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Welcome

Autumn is officially here. It is time to get to work. It is time for planning and it is time for action.

CSCE is a complex organization with many moving parts. Committees, Divisions, Regions, Sections, staff... these are the moving parts of CSCE. And each moving part is made up of individuals – members of CSCE... you and I. The sum of all the parts is a whole. That whole is CSCE.

CSCE has a bold new vision. Our challenge is to understand what that vision means to each "moving part"... to our part... to me. When we function together with a common vision, we will achieve great things!

What did I do? What do I want to do?

This past week I visited two of our Ontario Sections. They were hosting the concluding National Lecture Tour presentations on the National Infrastructure Report Card. The University of Western Ontario (London) and McMaster University (Hamilton) provided the venue for these two events in the London Section and Hamilton / Niagara Section of CSCE, respectively. Both events were well attended and, as would be expected based on the venues, both had a majority participation by the engineering students. Nick Larson (Chair – Infrastructure Renewal Committee) presented the development and results of Canada's first Infrastructure Report Card published in 2012.

I appreciated the efforts of the London and Hamilton / Niagara Chapter leaders in hosting the NLT events. It afforded me an opportunity to make my first formal public appearances as President of CSCE. Judging from the interest expressed by the attendees following Nick's excellent presentation I can only conclude these events to be most successful and would like to express my thanks to the organizers, the Section leaders, the presenter and all the participants. I also appreciated the opportunity to offer a "presidential" message to the participants, especially to the engineering students, our future civil engineers.

Besides the Section visits and convening a National Management Committee meeting this month the focus of my attention has been to work with the infrastructure Report Card Steering Committee in preparing for the next iteration of the Report Card. We have been in the process of retaining the services of a support organization to assist with the survey and data analysis. It is difficult to go through the development of such a document only with voluntary workers. I hope we can report on the selection of a "support organization" for the Report Card very soon and with it, plans for the next publication.

In looking ahead I am hoping to focus the business of the Board in the development of a detailed implementation plan to guide CSCE in meeting its Vision 2020 goals and objectives. If you followed my last e-letter (August 2013), you will have noted my concluding comment that "we have a big job in front of us". The basis of this statement is founded in a broader mission for CSCE and for civil engineering at large in terms of global sustainability with infrastructure as our platform. CSCE's ability to influence this goal lies in its ability to achieve success with Vision 2020.

Vision 2020: CSCE's Student Members and Young Professionals

The Section meetings I attended this month provided an opportunity to offer a message to our young professionals and to our student members. It also reinforced that one of CSCE's strategic directions is "growing with youth". To state the obvious, young people are the future leaders of CSCE. Involvement in the activities of the Society provides opportunity for our young people to develop leadership skills

and to develop an understanding of an engineer's responsibilities in Canadian society.

This is an exciting time to be a young civil engineer – whether you are studying or already practicing. Infrastructure continues to be at the top of our political agenda at all levels. Political leaders have come to understand that infrastructure is a key to the economic development and success of our communities, our regions and our country. The management of civil infrastructure systems is the domain civil engineers. Civil engineers are in a place to be significantly influential in the future success of our communities, our regions and our country. It is critically important that we take this opportunity to be leaders that respond to this opportunity. In fact, I would suggest we have an obligation to respond.

In thinking about this obligation, I am reminded of the relevance of one of the objectives of the 2003 Technology Road Map. The objective was stated as follows:

...To ensure that educational, training and public outreach programs meet the needs of decision makers, the workforce and the industry.

In the next decade, CIS education, training and outreach initiatives will be widespread across Canada. These initiatives, focusing on construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure, will be directed to all levels of the CIS community to ensure that consultants, operators, managers and students have the academic and practical knowledge to fulfill their obligations. The improved dissemination of knowledge, along with advocacy and outreach programs directed to the public, will lead to a better understanding of CIS, the acceptance of new, innovative and affordable technologies, as well as to the adoption of improved CIS management practices by users and decision makers.

Embodied in this objective is a challenge for CSCE. Dissemination of knowledge, advocacy and outreach – these need to define CSCE to the rest of Canada. We need to share the knowledge we have about infrastructure and how it impacts global sustainability. We need to advocate for infrastructure...for sustainable infrastructure. We need to reach out to the rest of Canada, to stand up and be heard on these issues to influence change.

As we develop our implementation plan I envision a significant role for students and young professionals. World changing events are often defined by a common element – youth. Youth bring some very important characteristics to influence change – idealism and enthusiasm unbound by institutionalized practice. We need these characteristics in our advocacy and outreach for sustainability. I would also acknowledge the complimentary role of the mature experience of practicing civil engineers in this challenge of developing practice changes that achieve the higher goals of global sustainability. If ever a generational partnership is needed, it is now.

It is my belief that today's young civil engineers will be the generation that implements the types of the management practices for sustainable infrastructure we are currently trying to understand. These practices will be normal business for them and they will wonder how their predecessors ever did business that did not incorporate the principles of sustainability. The obligation of current practicing engineers is to identify the long term vision and to set the stage for the types of change needed to achieve the vision.

The ideas and participation of all "moving parts" of CSCE is essential and must be guided by a common vision if we are going to be successful in enacting the types of change that will make a real difference.

Programs / Conferences

The London and Hamilton / Niagara Sections hosted the last two sessions of the 2012-2013 National Lecture Tour on Canada's Infrastructure Report Card. Twenty students and engineers attended in London and 30 students and engineers attended in Hamilton. A total of 471 participants attended the entire tour, which was very well received.

Did you know?

In 2003 the federal government formally entered the infrastructure world with the appointment of Hon. Andrew Scott as the first Minister of State (Infrastructure) by Prime Minister Paul Martin in his first cabinet.

The current infrastructure portfolio is held by the Hon. Denis Lebel, Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs. Mr. Lebel is also the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. Is it a coincidence that the Minister responsible for infrastructure is also responsible for economic development?

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