



THE ENGINEERING INSTITUTE OF CANADA

and its member societies

L'Institut canadien des ingénieurs

et ses sociétés membres

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**“The changing role of the EIC from the 1960s
to the present”**

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In the late 1960s, to seek solutions to the problems of declining membership, revenues and enthusiasm, on the one hand, and competition from other - often smaller - learned societies, on the other, the Council of the Engineering Institute of Canada turned to its Committee on Technical Operations for advice, much as the CSCE Council had turned to its Committee on Society Affairs some 50 years earlier.

Formed in 1955, the CTO's principal job was to review the various technical activities within the Institute and to establish special committees or other bodies to examine and report on developing needs in particular technical areas. For example, by 1958 CTO had set up six technical divisions - for civil, mechanical, electrical, chemical, hydro-electric and mining engineering - each with its own chairman, a geographically representative executive, and members drawn from across the Institute. By 1963 the number of divisions had been increased to 15. The possibility that a division, or a group of divisions, might become the nucleus for an autonomous constituent society established within the Charter of the Institute was discussed at the CTO meeting in January 1967. Such societies, it was suggested, might provide the answer to the various problems that were causing so much concern.

By the spring of 1968 the Committee and the Council had been persuaded that they should support this strategy. Meanwhile, on its own initiative, the Geotechnical Engineering Division had begun to develop a proposal that would lead in this direction. In June 1968, CTO approved the setting up of a Steering Committee under the purview of the Mechanical Engineering Division to pursue the development of a mechanical engineering society. Representatives of two other mechanically-oriented divisions, the EIC, and the American ASME and British IMechE branches operating in Canada were invited to participate. The possibility of establishing civil and electrical engineering societies was also discussed. And at the same time work began on the revision of the Institute By-Laws to accommodate constituent societies.

As a result of the work that was done over the next few years, the Canadian Society for Mechanical Engineering (note: for ME, not of Mechanical Engineers) was established in April 1970, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering and the Canadian Geotechnical Society in June 1972, and the Canadian Society for Electrical Engineering in October 1973. The new societies sought members from outside as well as inside the Institute. Those EIC members who declined to join one were assigned to the General Members' Group, which became - effectively - the fifth member of the new EIC Federation of Societies.

(A problem arises from the use of the acronym 'CSCE' to denote both the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering and the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers (1887-1918). One solution is to refer to the latter as the original or 'old' CSCE and to the former as the present or 'new' CSCE.)

It took some years after their establishment for the four discipline-oriented member societies, the GMG and the Institute itself to work out cooperative inter-relationships and their respective administrative and technical responsibilities. In any event, these evolved with experience, the passage of time, and the development of the societies' technical programs and publications. By the late 1980s the societies had incorporated and had gained control of their affairs and administration. The EIC's formal region, branch and committee structure - with certain exceptions - was dismantled and publication of the **ENGINEERING JOURNAL** terminated. The Institute's role now centred around federation affairs and the promotion of cooperation and communication between the members and with 'outside' engineering societies. There were also financial problems. The once-bustling service centre at the Montreal headquarters was closed and the EIC's

staff reduced significantly. The Toronto field office was also closed. The diminished headquarters were later moved to Ottawa.

On the positive side, the Institute maintained its honours and awards program and the Council took a growing interest in the encouragement of professional development and continuing education for engineers. The Life Members' Organization remained active. Notably, also, the Institute played an active part in the arrangements made in Montreal and elsewhere across Canada for the Centennial of Engineering in 1987 - the celebration of the founding of the 'old' CSCE. The financial problems received attention. Historical and archival activities were revived. And for the last few years the Institute has taken a leading role in promoting the maintenance of professional competence in association with partners in the education and private sectors and in consultation with the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers and its member associations, the Canadian Academy of Engineering, and the Association of Consulting Engineers of Canada.

As a result of By-Law changes in the late 1980s, the societies – rather than individuals – are now the members of the EIC. But the society composition within the Institute has also been changing. The General Members' Group has been re-formed as the Canadian Society for Engineering Management. The Electrical Engineering Society first added 'Computer Engineering' to its title and then, in 1993, merged with Region 7 of IEEE in the United States to become IEEE Canada -and replacing the 'new' CSCE as the largest EIC member society. The Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering joined the Institute in 1998 and the Canadian Medical and Biological Engineering Society in 1999, bringing the number of member societies to seven.

(This historical note was based in part on the paper ***THE ORIGINAL CANADIAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS*** by Andrew H. Wilson, which appeared in Volume 1 of the ***PROCEEDINGS*** of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering Conference at Sherbrooke, Quebec, in June 1997.)

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