

## SOURCES OF NEW JOBS AND SURVIVING THE "FREELANCE ECONOMY"



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AS YOU KNOW from my previous messages, I have already taken two steps in the pursuit of replacement or additional jobs for Ontario's manufacturing economy.

The first is an emphasis on incorporating new technologies into our present companies in Ontario, with the objective of augmenting product lines and numbers of employees. This proposal has been given to Premier Kathleen Wynne and will soon be given practical dimensions when it is coupled with the names of potential companies that could profit from

such alliances. The names of these enterprises have been solicited from members of each of PEO's 36 chapters in Ontario, at our recent Chapter Leaders Conference in Toronto. When received, Dunn & Bradstreet reports will be ordered for each of these enterprises. With their agreement, they will be presented to the premier as real, live candidates, with expansion possibilities using new technologies.

The second is the development of infrastructure renewal projects in India sought by their consul general in Toronto, Akhilesh Mishra, who, by the way, is also an engineering graduate. He has given me a list of potential projects for development, in which he hopes Canadian engineers will participate. In an attempt to begin the process, independently of PEO, I am personally proposing an energy facility in the south of India, to supplement the country's electrical grid capacity. Hopefully, others will take up the challenge in the many areas he has outlined. Would those members who are interested please contact me with potential alliances with our members?

Certainly, economic conditions in India are ripe for expansion in both manufacturing and infrastructure. To begin with, India is blessed with many well-educated engineers on site, poised to effect Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expansion plans.

Based upon an average hourly labour cost of \$0.92, compared to \$3.52 in China, according to the Boston Consulting Group, the economics for construction are certainly viable. The prime minister's plan is to build a giant industrial corridor between Delhi and Mumbai featuring high-speed trains and superhighways to turn the area into the equivalent of southern China's Guangdong province.

While both the adoption of our new technologies strategy and the Indian infrastructure initiatives have the potential to create work in design, consulting and manufacturing in Ontario, we have another approaching domestic situation we must also prepare to tackle. This is the ever-increasing "freelance economy" in Canada, as is taking place in the US, where the number of temporary workers is skyrocketing, while full-time employment is decreasing.

In a recent article in *Bloomberg Business Week*, it is noted that businesses must learn how to integrate employees that are happy "to trade

stability for flexibility"—a rather draconian relationship for many of us to contemplate. "Apparently many workers and companies are pursuing a model of work on an as-needed basis, producing a population of freelancers that can help a business scale up or down in a snap." According to Bloomberg, "by 2020, these guns for hire will comprise 40% of the US workforce, or about 60 million people, a number that was just 42.6 million in 2006."

Within the next decade, Bloomberg states, "two out of five Americans will have only loose ties with their employers." Apparently the "millennials" will be more comfortable than their predecessors in earning a living through less-stable, contract work. As reported by some, this group actually prefers this employment arrangement because they feel their time is more like their own.

If this is to be so, it is not beyond the realm of reason that when this trend takes hold, the engineering curriculum should be tailored specifically to accommodate competitive contract work of short duration, in specific fields, where, basically, our members must know more and more about less and less to be gainfully employed. This would require a realignment of the approved academic requirements (CEAB) and the approved experience qualifications (CEQB) to enable graduation as an engineer, while coping with fast-changing, short-term project work.

With this prediction of the pattern of work to come over the next five to 10 years, what can we expect will matter to surviving engineers, products, innovation, company lifetimes and, consequently, the economy in the near- and medium-term future?

I am confident we can cope with these new world conditions, but strongly recommend we undertake measures to design our education and experience requirements to cope with changes like these within the next five years. Thank you for your consideration of these concepts and happy new year to you and yours. Σ