



MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION — ARE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND MUNICIPALITIES DOING ENOUGH?



By **Tom Williams**, XCG Consulting Ltd.

One of the last rooms in our house that truly needed an upgrade was the "kids" bathroom. At the beginning of the family DIY project I enlisted the assistance of my fifteen-year old son to help. I assumed the role of supervisor and delegated the responsibility for most of the plumbing and general labour to him.

We worked well together and in the final stage of the project, I asked him to ensure that the toilet seal was properly positioned. For anyone who has replaced a toilet before, you only get one shot at this, or the seal is compromised and you have to start again. The responsibility to connect all the plumbing and secure the toilet in place was entirely his. He knew that if he didn't get it right, he'd be expected to do it all over again.

The ceremonial first flush worked perfectly and there were no leaks. The bathroom was complete and he could take credit for a job well done. The look of pride and accomplishment on his face was a moment I will never forget. This made me reflect on what I enjoy the most about my role as president of XCG, and that is mentoring the smart young engineering and science professionals that we employ.

But I don't see that happening in government regulatory agencies or municipalities.

A 2015 Engineers Canada report looked



"What I enjoy the most about my role as president of XCG is mentoring the smart young engineering and science professionals that we employ," says Williams (left).

at the current supply and demand needs for engineers and projects through to the year 2025. It predicts there will be more than 100,000 engineering job openings in Canada between 2015 and 2025, as older engineers retire and the economy continues to grow. The report concluded that Canada is facing a serious skills gap, as senior engineers leave the workforce and their experience is lost because of a shortage of graduating and early career engineering professionals.

Because of this gap, many young professionals could be filling positions that have greater responsibility, despite not necessarily having the experience or knowledge they need to manage these effectively.

I routinely meet colleagues from other

consulting and engineering firms across Canada who bring their young engineers to technical conferences and seminars and show them the ropes. But I rarely, if ever, see government regulatory agencies or municipalities bring their junior staff to these events and learning opportunities. Yes, there are budget constraints and in some cases expenditure freezes on many of these agencies and municipalities. But, in order to fill the skills gap in Canada, we need to mentor the young professionals in those organizations as well.

It's our duty as senior engineers, in both the private and public sectors, to help the next generation succeed. All employers are obliged to provide the proper training and mentoring for more senior and technical roles as these young professionals progress in their careers. So why does it seem that private sector companies are the only ones doing it? ■

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