

Canadian Society for
Civil Engineering



Société canadienne
de génie civil



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Welcome

This e-Letter marks the start of my second term as President. I was recalling the first of this series of communique's to the members of CSCE and realize how different my outlook is now as compared to 12 months ago. I would describe my perspective in 2013 as '*I did not know what I did not know*'. Now in 2014 I think I have a better grasp of '*knowing what I do not know*'. I need to start this month's letter with a heartfelt thank you to CSCE – members, staff, leaders, Board members, committees... all of you for the support and engagement in the work of our Society. I feel these past 12 months have been the equivalent of my President-elect term where a lot of learning and preparing for my formal term as President begins. And, as they say, now the work begins! Now I would like to now ask for your on-going support as we ramp up CSCE activities and exposure in this coming year.

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

The key initiative in terms of recent activity is, of course, our Annual Conference. Halifax provided an excellent backdrop for this event. The hard work of the Local Organizing Committee, Conference Chair (John Newhook – Dalhousie University), Honorary Chair (Carl Yates – Halifax Water), our Head office staff (Doug Salloum, Lois Arkwright) and all the other folks involved (volunteers, staff, sub-committees, speakers, organizers, etc.) certainly paid off. Well done all! I found the conference particularly uplifting. A few highlights that stand out for me include:

- The celebration of our past, present and future engineers with the historical designation of three amazing engineering sites in Halifax, the awards celebrations of the current engineering successes of some amazing civil engineers and finally a glimpse into the future with awards celebrations of our student and young professionals. It made me feel so proud to be a civil engineer!
- The degree of integration of our students and young professionals into the overall program was particularly impactful based on the energy level the young engineers added and the opportunity for young and not-so-young to interact!
- The reinforcement of our sustainable infrastructure initiative came through not only in name with the Conference theme (Sustainable Municipalities) but also in the papers and presentations, the community leadership and innovation awards, the hallway and mealtime discussions,... we have a lot of material to push out to the general public to show the impact civil engineering has in their lives and in the future development of our nation.
- The ramp up in communications was great. The LOC had a number of press releases and notices issued as part of the conference and yes, we had the social media thing going. While I did not “tweet” during the conference, I did get a personal lesson on how it worked, thanks to one of our young professional leaders – thank you Nigel.
- On a more personal level I observed social camaraderie, old friends, new friends, a good time being shared by relationships that went beyond professional or social events. I learned, during my sports coaching career, that one characteristic of championship teams included team mates who got along outside the field of play. If civil engineers are to do something meaningful in their career it will take colleagues, partners and professional acquaintances that truly enjoy each other’s company. CSCE’s annual conference provides the opportunity to nurture these relationships.

I know these are only a few of many successes of our Conference. I would be happy to hear your own stories about the conference experience. I am now looking forward to Regina, Saskatchewan next year!

The conference in Halifax ended with the inaugural Board meeting for the 2014-2015 Board elected at the AGM. We have some new faces around the table that will bring new energy and enthusiasm to the work of the Board. I am looking forward to this coming year with anticipation and expectation of great things to be accomplished. Many thanks to those who volunteer their time for this important work. Let me suggest what you should expect to see in the coming year in terms of “ramped up” activities for CSCE, somewhat of a to-do list from my perspective:

- More reporting on the implementation of our strategic directions. Look for a report card on our achievements.
 - Continued activity to improve communications between Regions / Sections and Divisions / Committees
 - Post conference feed-back processes to glean information of interest to share with the general population about civil engineering research and developments and their impact on Canadian life
 - Position papers and policy statements that will bring CSCE into the forefront
-

of some of the important issues of the day (sustainability rating of infrastructure, development of the Canada's Arctic, investments in science and engineering research, ...)

- Increasing liaison with our sister organization ASCE. I had the privilege of meeting with the President of ASCE in Halifax to set the stage for some future initiatives.
- A communications strategy for CSCE that includes the development and implementation of communication tools to bring CSCE more visibility on a more regular basis
- Next iteration of the Canadian Infrastructure Report Card
- Reinvigoration of the National Lecture Tour activity with the potential to include Regional Lecture Tours in this program. This initiative would be a linked to the issue of increased communications overall
- Operational review of CSCE to ensure the individual parts are working together to make the whole larger than the sum of the parts.
- Increasing engagement of our students and young professionals

This list could go on. You probably get the idea that it is going to be busy. Maybe my expectations are higher than what can realistically get done. I would rather set a high bar and come close than limit expectations to something less. I would be more than happy to hear responses on our plans with suggestions that may be used to help achieve our goals. Many of these initiatives are already well under way with initial plans and activities to get them started.

Did you know?

I had the privilege of dedicating three amazing feats of engineering as National Civil Engineering Historic Sites in Halifax. The Angus L. Macdonald Bridge, the Halifax Graving Dock and the Robie Street Reservoir are a tribute to the engineers of the past and their ability to design “sustainable” structures that still service Canadians today. Each of these accomplishments has their own story.

One interesting comment was made about the Robie Street Reservoir, originally constructed in 1913, over 100 years ago. It is one of the few structures that survived the Halifax explosion of 1917. Google ‘Halifax Explosion’ to appreciate this story. This first test of the structure must have given the Engineers the confidence that they had indeed built a sustainable structure. Little would they know this structure would need to survive a second explosion. In 1999 a controlled blast removed the iconic dome roof to make way for its replacement with an aluminum geodesic structure, the largest dome replacement project in Canada. Our conference Honorary Chair, Carl Yates of Halifax Water described his personal experience with the second explosion with two TV cameras, one on either side of him watching the blast and Carl’s trepidation if the blast did not go as planned. He imagined the cameras turning to him for an immediate reaction. Carl must have been a confident engineer that day. As we all know, Carl did not have to answer any question about what went wrong, because it all went right! It was engineered that way! See it on You Tube – Google ‘Robie Street Dome Demolition’.

This facility and the others dedicated in Halifax this year stand as a testament to civil engineering then relative to the core strength of the original “sustainable”

structures and now as innovative and creative engineering is applied to keep these structures functional today. These are examples of why civil engineers have earned the right to be heard. We need to stand up and announce these types of accomplishments that surely make us all proud to be counted as civil engineers!

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