

Message from the Chair



We welcome the new executives who joined our team at our March 1st annual general meeting (AGM). Joining our executive for the first time are Brenda Bao, Michael Chan, Adam Kavski, and Miriam Vasen. Kavski is past chair of the Simcoe-Muskoka chapter. Meanwhile, Chan, who was previously employed by the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) as chapters manager, is now our government liaison program (GLP) chair.

We are a powerful, dynamic group of individuals. We look forward to a successful year ahead of us.

Our AGM and certificate presentation ceremony held at the Novotel Hotel in North York on March 1st was a success. The organizers of the event, which included Changiz Sadr, Frank Sorokin, Mark Friedberg, Michael Marr, Nanda Lwin, Gary Marcarian and Miriam Mozes, did a great job and it was truly successful. It was an example of teamwork at its best.

This season, our main focus is to increase the number of volunteers to join our commit-

tees. If necessary, we will create subcommittees. Our goal is to have a group of 60 to 70 people in the executive and the various committees. We will do our best to achieve this as we have close to 4,000 members within the boundaries of our chapter, making us the second biggest chapter in the PEO's East-Central region (after York chapter).

If you have any plans of promoting your business and wish to network with other engineers in Willowdale-Thornhill, you are more than welcome to do so. You can also promote your business and other ideas that you may have by organizing a seminar. The executive will advise you if the suggested seminar meets the mandate of the chapter.

Let's look upon our chapter as the Coliseum of Willowdale-Thornhill, where we can interact, share our experiences and discuss issues related to our profession.

Join our team of dynamic professionals. Let us hear from you.

Regards,
Noubar Takessian P.Eng.
Chair, Willowdale-Thornhill PEO Chapter

The Chronicle

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Willowdale-Thornhill PEO Executive

Noubar Takessian, Chair; **Changiz Sadr**, Vice-Chair; **Mark Friedberg**, Treasurer; **Michael Marr**, Secretary; **Brenda Bao**; **Mario Boetto**, Education; **Michael Chan**, Government Liaison; **Adam Kavski**; **Nanda Lwin**, Newsletter; **Gary Marcarian**; **Miriam Mozes**; **Frank Sorokin**, Webmaster; **Miriam Vasen**

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Promoting engineering

By Changiz Sadr, P.Eng.

The main focus in my previous articles has been the prestige of the engineering profession in Canada and the public's lack of awareness. To be more effective I have been actively involved in several related professional groups in addition to my regular chapter activities. I would like to mention some of these activities in this article and I would appreciate your feedback and opinion of the effectiveness of these activities.

I joined the Toronto professional chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) (www.ewb.org) in January 2008 when it was established. EWB was initially established in universities and almost of all its members were students. In January, EWB decided to expand its activities beyond post-secondary education and established the Toronto professional chapter; that was when I joined its board as the liaison to the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO). EWB's board consists of several young, enthusiastic and energetic people who can actively promote engineering's image to the public through several different outreach programs; this is exactly what we need in order to promote our image.

Last year, I joined Engineers for Engineers (www.eng4eng.ca) which is a group of volunteer engineers who get together once a month to discuss current issues facing the PEO. This is usually done with the view of "an outsider" to submit recommendations to the PEO for improving its operation and governance. One of the major activities in this group is promoting the engineering profession's image in public. For example, industry exemption is one of the items that is being discussed and recommended to the PEO council with the ultimate goal of lobbying the government and enforcing the exemption. That way, more engineering positions will require licensed professional engineers thereby increasing the market demand for licensed engineers and in turn making the profession more valuable.

I was also invited to join a committee that was established by Humber College to evaluate various engineering specialty software applications offered in present post-secondary curriculum. We had our first meeting on May 12th where we discussed specialty software applications in three disciplines – civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering. Being an electrical engineer, I recommended a few applications: E-TAP for lighting calculations; PLS-CADD, PLS-Tower, and PLS-POLE for transmission lines; and ASPEN for relay settings. Although this program is mainly offered to help engineers new to Canada to break into the Canadian job market, these specialty courses will result in more knowledgeable engineers in the market. They can also balance the demand-supply equation and result in better value for engineering professionals.

I am also a mentor for newcomers and new graduates, helping them to earn their professional engineering (P.Eng.) and engineer-in-training (EIT) licenses, and to find an engineering position in Canada. TRIEC (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Center) and its various mentoring partnership programs organize this mentoring program. In addition to all of these activities, I am an active member in my own community in engineering-related matters working with other engineering and non-engineering organizations. This gives me a great opportunity to promote engineering amongst these organizations and their non-engineering partners.

I hope to see engineering on top of a list of highly-valued professions one day soon.

Changiz Sadr, P.Eng., CTP, VoIPS, CTME, is the Vice-Chair of the Willowdale-Thornhill PEO chapter and is a member of the PEO's Experience Requirements Committee. He can be reached at changiz.sadr@wtpeo.org.

Dividends: A good source of income

By Brenda Bao, P.Eng.

Looking for a way to add both income and growth potential to your investment portfolio? Consider dividend-paying stocks.

When you invest in shares that pay dividends, you get a regular stream of income and the potential for your investment to increase in value. That means dividend stocks can help meet your income requirements, and potentially boost your wealth - as long as you're willing to take on more risk.

However, an investment in dividend stocks doesn't mean you have to go overboard on risk. While stocks are inherently more risky than conservative interest-generating investments, sticking to dividend-paying shares of high-quality blue-chip companies can help you manage that risk.

What are dividends? They're the portion of profits that companies pay out to shareholders. Typically larger, well established companies pay dividends - usually quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

These companies pay dividends as a means of delivering value to their shareholders. Paying investors to hold shares can be an enticement for shareholders to not only retain the shares, but also purchase more. Younger and smaller companies may not pay dividends because they prefer to reinvest all profits in the company to further growth.

There are more advantages to dividend-paying investments than you might think. In addition to producing a steady stream of income, dividend-paying investments can be less vulnerable to rising interest rates than some other income investments. Plus, dividend payments have the potential to rise as company earnings grow, while interest payments from most investments remain static.

Dividend-paying stocks can also help reduce the overall volatility of your equity portfolio

because price moves of these stocks are typically less than those of non-dividend-paying equities. Because of this income potential, investors are less likely to sell dividend-paying stocks in turbulent markets, which tempers price swings.

There's also an income tax advantage. Dividends from Canadian corporations are eligible for the dividend tax credit, which reduces the tax you pay on income from these shares. Interest income, on the other hand, is fully taxable. And if shares increase in value there are also capital gains, which receive preferential tax treatment.

How do you pick suitable dividend-paying stocks? Since a steady stream of income is a major consideration, invest in companies that are capable of generating an uninterrupted stream of dividends, perhaps with the potential of increases down the road. Some possibilities to consider include large, blue chip companies with good cash flow and profit histories, companies that have a solid record of paying uninterrupted dividends, and companies that have consistently raised their dividends. Keep in mind, however, that dividends can be increased, decreased or eliminated at any point without notice.

Also be wary of extremely high dividend yields. Unrealistic payouts could be cut in the future - which not only reduces income, but can sink share prices.

When evaluating dividend-paying stocks and their underlying companies, it's helpful to compare similar businesses. One of the most important comparison tools is dividend yield - the annual dividend amount divided by the stock price, expressed as a percentage.

Another key comparison is the dividend payout ratio, which is the percentage of company earnings paid to shareholders in dividends. Comparing these figures for dif-

ferent companies in similar industries allows you to gauge individual investment potential.

And finally, never invest in a company simply because it offers a good dividend. The longevity of that dividend and the health of the share price depend on whether the business is sound and has good prospects for the future.

Brenda Bao is a financial advisor at Edward Jones Investments, Member CIPF. She holds an MBA and a professional engineering license (P.Eng.), and is an executive of the Willowdale-Thornhill PEO chapter. She can be reached at (416) 490-8380, web: www.edwardjones.com, e-mail address: brenda.bao@edwardjones.com



The Willowdale-Thornhill PEO chapter holds a licence certificate presentation for the latest recipients of the professional engineering (P.Eng.) licence at the Novotel in North York on March 1, 2008.

ENGINEERING NOTES by Nanda Lwin

Wasn't that a party!

I can't begin to tell you how great it is to think outside of the box. In January, the executive met to plan this year's Willowdale-Thornhill Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) chapter annual general meeting. We decided to make this one different from the others...to shake things up, so to speak. For one thing, we changed the location to a more accessible venue. In the past, we tapped the Armenian Community Centre and All Saints Centre for rooms. However, this year was different: we chose Novotel, an upscale hotel right on the Yonge subway line and in the heart of downtown North York.

The business portion of the evening included Major Corneliu Chisu, P.Eng., a PEO councillor, who spoke to us about his ventures as a military engineer in Afghanistan. Meanwhile Peter DeVita, P.Eng., another councillor, gave a presentation on the history of engineering. In all, I figured we had about 20 or so engineers received their professional engineering license (P.Eng.) for the first time, during the certificate presentation.

We also aimed for a more casual evening for the March 1st meeting, opting for a Saturday night dance party to immediately follow the more formal business proceedings – unprecedented in recent memory. Veteran disc jockey Bill Wilson cranked out the tunes from Kool & the Gang to Chris DeBurgh to Engelbert Humperdinck, an appropriate mix considering the demographics of the crowd.

In all, the March 1st AGM marked a departure from the somewhat more formal business meetings we're all used to. There's nothing like thinking outside of the box...

Nanda Lwin, P.Eng., is a professor of civil engineering technology at Seneca College. He is also a journalist and the author of several books.