

Canadian Society for
Civil Engineering



Société canadienne
de génie civil



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Welcome

Two weeks of sand, sun and ocean does a world of good to relax and recharge. It is all the better when, while away, the winter of 2013/14 decides it is finally finished as well. Growing up on a farm I was not always happy to be working on certain jobs. When I complained about it I was usually met with the phrase... “a change is as good as a rest” as a new task was assigned. I appreciated and learned about the value of a good rest but I have also appreciated the energy that accompanies a new task. I would like to encourage each and every volunteer worker in CSCE with the challenge of initiating a number of new tasks and different approaches or perspectives on existing tasks. The work of the society is ramping up and I am looking forward to seeing some tangible results of those new efforts.

What happened? What is happening? What is going to happen?

Last month's letter focused on some high level conceptual thinking about sustainable infrastructure and the concept of sustainable communities. This was intended as a backdrop to our up-coming Halifax conference with the theme of “Sustainable Municipalities”. This month I would like to come out of the clouds a bit and think about the operation of CSCE as an organization. I have come to realize that this is my 11th e-letter. It is time to think about what has happened during this past year as we prepare for our annual conference and to turn over a new leaf. The past few years saw a number of negative trends and concern for a re-ignition of the Society. This led to the adoption of our new vision. That was two

years ago. The intent of the new vision was to effect some changes that will achieve some new results focused on our new vision. What have we accomplished over the past two years with regards to our desire for change, for different results?

We are in the process of implementing this new vision. We are looking for some different results in terms of what CSCE is doing for its members, in increasing CSCE membership with a focus on youth, in being recognized by all Canadians for our contribution to the life we enjoy in Canada, in being influential in choices that are made in the country that impact sustainability of the infrastructure on which our lifestyle depends.

One of the longstanding issues that challenge our volunteers has been the relationship and linkages between our discipline components and our geographic components (i.e. Divisions / Committees and Regions / Sections). Under the strategic direction to “enhance member services” I would like to applaud the efforts of our Senior Vice-President, Tony Bégin, in rallying Regional VP’s and Section Chairs in seeking input from Division and Committee Chairs to support Region and Section activities. Tony’s approach is focused on face-to-face contact... people talking to people. He has challenged Regional VP’s to increase face-to-face contact with Section Chairs to encourage on-going strengthening of Sections. This has extended to a proposed program that links the Regions / Sections with Divisions / Committees. His proposed program is not to change what Divisions/Committees do, nor to change what Regions and Sections do. Tony’s proposed program is to capture technical information developed and shared by Divisions / Committees with CSCE members (i.e. a key activity that defines CSCE as a learned society) and find ways for this content to be shared as a basis for some Regional / Section activities (i.e. local lecture tours, dinner meeting speakers, etc.). This will challenge all concerned. It will require hard work. If we are going to expect different results we will need to work on doing some things differently.

In the context of our strategic direction for “leadership in sustainable infrastructure” I would like to add one more challenge, specifically to our Divisions / Committees. Again, acknowledging technical knowledge that defines CSCE as a learned society and Divisions / Committees being the primary sources of this technical knowledge, I would like to challenge that this information be shared with others on a broader scale. I would like to have one outcome of workshops and specialty conferences to include a statement of social importance and impact that would be communicated to a broad Canadian audience – a statement that demonstrates advancements in technical research and development that has a potential and future impact on Canadian society, addressing lifestyle or sustainability issues in our communities and/or country as a whole. Civil engineers have a direct influence on so many of our current community development issues! We need to be heard.

CSCE as usual, is also working on all of its regular on-going activities including the planning and implementing of specialty conferences, preparations of the hundreds of papers / presentations that are part of the CSCE programs over the year, dinner meetings with special speakers, national lecture tours, continuing education programs, young professionals and student activities and international branch activities. While these are going on CSCE is implementing a number of new initiatives of note that are aligned with and support one or more of the Society’s

three strategic directions. The following are noted:

1. Members Survey (ACC) – the Membership Services Committee chaired by Peter Calcetas, is undertaking a members survey. Response thus far has been slow. Unless responses are provided it is very difficult to target our activities to address what you, CSCE members, are thinking and what is important to you. I would encourage all members to respond to the survey as soon as possible.
2. National Infrastructure Report Card (PCC) – The inaugural issue of the Canadian Report Card was released in 2012. The Infrastructure Renewal Committee is engaged in the preparation of the next release scheduled for 2015. This activity is an example of CSCE partnering with three other national associations on a common activity. Besides the Report Card itself the process of preparing this report offers a side benefit in terms of an ongoing relationship with FCM, CPWA and CCA.
3. Canadian Sustainability Rating System for Infrastructure (PCC) – the Infrastructure Renewal Committee (IRC) is engaged in an initiative related to the development of a sustainability rating system for infrastructure. Along with Nick Larson, Chair of the IRC and Doug Salloum, I had the opportunity recently to meet with a committee of the Council of Deputy Ministers of Transportation and Highway Safety to present CSCE's position on this issue. The concept was well received with an expectation to be invited to present this message to the Deputy Ministers in the fall. This initiative also has evolved on-going relationships with three other national organizations – CCA, CPWA and ACEC.
4. Award for Governmental Leadership in Sustainable Infrastructure – CSCE will be awarding its third award at the conference in Halifax. This is a significant award gaining increasing popularity and reaching out to other sectors of our society, including the young artists of Canada who are in a competition to create a work of art as a symbol for the Governmental Leadership Award.

This list of activities simply highlights the many initiatives that are underway within the Society. I would like to thank all volunteers and staff for their participation in making CSCE a leader on the national stage. We are seeking results from our operational and program activities that are different than some of the results experienced in the past few years. With that in mind new initiatives and new approaches to existing programs have and are being tested. As new programs are tested it is highly likely adjustments will need to be made. Some activities will not be as successful as we thought. The bottom line is, efforts are being made to do things differently and everyone's indulgence and support is critically important. The following overstated cliché comes to mind... "definition of insanity - doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result". CSCE is trying new approaches and expecting different results. During my next and final year as President it is my hope and belief we will see some of the changes we desire and CSCE will be a prominent and relevant organization not only for its members but for Canadians at large.

Did You Know?

The Van Horne Institute recognized as a leading institute for public policy, recently

published a report titled "Catching Up: The Case for Infrastructure Banks in Canada". This report discusses the issue of governmental funding for infrastructure, making a case for iBanks. The Executive Summary of the report notes the following:

In the slow recovery from the devastating world-wide recession of 2008-9, Canada continues to face a large "infrastructure deficit." Traditional ways of paying for new infrastructure projects or renewal --- property, gas taxes, and government grants --- may not be able to finance all major projects in future. Around the world, countries and subnational political entities are turning to Infrastructure Banks ("iBanks") to provide another kind of capital for infrastructure projects.

Canada possesses world-class expertise in its insurance companies, pension funds and investment banks to lead in the creation of national, provincial or municipal iBanks. This paper urges all levels of government and the private sector to "catch up" to these discussions and to look at various forms of iBanks and ask whether it is time for Canada to create one or more iBanks.

Food for thought!
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