



# Guelph Engineering Society

Report on Professional Engineers of Ontario at Queens University,  
November 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>.

Prepared By: Darius Mali, Senator.

## 1. Purpose of Conference

*This conference discussed the different aspects of ethics in the workplace. They engaged the participants in real life scenarios to feel the full aspect of ethics, to grasp the real life consequences.*

## 2. Personal Goals for Conference

*My personal goal for this conference was to keep an open mind and learn as much as possible from the professional about a very subjective issue. I gained an understanding of how ethics are dealt with in the work place and some of the grey areas that can occur. This information was beneficial to bring back to the University of Guelph, since I sit on the petition and appeals board, and I face a lot of ethical decisions in that position. The background and knowledge received will contribute to the appeals being presented, and since people from all over the University bring appeals to the board this has an impact on the entirety of the school.*

## 3. Summary of Events

*Presentation 1 – The world (of engineering) is flat (maybe)  
This presentation talked about the title relates to, at makes an engineer successful and engineering ethics. The title simply implies that since technology has advanced so far that business can be conducted from anywhere around the world. This also implies that we have to keep up with technology and embrace it in order to advance in our careers. The one point that you will see me mention over and over is that engineers have a duty to the public to act with fairness, loyalty, devotion to ideals, personal integrity, and fidelity to the public needs. One interesting point made was that, personal values can become variables in engineering decision making.*

*Presentation 2 – Evolution of the code of ethics  
Early on in the 1930's people had a fascination with technology and engineers with trusted and loved. Then the big accident of NASA and the public lost its interest in technology and things*

were halted. Now the fascination has come back and there is a desire to push it again. During these times a set of ethics was developed and soon enforced by the PEO (Professional Engineers of Ontario). These would build the backbone of how engineers are to act and perform the tasks they are assigned.

#### *Presentation 3B – Our Responsibility as Engineers*

*This was the best presentation that I attended at the conference. We discussed, What is ethics, Ethics in general, and making a case to see if something is ethical. Ethics is how to make sustainable decisions. Ethics is the “right” thing to do, and it should be known that just because the law states one thing does not make that ethical, and the example used was slavery. Also we need to be ethical to obtain a trust in our profession. Making a case for ethical decisions has three criteria. First, logos; the logical argument. Second, ethos; what is the right thing to do. Finally, pathos; the human dimension or empathy. These three things should be kept in mind when making decisions in the workplace.*

#### *Presentation 4 – Ethics, Engineering & Politics*

*This was a presentation given by Howard Brown, with a question period to Minister of the Environment John Gerretsen. They discussed how more engineers need to get involved in politics and how they need people who are performing the science in the house of commons. The minister was asked many question about the current situation in politics and engaged by myself and Adam Kristoferson about energy from waste applications in Ontario and brown field sites and how they will be handled. This was a great presentation and a great opportunity to ask the minister questions on topics that we are currently studying.*

#### *Presentation 6 – Professional Development*

*A panel of professionals discussed questions that pertain to professional development. Examples include: How to stay up to date on ethical issues? Should there be different licenses for engineers? Does education teach of talk about ethics enough? Etc.*

## **4. Evaluation**

### **i) Conference Organizers**

*The conference went very smoothly, with the organizers running the events well. Things ran on time, for the most part, and were conducted in a professional manner. The speakers in the conference were practicing engineers and took the time to offer their professional advice and experiences on ethics. To improve this event I thought that less money could have gone to the bar tab and more to breakfast and the wine and cheese event.*

### **ii) Delegates**

*I thought that I was attentive and represented the University of Guelph well, along with the other delegates from Guelph. We all had to give a group presentation, which made us get involved. I asked questions when appropriate and felt like I obtained important information from the professionals. I gained a better understanding of what an engineer’s role*

*really is, engineers have a duty to the public to act with fairness, and to do what is "right". Our duty is not to law or to the contract.*

*I wish to make another comment on the professional level of other delegates at the conference. Since this is a professional engineer's of Ontario conference I expected other delegates to conduct the conference in a professional manner. I was surprised with what I saw. The conference seemed like a time to party and drink for a large number of the delegates. There were many people sleeping during the presentations, and when someone takes time of their own to make a presentation it is very disrespectful to sleep during it. Also in some more rare cases people left at lunch to go back to the hotel to do homework or start to drink. This really left a bad taste in my mouth and wondered how much money was wasted that weekend. One person in my presentation group had gone out the night before our presentation and was in no condition to talk. I had to take over her part and do the speaking. I have no problem with people going out and having fun, but just be able to get up and be active in the discussion the next day. I had a great time at this conference, which brings me to my last point. Everyone at that conference seemed to have been to a lot of other conferences and knew each other. They talked about how they have heard the topics discussed before. I am just wondering what good it does to have the same people go to every conference? I learned a lot and I think others would have the same experience. I do not like how all these conferences are about the little cliques and a chance for "old friends" to go out and drink. This seems a little concerning.*