

It's a small world, after all

It is a small world, and we are being taught to think globally, and act locally in all phases of our lives and work. In this issue, we look at how this tenet applies to the regulated professions and internationally trained professionals, and some of the efforts being made to bridge the gap.

In the Toronto area, since the beginning of the year alone, there have been at least four conferences focusing on how to integrate internationally trained professionals into our society and workforce. Our new associate editor, Michael Mastromatteo, reports on two such conferences in our News section (pp. 11, 12) and his reports show that a big part of the frustration for both the regulators and the professionals is the inability to assess credentials as promptly as would be preferred. He also looks at the issues facing regulators of the professions relating to the outsourcing of professional services. (p. 42).

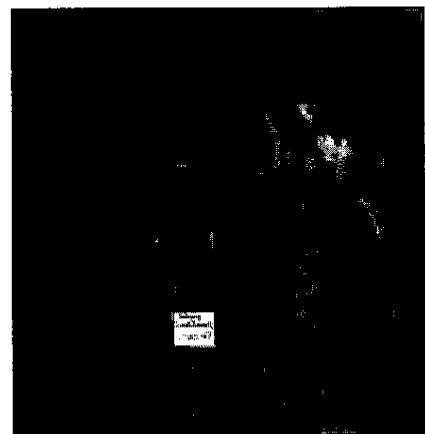
Our coverage includes a look at a project to help those trained internationally in engineering to find suitable employment in Canada, (p. 34) and we have a report from an umbrella group that speaks to access issues with an immigrant voice (p. 38).

As we are discussing borders and barriers and getting beyond them, this seems like a good place to mention the recent Annual General Meeting of Engineers Without Borders (EWB). The four-day conference, starting February 4, sought to "broaden understanding of the goals and challenges that surround development work, and also learn about the specific ways that ...actions overseas and in Canada can help achieve these goals," conference co-chairs Anupam Singhal and Nicolas Kruchten wrote in their welcome letter to conference delegates.

About 350 people attended the conference, which looked at ways to contribute to the United Nations Millennium development goals to reduce poverty, increase basic education, eliminate gender disparity, reduce maternal and child mortality,

halt and reverse the spread of AIDS, Malaria and other illnesses, increase environmental sustainability and increase global partnership for development. (See the website www.ewb.ca or www.unmillenniumproject.org for more.)

About 425 people attended the closing gala. The guest speaker at the banquet was well-known Canadian social advocate Stephen Lewis. In recent years he has worked tirelessly to alleviate the plight of those with AIDS in Africa as the United Nations Special Envoy to HIV/AIDS in Africa. The depth and breadth of his social



Catherine Karakatsanis, P.Eng., (left) board member, Ontario Professional Engineers Foundation for Education (FFE), presents the first ever "Leaders for the Future" Scholarship, to Engineers Without Borders volunteer Samina Hashmi, at the EWB Annual Conference in February. The new scholarship was established last fall by the FFE to recognize the outstanding leadership qualities of Ontario engineering students who are selected for overseas assignments for EWB. Hashmi is a third-year electrical engineering student at Carleton University.

commitment, stated so eloquently in the evening's introductions, is worth repeating. He has worked on race relations in Toronto, AIDS in Africa, and investigating the genocide in Rwanda. He has 18 honorary degrees, and has been named a Companion of the Order of Canada—all for a man who would tell us: "I flunked out of U of T twice—once as an undergrad

and once from the Law School. It was a consistent performance."

Lewis said that international involvement has not always been to the benefit of the communities that have been the recipients of it. At the macro level, he said, "these economies have been damaged by the international financial institutions," adding that the policies and programs of institutions like The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have proven to be unfeasible. Many, he said, misunderstand the legacy of such international involvement.

"The poverty," he said, "is inherent in the economic policies we imposed on them for many years."

Lewis said that the Without Borders model, pioneered by the French medical group Médecins sans frontières (Msf) or Doctors Without Borders, has been adopted by other social organizations and even governments: "The government of South Africa," he reported, "will use the Msf model."

He was also encouraged by the renewed levels of volunteerism from Canadian students, and their commitment to make a contribution to society. "There is a renaissance of young people engaging in international development," he said. "Frankly, it is mostly young women," he added, who often find themselves in the "most egregious and threatening situations." But their efforts are well-needed and have their own rewards.

In encouraging young people to get involved he said: "I salute you. Take a chunk of your life, and give it to the developing world. You will get great rewards from it."

Joan Bailey
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