a role in ensuring that engineering colleagues are not lost to the profession for lack of full licensure.

"I think we all, as professional engineers, have an obligation to promote the value and high regard for the P.Eng. designation," Andrews told *Engineering Dimensions*. "I am encouraging Mansoor to apply for the P.Eng. designation and I would provide all necessary support and advice that may be needed."

Andrews believes many internationally trained engineers may be losing interest in pursuing a professional licence, particularly as they experience difficulties in finding career-related work in Canada. "During my discussions with Mansoor, I have a feeling that immigrant engineers are not sure of the benefit of getting the P.Eng. designation [because] they think the process is too long and complex, they have to write exams and pay some fee, the training for writing the exams could be expensive, and they might not get jobs even if they have a P.Eng. designation. As such, there is little or no motivation to get the designation," Andrews suggested.

For his part, Mansoor Ali, who has 18 years of international engineering experience, hopes his stint with Markham will

serve as a way station on the road to a professional licence. "I might have to defer getting a professional licence in Ontario for the time being, because of the financial considerations, but I do plan to proceed when the time is right," he said.

### Role models

A second coach involved with the Career Bridge program is Mila Jokic, P.Eng., facilities project engineer for the Regional Municipality of Halton. Since December, 2003, Jokic has supervised the work of IEG Leonor Adel in Halton's construction and asset management section. Jokic suggested



*Steve Andrews, P.Eng., (left) manager of engineering development for the Town of Markham, is now working with international engineering graduate Mansoor Ali through the Career Bridge program. Ali's extensive experience in the building and construction industry in Pakistan has become a valuable asset in Markham's sanitary system redevelopment project.*

that individual engineering practitioners should seriously consider creating opportunities for students and the internationally trained to gain work experience as a prelude to obtaining the professional designation.

"I've always been trying to get schools and companies to provide work opportunities for potential engineers," Jokic said. "My experience with internationally trained engineers in particular ... is that most of them want to pursue the P.Eng. because there is a certain level of prestige of being an engineer in the countries they come from. As a result, in the same way that they want to pursue their Canadian citizenship, I found that the engineers that I've met want to pursue their P.Eng."

Noreen Calderbank, P.Eng., manager of prelicensing programs for PEO, is charged

with developing a mentoring program for those registered in PEO's Engineering Internship Training (EIT) program in hopes that the next generation of practitioners acquires a proper respect and appreciation for the significance of professional licensure. Calderbank agreed that individual practitioners can play a key role in instilling respect for the engineering licence.

She said one of the most noteworthy aspects of her work in developing this mentoring program is the apparent determination of many engineering interns in their efforts to pursue licensing. "Secondly, but more lasting," Calderbank added, "is the mentors' dedication to the promotion of their profession and their commitment to assist in the development of the next generation of engineers."

Speaking to participants in a pilot mentoring program last June, Calderbank suggested that a sense of professionalism can keep younger people focused on licensing. "Much of this professionalism was already making its mark on the young protégés," she said. "I have witnessed an overwhelming display of similar commitment from our membership, primarily through the efforts of our Experience Requirements and Academic Requirements committees, but also through the numerous regular members who willingly give of their time to help others develop into fine engineers."

Calderbank has also made it a point to urge faculty members at Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) universities to help promote the value of licensing to their students. "This cannot be over-emphasized," Calderbank said. "We must all become aware of the effect that our words and actions have on others and their opinions of engineers and engineering as a profession. Engineers must not only take responsibility for their contributions to our society but also take ownership and value in it. My goal is to raise this awareness, and thus the standard of professionalism throughout our membership and those who should form part of our membership, starting most particularly with the next generation." ❖