

GE 449  
MID-TERM EXAMINATION  
FEBRUARY 26, 1998

Time 2:30pm to 4:00 pm  
Mark - 20% of the final mark for GE 449

In the past, associations of professional engineers, such as the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan, came under criticism for being too insular. They dealt almost exclusively with admitting engineers into the Association, dealing with complaints as they arose, and 'protecting' the engineering profession from competition from others such as the architects. During the recent past the associations of professional engineers have become much more proactive. For example, the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan became much more proactive starting in the 1970s. It became an active supporter of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers in such areas as setting standards for the admission of applicants from non-accredited universities (basically non-Canadian), and the accreditation of engineering programs in Canada. Later, with a 'bit' of encouragement, the Association became involved in university education, from having a representative on the Selection Committees for Deans of Engineering, to promoting engineering education and assisting engineering students. These activities included (and still do) such matters as scholarships and prizes for engineering students, gold medal awards at both of the universities to the most distinguished graduate at each school, support of the engineering libraries (now \$7,000 to each library each year), financial assistance for student publications, student travel, etc. Other activities include advertising the profession by such means as billboards and publishing the names of the gold medal winners in the newspapers. All of this cost money - money which comes from the annual fees of the members.

Not all members support such activities and a particular well written letter appeared in the December 1997 - January 1998 issue of The Professional Edge, the publication of the now APEGS, objecting to the use of fees for the support of such activities. A copy of this letter is reproduced here.

There is only one question on this examination paper and it is this. Compose a letter which could be sent to the Editor of The Professional Edge either supporting or disagreeing with the author (Mr. William Hughes, P. Eng.). Your letter must not exceed 600 words. **You will not be marked on whether you agree or disagree with Mr. Hughes, but on the arguments that you present and on your composition.**

# To the Editor

William Hughes, P.Eng.  
2509 Albert Ave., Saskatoon, Sask. S7J 1K7

Aug. 27, 1997

Dear Professional Edge Committee:

I am compelled to write this letter by the APEGS President's Message in the August/September 1997 issue of The Professional Edge. Her reference to the many services and activities that our professional fees pay for did not awaken within me any sense of intense gratitude. Nor did I feel grateful that I would be allowed to continue paying these mandatory, unavoidable, legally required, and inevitable fees.

My opinions may be dissenting ones. I understand the requirements of a democratically run organization: minority views will not dictate policy. It is also usually understood that dissenting views are inherent in democracy and that change cannot come without discussion of dissenting views.

The president is quite safe in stating that the real purpose of the association is to regulate the professions for the benefit of the public. However, as I understand it, the association is required to administer the act. The act does not require the association to improve the public's image of engineers, to procure insurance, or to engage in education programs. Neither does the act require the association to engage in efforts to convince its members how terrible a lack of self-regulation is and how we should increase the association's bureaucracy in order to avoid government regulation.

I feel that the association should administer the act and that is all. If I wish to join a social club out to make the world a better place for engineers, then I will do so.

I am not grateful for an opportunity to comply with legislated requirements. I would like to avoid further such opportunities.

I do not want someone advertising on my behalf about how wonderful engineers are. It seems terribly rude to me. The public's perception of engineers would be better improved by engineers being nice people who do good work. If the public does not care about it then that is too bad for us.

That other professions pay more for registration should be irrelevant. I am filled with compassion for people who pay more onerous fees. I do not think that the amount other professions pay should have anything to do with how much we pay.

If the public, represented by the government, feels that the obligation of the code of ethics is not enough and wants to remove our self regulation and impose random tests, additional bureaucracy, logbooks, annual reviews, monthly seminars or what have you, then more power to them. I cannot help but feel that self regulating bodies are ultimately self serving. Frantic efforts to avoid this with funds designated to protect the public seems improper. Doing unto ourselves before others do unto us seems futile.

The public's (such as it is, consisting of my co-workers, friends and family) respect for me is based on my behaviour and reputation. People I meet are unimpressed by my qualifications, and I don't press it on them. If someone has become a professional engineer hoping for respect and adulation, they have been sadly misinformed.

I became an engineer for the opportunity to build useful things, to get satisfaction out of seeing an idea take form and substance. I did not become an engineer in order to prove, continuously, how competent or well educated I was.

That we must comply with the requirements of the association is an unfortunate consequence of the realities that surround us. I do not view these requirements as a privilege, but as a necessity.

With respect: William Hughes, P.Eng.