

Peter M. DeVita,
P.Eng., M.A.Sc., M.B.A.,MCIPS, MADR, F.E.C.
For President-Elect, 2010

Mr/Mdm Chairperson, Fellow engineers and candidates. Thank you for coming tonight.

I am proud to have been involved in many positive changes in the profession –like the creation of PEO’s Enforcement Committee, OSPE, both PEO’s G.L.P. and OSPE’s P.A.N.. These are great tools, so how do we use them?

1. ‘Serving the Public Interest’ – Engineering and the Economy

The Engineering Act mandates PEO to ‘govern the practice of Engineering in order that the Public Interest may be [BOTH] served and protected.’

We have focused on the ‘protecting’ however, ‘Serving’ the public interest is really the essence of why society needs engineering. Engineers build economies and this ultimately serves society. This is our core value proposition. PEO is supposed to have a role in how Engineers serve that Public Interest. So what can we do?

Let me be clear - Serving the Public Interest is not the same thing as serving the interests of engineers.

The public interest is PEO’s responsibility while the interests of Engineers is OSPE’s.

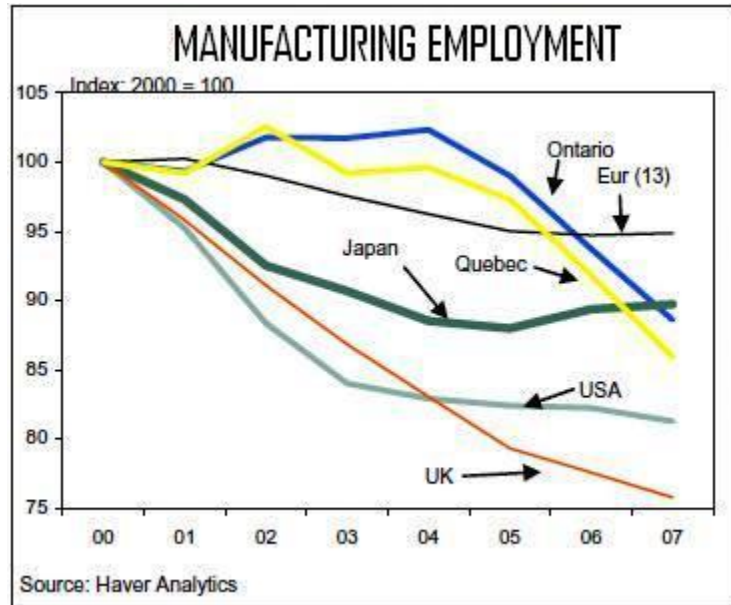
By turning some attention to serving the Public Interest we will be in a stronger position to influence governments and politicians.

Canadian Engineers are very good at infrastructure engineering, but we have lost ground on industry related engineering.

This is currently exemplified by Ontario's high loss of manufacturing jobs – the supposed heartland of Canadian industry.

This 'Great Recession' makes it clear that our economy is faltering. Canadian unemployment is running at 8.6% and Ontario at 9.2%, with most losses coming from the manufacturing sector.

Dr Tom Brzustowski, past chair of NSERC and author of 'the way ahead', gives us several ideas on what we can do.



He describes how innovative engineering leads to the commercialization of new inventions that create new products to fill our production facilities. The Canadian Academy of Engineering has also written extensively about the value and need for engineering innovation¹ in creating real wealth.

Some of my slides show how poor Canada has been in Productivity growth, R&D, and Invention rates – these are all related to engineering. We should be able to get government funding to help.

We can make a big difference, especially in these economic conditions.

We cannot simply do engineering. Engineers must be at the political decision table to prevent disasters². The Avro Arrow is one such example from Canadian history. How about Nortel? And will AECL be another?

¹ "Technological Entrepreneurship and Engineering in Canada", by the Canadian Academy of Engineering, Roger A. Blais, Ed., 1997.

² The Avro Arrow is one such example from Canadian history; some others are Nortel, Mitel, Massey Fergusson, Canada's Merchant Marine, Ontario Hydro, etc. – lost, killed or sold off to non-Canadians- where was the profession on these decisions?

With OSPE's and PEO's political lobby committees we can influence these economic disaster decisions that also impact 10's of 1000's of Engineering jobs.

The engineering profession MUST be constantly at the political decision table. This is essential to 'Serving the public interest'.

Dr Brzustowski's book gives us a core message and our new political arms give us the means to deliver it.

2. 'Protecting the Public Interest' – Rights to Practice

We protect the public interest by ensuring that Engineering is only practiced by Licensed Engineers. Much of our infrastructure engineering is properly licensed with exclusive rights to practice. In extreme contrast, manufacturing oriented engineering is faced with the Industrial Exception in Ontario's Engineering Act.

In spite of a lot of PEO talk to get rid of this clause it is still here. We have over 70% of engineering missing rights to practice, the fundamental property of a Licence. This condition gets worse as we introduce new Engineering disciplines.

I chaired the OSPE committee that spent almost 2 years examining how we can change the Industrial Exception. It is time for PEO to complete that effort and prepare a joint strategy with OSPE on addressing this long time thorn.

We have a good plan and the means to deliver it.

So in Conclusion

- To serve the public interest - Engineers understand the needs of our economy, and the economy needs our engineers. We can adopt Dr Brzustowski's ideas and our political committees to drive positive change that will benefit Ontario and engineers.
- We can improve 'protecting the public interest' by collaborating with OSPE on the Industrial Exception. We have a plan and the political tools to do it.

I ask for your support to turn these ideas into reality.

Thank You.