

installation of a building public address system to be used for fire and emergency information only. In addition to the alarm, this voice message would confirm a fire and the need to exit quickly, and could also indicate any building areas to avoid when exiting, etc.

I note that later in the issue there is an article on the Royal Bank Building and that its system includes "emergency voice communications ... prerecorded messages [that] are clear and consistent ... and do not depend on the ability or composure of system operators to transmit them." Such systems, especially in large buildings would have to be in the individual offices, not just in common areas.

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Female engineers find harmony in Vancouver

"You are enough, you have enough, you do enough" were powerful sentiments I heard during an "affirmation luncheon" on the final day of Achieving Harmony—Women in the Workplace, held in Vancouver May 21-23. This was the first joint planned conference to combine the "More Than Just Numbers" conferences with the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (CCWEST) series.

For the more than 265 women who came from everywhere from St. John's to Nanaimo to attend, the focus was on the lives of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, referred to as the STEM professions. The aim was to explore issues affecting women, to discuss current projects that

promote these professions, develop professional skills, and cultivate business and support networks. As well, papers were presented on recruiting and retaining women into these fields.

Over the course of my career I have had few opportunities to network with people with whom I have so much in common. We are different: the flavour of the conference was warm and inviting, with netwalking (with umbrellas provided by sponsors), the affirmation luncheon, daycare, and a B.C. hand-crafted teapot for every speaker and facilitator. I even won a door prize!

The three days were jammed with workshops, presentations and social events. I could only attend a few of the many personal and professional

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development (fun) workshops. Topics were Managing to Have Fun, Human Energy, Women's Health, Setting Boundaries, Dealing with Challenging Employees, Paternity Issues, Balancing Work and Family, Living Ergonomically, to name only a few. There were also

sessions at Vancouver's Science World, an English Bay boat cruise, and a slumber party at the Vancouver Aquarium.

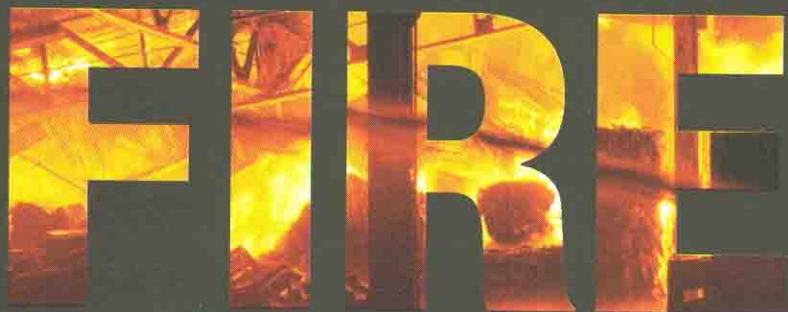
Ladies, lets face it, what has really changed in the last 15 years? Where have we made significant gains? In our seniority? Our salaries? In respect?

Certainly not in our numbers. We have not reached the critical mass required (30%) to make the changes or to permeate the folds of senior positions. Nor have we achieved pay equity.

Still, conferences like this show that there are hundreds of strong, dynamic and brilliant women committed to changing the education system to meet our different learning styles, and to changing the workplace so that within the STEM professions we can achieve balance and harmony in our lives. The network is there—tie into it if you haven't already done so.

Next time you ask why you are not further along in your career, or your house is a mess, or your kids are screaming for attention, or your friends think you have dropped off the face of the earth, give yourself a pat on the back. You have come a long way, so take a breath: "You are enough, you have enough, you do enough."

Tonia Jurbin, P.Eng.



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Engineering boom

Construction activity is rising dramatically compared with last year. Canada's statistics show that by May, activity in all fields had risen 96% compared with May 1997. Engineering accounted for the biggest increase, up 245% overall, and up 15,741% in the oil and gas sector. Industrial plant construction rose 398%, electrical power rose 188% and roads were up 102%.

Hard times or hard pressed

"The consulting engineering business tends to be cyclical and driven by capital spending. In a cynical mood I sometimes think we spend half our time competing with each other for work, and the other half competing for staff." —Bruce Bodden, P.Eng., inaugural address as chairman of the Consulting Engineers of Ontario at the annual meeting in Niagara Falls.