

Enough is Enough: Ontario Engineering Community Committed to Uprooting Systematic Biases

Bias Against Diverse Underrepresented Groups and Women Remains One of the Engineering Industry's Top Issues

TORONTO, November 26, 2020 – The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), the voice of Ontario's engineering community, is announcing a four-point action plan to address systemic bias prevalent in the culture, training and licensure process.

A recent study commissioned by OSPE found that, overwhelmingly, engineers, engineering graduates, and hiring managers view systemic bias as a major problem in the engineering community. While Ontario has a pool of diverse and underrepresented groups, systemic bias discourages some of the best talent from remaining in engineering roles.

In response to these findings, OSPE is deepening its vital commitment to acknowledging and uprooting all sources of bias in the system that selects, educates and registers professional engineers.

"This has gone on for too long, with little action by the leaders of Ontario – and Canada's – engineering community," says OSPE CEO Sandro Perruzza. "Starting right now, OSPE is dedicating itself to unifying the voices of Ontario's engineering community. Enough is enough and we won't stop until we see meaningful change and movement towards a diverse and inclusive profession that is vibrant and ready to serve Ontario without bias."

Research from a previous OSPE study highlights gender-based issues clearly enough, however more research needs to be supported and undertaken to conceptualize the experiences of other underrepresented groups:

- One-in-three women currently get paid less than their male counterparts in the engineering sector
- One-in-four women experience harassment, discrimination or bullying at work within the engineering industry
- Forty-five percent of women reported feeling undervalued or disrespected in the workplace, when compared to 20% of their male counterparts
- Forty-four percent of men compared to 18% of women claimed to having never felt barriers to their workplace advancement¹.

"Women and other underrepresented groups are being held back from contributing to the vital work Ontarians need them to do," says current OSPE President and Chair, Réjeanne Aimey, P.Eng. "Our members' voices are also clear: It's time for action. It's time for leadership. It's time for real change."

OSPE invites all engineers, Ontario's engineering regulator, Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), government officials, engineering school deans, Engineering Student Societies' Council of Ontario

¹Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. 2018. Calling All STEM Employers: Why Workplace Cultures Must Shift to Change the Gender Landscape. Retrieved at: https://diversifystem.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/breaking_barriers_white_paper_report_single.compressed.pdf

(ESSCO), the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies – Ontario (formerly Consulting Engineers Ontario) and all vested community stakeholder groups, to join with them in this endeavour.

“This is a complex problem, with deep cultural and historical roots. We are calling on the best of Ontario’s engineers to join with us to break the cycles of prejudice and bias that we all know are there,” says Perruzza.

“It’s not an us-versus-them initiative. We are all in this together, and it will take all of Ontario’s engineering community to make real change,” observes Aimey, “I know all too well the unspoken professional culture that diverse underrepresented groups have to overcome just to be heard.”

Current Chair of OSPE’s Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, Angela Wojtyla, P.Eng., adds, “I’m a proud engineer and know that the engineering community is committed to ensuring the safety and success of our society. It is our passion, but I’ve watched too many talented problem solvers get sidelined by systemic biases built up over generations. It’s time for real change, and together we’re going to make it happen.”

OSPE’s four-point plan will kick-start bringing about real change for the future of the whole engineering community in Ontario.

“We invite our stakeholders and all members of the engineering community to join us in this mission for change by signing their names and telling all of our leaders that they demand action over rhetoric,” says Perruzza.

OSPE is starting by shining a light on this issue with the following four-point plan:

1. Taking concrete actions and reaffirming that diversity and inclusion remain one of our core values,
2. Offering regular diversity and inclusion training to any members of the engineering community who seek it,
3. Launching a new featured Diversity and Inclusion Champion Award in 2021 to honour OSPE members who are making real systemic change, and
4. Committing to convene a summit with all Ontario engineering leaders in 2021 to develop an industry-wide action plan.

In addition to these steps, in its role as a leader of Ontario’s whole engineering community, effective November 26, 2020, OSPE has created a hub for the whole engineering community to unite to tackle its most challenging and most complex problem.

Please visit engineeringforchange.ca to get involved in this mission for the future of our engineering community.

About the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)

OSPE is the advocacy body and voice of the Ontario engineering profession. Ontario has more than 85,000 Professional Engineers and 293,600 engineering students and graduates in Ontario. OSPE provides strategic engineering input to the government, industry, and academia, often through work

undertaken by its committees and task forces. Most recently, OSPE has showcased how the engineering community will assist Ontario and Canada with economic recovery post-COVID-19.

As a member-driven professional association, OSPE welcomes the entire engineering community to contribute knowledge, skills, and leadership to help create a better future for the profession and society. For more information about OSPE, please visit www.ospe.on.ca.

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